The (De-)Colonial Dynamics of Im-mobility in 21st Century Representations of Migration: An Interdisciplinary Study of (Counter-)Narratives around (North-)African 'Harga' to EU-rope

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By

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Abstract

Situated at the crossroads of im-mobility-focused migration research, cultural studies, and digital humanities, this thesis offers an interdisciplinary and nuanced examination of 21st-century representations of (North-)African-European unauthorised migration, known as *harga* in Maghrebi dialects, against the backdrop of the so-called European migrant crisis. While the phenomenon has been extensively explored across different communicative structures in the European cultural context, perspectives from the Southern Mediterranean have remained thus far significantly under-researched. To address this gap, this thesis engages with a diverse array of *harga*-centred (counter-)narratives in Arabic and French, spanning different genres, produced *in* and *around* the Maghreb between 2015 and 2019. This specific timeframe is significant as it covers a period of heightened media attention to 'South-North' illegalised migrations on both sides of the Mediterranean and ends shortly before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Drawing on a hybrid qualitative methodological framework—combining Multimodal and Critical Narrative Analysis—and unfolding along a tripartite thematic schema, this thesis charts three distinct 'regimes' of migration representation encompassing media, testimonial literature, and digital platforms by specifically foregrounding and experimenting with the material and symbolic nuances of migrant im-mobility across pre- and post-migratory spaces, as well as within transit hubs. Applying a decolonial lens and leveraging theoretical and conceptual resources gleaned from immobility scholarship, it first examines Algerian and Moroccan mediascapes and retrieves the discursive mechanisms undergirding the dehumanising portrayals of (North-)African unauthorised migrants, while reflecting on how these representations *border* their stories and identities, de-authorising them in the process. Though testimonial accounts co-authored by 'sub-Saharan' migrants and Western writers (due to publication barriers in Morocco and Algeria) are lauded for contesting media clichés about 'South-North' unauthorised migration, this thesis unveils the power asymmetries underpinning these productions, with a specific focus on the persistent coloniality of the French language and its bordering effect on migrants' identities and histories. Expanding the conceptual framework of im-mobility into cyberspaces and building on the recent theoretical developments in digital migration studies, the thesis then shifts its focus to Algerian and Moroccan (would-be) *harraga*'s digitally mediated, subversive migratory imaginaries and practices—communicated to online audiences through diverse (and often hybridised) linguistic repertoires—to illustrate the extent to which they resist and disrupt dominant migration narratives by mobilising alternative, unfiltered gazes on the multifaceted nature of the *harga* journey to Europe. In so doing, it foregrounds previously silenced epistemologies while underscoring how the often precarious nature of digital memory complicates the establishment of a 'stable' counter-archive 'from below'. As such, a fundamental contribution of this thesis lies in its critical engagement with primary and secondary sources—both textual and audio-visual—composed in French, Modern Standard Arabic, Maghrebi dialects, and translingual modes, with English serving as

the medium of scholarly analysis. By moving beyond the confines of monolingual paradigms, this research illuminates the interconnections between language(s) and identity negotiation within cultural productions, and examines the ways in which they inform Mediterranean audiences' perceptions of (North-)African *harraga*. Ultimately, this study aims to extend ongoing academic inquiries into the (de-)colonial dynamics of 21st-century im-mobility narratives, while emphasising their complexities and the insights they offer for rethinking migration representation.

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List of Abbreviations

AMDH: Association Marocaine des Droits de l'Homme [The Moroccan Association for Human rights]

AOM: Autonomy of Migration

CNDH: Conseil National des Droits de l'Homme [National Human Rights Council]

ECOWAS: Economic Community of West African States.

EMAA: European Mediterranean Association Agreements

ENRD: The European Network for Rural Development

EUTF: European Union Emergency Trust Fund

GADEM: Groupe Antiraciste d'Action et de Défense des Étrangers et des Migrants [Anti-Racist Defence and Support Group of Foreigners and Migrants]

ICTs: Information and Communication Technologies

IOM: International Organisation of Migration

LADDH: Ligue Algérienne pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme [Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights]

MEPA: Mediterranean European Partnership Agreement

NGO: Non-governmental organisation

NIP: National indicative Program

OMDH: Organisation Marocaine des Droits de l'Homme [Moroccan Organisation for Human Rights]

SNIA: Stratégie Nationale d'Immigration et d'Asile [National Strategy for Immigration and Asylum]

UNHCR: The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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desk, the night coffees you prepared, and all the funny stories you told me, lifting my spirits when I needed most.

Dedication

To Ghassen, gone too young,
The 'Eldorado' is where you are.

Author's Declaration

I, Khaoula Zitouni, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Introduction

"Despite the oft-cited statistic that one in seven people are on the move, few scholars ask why, in our age of globalisation, six out of seven are not."

Kerilyn Schewel, *Understanding Immobility: Moving Beyond the Mobility Bias in Migration Studies*
(2019: 329)

Im-mobility and the '(De-)Coloniality' of Migration in a Globalised World

Whether "imagined, desired, resisted, experienced, managed, or represented, migration is a multifaceted reality" (Carling & Collins, 2017: 1). The multidimensionality of contemporary migrations has been explored through the integration of knowledge from diverse academic disciplines, thus highlighting the interdisciplinary[1] breath of migration research. As Caroline Brettell and James Frank Hollifield (2000: 7) firmly assert, to study migrations and the narratives surrounding them comprehensively, "each discipline [should] bring something to the table, theoretically and empirically". In its varied forms, migration entails an act of border crossing, be it national or transnational, real or imaginary. Accordingly, the latter is inevitably equated to the notions of motion and mobility.[2]

Reviewing the most prominent 20th-century empirical and theoretical works on international migration, Jøren Carling (2002) argues that titles like *Worlds in motion* or *Workers without frontiers* (Massey et al., 1998; Stalker, 2000) instantly conjure up images of fluidity and permeable borders, which thereby define the 20th Century as 'the Age of Migration' (Castles & Miller, 1993). This celebration or romanticisation of movement has long been embedded in mobility-cherishing globalisation rhetoric. Indeed, both migration-centred academic and literary narratives have developed around concepts like translocal mobility, flight, double identity and transculturality in a bid to celebrate humanity's growing disengagement from a sense of place or rootedness (Søren, 2015). In line with Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht's conceptualisation of globalisation as a form of 'spacelessness',[3] whereby time and space are compressed and

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[1] In this research context, I use the word '*interdisciplinary*' to emphasise the combination, interaction, and complementarity of theoretical and conceptual insights from various areas of study, creating thereby a complex and unified framework that is tailored to meet the research objectives.

[2] I understand 'motion' as the act or the very process of moving from one position or place to another and 'mobility' as a term encompassing both the act of moving (for example, across borders) as well as the ability/capacity to do so. This semantic distinction is particularly relevant to my elaboration of the concept of 'immotility' or the 'incapacity'/dis-ability to migrate in the context of my analysis of digital (counter-)narratives around illegalised migration or '*harga*' in the third and final part of this research work.

[3] Søren (2015: 115).

boundaries are obliterated due to the world's increasing interconnectedness, writers like Salman Rushdie among others, affirmed as early as the turn of the 21st century, that "the migrant, the man without frontiers, is the archetypal figure of our age" (2002: 415). As per this understanding, in the so-called Age of Globalisation, individuals have become "detached from physical space […] [thus becoming] weightless and bodiless" (Søren, 2015: 108) by defying the roots of belonging.[4] However, these visions of a freely moving migrant subject, in their theoretical, analytical, or literary manifestations fail to tell the different 'other' stories of migrants—particularly those who are 'un-authorised'[5] or denied entry into specific foreign territories for lack of 'supporting' documents—and their struggles to overcome borders.

In the context of contemporary unauthorised Mediterranean migrations, the spectacle is radically different from the one staged by the romanticising conceptions of mobility in the Globalised world. The latter constructions cloud, for instance, the impact of the restrictive immigration policies implemented by the European Union (EU) in the early 1990s and their

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[4] Drawing on Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's (1987) conception of the rhizome, Martinican poet and philosopher Édouard Glissant argues in one of his seminal works, *Poetics of Relation* (1997), that there is no 'totalitarian root', no settled way of life, and proposes instead the figure of the errant and the nomad. Elaborating the latter argument, Moroccan critic Nabil Echchaibi (2020) explains that "unlike wandering aimlessly, errantry is still about an oblique sense of itinerary, of movement that is still informed by one's past, yet it resists the univocal pull of fixed roots and closed belonging" (307).

[5] Although the word 'unauthorised' may carry a bureaucratic connotation, it is deemed fitting in this research context on account of its semantic nuances and malleability. I use it specifically to refer to how nation states perceive the people who attempt to cross borders without being equipped with a 'proper' governmental authorisation. I also particularly foreground this terminological construction to draw attention to how "illegalised migrants" (Tazzioli & De Genova, 2016) are "perceived for what they are not" (Khosravi, 2024: 2350) by racialised border regimes and how (ironically) they become "visible only through negation" (ibid). Similarly, I argue that it is this 'unauthorised' aspect that determines the (often highly risky) itineraries migrants take to reach their desired destination(s). My use of the qualifier 'unauthorised' also serves to highlight nation states' strategies to disempower migrants through their bordering practices by depriving them of a sense of 'authority' over their lives and destinies (through arrests and deportations, for example) for lack of authorisation to enter, stay, or work within a given country. As I shall further demonstrate throughout this thesis, 'un-authority' also becomes an apt concept through which to read the degree of migrants' vocality/voice (agency) or 'author-ship' in the context of migration representation in a more general sense. Lastly, in a terminology-contesting spirit that mirrors my decolonial stance, I particularly problematise and avoid the use of derogatory and value judgement-loaded descriptors such as 'illegal', 'irregular' migrant, and '*sans papiers*', and opt instead for the adjective 'illegalised' to point to the governments' strategies of migrants' illegalisation (i.e., turning them into 'illegals', and hence criminals) as a way of veiling their *illegal* and thus human rights-violating border policies and practices. As I shall elucidate in the unfolding parts of this general introduction, '*harraga*'—meaning 'border burners' in Maghrebi dialects—is also a key term that I deploy to refer to (North-)African unauthorised migrants.

ongoing impact on contemporary (North-)African[6]-European migratory movements.[7] Accordingly, a number of migration scholars have contested in their works the myth of border-crossing mobilities, arguing that they have become "an exception rather than a norm" (Salazar & Smart, 2011: iv).

As a consequence of the Schengen Border regime, the Mediterranean Sea, which, in pre-Modern times, used to be 'the white Sea in the middle' (Abderrezak, 2016) binding two shores and bringing together diverse civilisations,[8] has turned into a space of rupture and fracture, a manipulated signifier, the signified of which is constantly dis-placed and deferred. It has also become a liquid boundary wherein new peripheral itineraries are traced by those who have been immobilised and denied access to so-called "Fortress Europe" (Thielemann & El-Enany, 2008). Cultural theorist Iain Chambers corroborates this argument in his 2008 book *Mediterranean Crossings: The Politics of an Interrupted Modernity*, where he contends that nowadays the Mediterranean *border*[9] has become the very incarnation of "authority", "control" and "surveillance" (9-10). This view finds strong resonance in Thomas Nail's (2016) incisive claim:

We live in a world of borders. […] Borders of all kinds quite literally define the 21st century. Despite the celebration of globalisation and the increasing necessity of global mobility, there are more types of borders today than ever before in history. In the last twenty years, but particularly since 9/11, hundreds of new borders have emerged around the world: *miles of new razor-wire*

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[6] In this thesis, the term (North-)African refers to migrants from 'sub-Saharan' Africa and the Maghreb, particularly Algeria and Morocco. The parentheses and hyphen are used to reflect this dual reference, ensuring precision while avoiding redundancy. Although historically, the appellation 'North Africa' was used by the French in colonial times to draw a racial line between their 'white' and 'black' African colonies, I nevertheless re-purpose its use to specifically differentiate between the various nationalities of migrants crossing to Europe from the African continent and thereby mitigate geographic ambiguity. Further, as I shall elucidate in the following chapters, I also calculatedly use it in more critical ways in my examination of Moroccan and Algerian hegemonic representations of unauthorised 'sub-Saharan' migrants within which this White/black African racial dynamic is (ironically) embedded.

[7] Although this thesis does not engage with the COVID 19 context and the subsequent restrictions on people's movements (both those who prior to the pandemic enjoyed cross-border mobility and those who did not), it is nonetheless important to point out the limitations of the mobility-cherishing globalisation rhetoric that has been prevalent over the past two decades. I further explain my choice to exclusively focus on the pre-COVID context near the end of this general introduction.

[8] It is worth recalling here French historian Fernand Braudel's poetic image and unifying metaphor of a plural Mediterranean, being "*non pas une mer mais une succession de mers*" (Braudel, 1999: 5) [not one sea but a succession of seas], and a space wherein "*les civilisations [sont] entassées les unes sur les autres*" (ibid) [a space wherein civilisations overlap/converge]. My translation.

[9] My emphasis.

fences, tons of new concrete security walls, numerous offshore detention centres, biometric passport databases (2).[10]

Likewise, referring to EU-rope[11]'s increasing borders' externalisation and militarisation, Ronan Shamir (2005) uses the phrase "global mobility regime" to underscore that processes of globalisation have oxymoronically created "their own principle of closure" (199) whereby the mobility of some is smoothened while the movement of others is hindered (Schiller & Salazar, 2013). Indeed, this condition not only incontestably underpins the uneven power relations and spatial inequalities (Squire, 2022) between the 'Global North' and the 'Global South'[12] (or rather, between the self-perceived 'developed' countries and those they regard and classify as 'underdeveloped' and/or 'developing') but also testifies to the enduring "coloniality of migration" (Rodriguez, 2018: 25) within which Europe's "racial coding of immigration policies"[13] has found fertile ground. As conceptualised by Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodriguez (2018), "coloniality of migration" is an extension as well as an integral part of the larger "coloniality of power", which Peruvian sociologist and philosopher Anibal Quijano (2000) defines as the persisting influence of colonial-era forms of political, economic, and social domination on contemporary structures and relations, reinforcing racial and class inequalities, and thereby cementing 'North-South' power asymmetries.

The ways in which Europe constructs migrants as outsiders or non-citizens to legitimise their immobilisation and subsequent deportation or dislocation are part and parcel of its neo-colonial dynamics of migration management and its ensuing violent bordering practices against racialised 'Others'. The racialisation of brown and black bodies in contemporary Europe is undoubtedly not a recent phenomenon but a legacy that echoes through its colonial past (Mbembe, 2020). As such, the coloniality of migration, seen from a 21st century perspective, is "shaped by the persistent effects of colonial epistemic power" (Rodriguez, 2018: 25), hence the

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[10] My emphasis. According to Amnesty International (2015), EU member states constructed over 235 kilometres of fences along the EU's external borders, with expenses exceeding 175 million Euros. Amnesty International (2015). 'Refugees endangered and dying due to EU reliance on fences and gatekeepers.' 17 November 2015. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/5yxsefjh [Accessed 1 July 2022].

[11] Following Maribel Casas-Cortés et al. (2015), I use upper case E and U to refer to the European Union more specifically, and thus to distinguish it from the broader European continent. Therefore, 'EU-rope' (with a hyphen and a visual emphasis on the (metaphorical) 'rope' marking its boundaries) and 'Europe' will be used interchangeably to refer the EU and its member states. In contexts wherein Europe designates the whole continent, a clarification note will be added to ensure precision.

[12] To preclude any confusion, throughout this thesis, I use single inverted commas to denaturalise derogatory, homogenising and discriminatory terminology or (neo)colonial constructions like 'Global North/South'. Similarly, I place single inverted commas around phrases and words which I use idiosyncratically for the purposes of data analysis. This is often inferred from the context wherein they are deployed.

[13] Rodriguez (2018: 18).

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dominance of Euro-centric narratives around contemporary (illegalised) cross-border movements and the resultant invisibility, or rather, invisibilisation of 'Other' ways of 'feeling', 'knowing', and 'writing' borders. Accordingly, in order to address contemporary patterns of (formerly colonised) populations' im-mobility[14] and dis-placement as well as the so-called "crises" ensuing as a consequence of such "excessive" movements (Mbembe, 2020), it is primordial to account for the ways in which colonial injustices have shaped the socio-political, economic, and cultural structures of the ex-colonised nations (Tazzioli & De Genova, 2016) on the one hand, and to reveal the "cracks in the otherwise imagined intact theories, conversations, and thinking" (Khosravi, 2024: 2347) around 'South-North' (im)mobilities, on the other. It is particularly within these 'fissures' that the inspiration for the present research was born, shaping its course and direction.

Circling back to the paradoxical image of a globalised yet bordered world, it is important to add that "the hyper globalist view that geography no longer matters is hardly a relief to people who are involuntarily immobile" (Carling, 2002: 8), hence the pressing need to dis-place the focus from mobility to *immobility* narratives and examine the different mechanisms undergirding the (self) constructions of unauthorised migrants' identities and cross-border journeys. It is also pertinent to add in this context that in contrast to the significantly extensive literature on mobility in migration studies (Adey 2006; Castles, D Hass, & Miller, 2014; Hannam et al., 2006; Salazar et al. 2016; Schwarz, 2018; Sheller & Urry, 2006; Urry, 2008), immobility, as a concept, condition, and phenomenon has comparatively received scant attention especially in the years before the outbreak of the COVID-19 Pandemic[15] (Khan, 2016; Jacobsen et al., 2020). This view is consolidated by Kerilyn Schewel (2019) who asserts that the field of migration research suffers from "a mobility bias" (330) as it tends to privilege the analysis and examination of movement and mobility while casting aside "stillness, inertia,

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[14] In this research context, *'im-mobility'* and *(im)mobility* are used interchangeably to capture the dynamics of movement and stasis, their diverse nuances, as well as their interrelation.

[15] The global immobilities induced by the COVID 19 pandemic have spurred extensive research, offering a thorough understanding of the ways in which sudden mobility disruptions and restrictions on movement both within and beyond the borders of nation states, affected global populations and economies. Some of the most seminal scholarly contributions include: Martin, S., & Bergmann, J. (2021) '(Im) mobility in the age of COVID-19,' *International Migration Review*, *55*(3), 660-687. Cairns, D., & Clemente, M. (2023). *The immobility turn: mobility, migration and the COVID-19 pandemic*. Policy Press. Piccoli, L., Dzankic, J., & Ruedin, D. (2021) 'Citizenship, Migration and Mobility in a Pandemic (CMMP): A global dataset of COVID-19 restrictions on human movement,' *PloS one*, *16*(3). e0248066. More importantly, some critical works examined Europe's instrumentalisation of the global health crisis to legitimise its *refoulement* of 'Global South' (unauthorised) migrants and refugees, further aggravating already existing unequal power and spatial dynamics. For further discusiion, refer to De Genova, N. (2022) 'Viral borders: Migration, deceleration, and the re-bordering of mobility during the COVID-19 pandemic, *Communication, Culture and Critique*, *15*(2), pp. 139-156.

immobility, or fixedness" (Smets, 2019: 651). It is particularly within this under-researched niche that the central idea of this study emerged and gradually matured over the course of its development.

Additionally, this academic endeavour is a response to Koen Leurs et al.'s (2020) call to expand further on a migration-focused and narrative-centred research agenda that the authors have developed as part of the special issue on "Migrant narratives" in the *European Journal of Cultural Studies*. In their collective project Leurs et al. (2020) not only critically engage with contemporary "migrant narratives", but also offer insights into the "group of actors narrating migration" (682) along with the opportunities and challenges entailed by the act of representation. Indeed, these "agents of migration representation"[16]—be they media professionals, politicians, artists, or migrants themselves—deliver, as the authors demonstrate, a multi-perspectival and thereby more balanced account of contemporary cross-border journeys especially when juxtaposed within a hybrid research framework, which shall be one of the major contributions of this thesis.

While illegalised migrants' experiences of immobility and displacement received significant attention during the COVID-19 pandemic years, the (counter-)narratives that emerged as a response to such conditions were notably underexplored in the pre-COVID period particularly between 2015 and 2019, from the *southern side of the Mediterranean*[17] despite extensive media coverage of the so-called 'migrant crisis' at Europe's doors (Abderrezak, 2016; Souiah, 2013, 2016; Mastrangelo, 2018). Thus, in accordance with the decolonial critique of the centre-periphery paradigm characteristic of Western knowledge production (Mignolo, 2002, Khosravi, 2024), I foreground both dominant and marginalised (counter-)narratives generated *around*[18] (North-)African-European unauthorised migrations through a specific focus on the multifarious facets of migrants' im-mobility, immobilisation, and consequent dislocation, and through a southern Mediterranean lens. In so doing, I not only engage a multitude of previously 'absent' narrative perspectives—often conflictual and divergent in content—but also, "provincialise *northernness*[19] as the epistemological centre of migration studies" (Chakrabarty, 2000; Mignolo, 2002 cited in in Khosravi, 2024: 2346), thereby highlighting the decolonial essence of this academic intervention.

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[16] Ibid.
[17] My emphasis.
[18] My emphasis.
[19] Emphasis in original.

Owing to their rich and intricate historical and cultural interconnections, as well as their shared (yet distinct) experiences of French colonialism, this doctoral research aimed to initially incorporate the Algerian, Moroccan, and the Tunisian contexts in the analysis of the different narrative constructions of (North-)African illegalised migrations against the backdrop of the 'migrant crisis' in Europe. However, I ultimately decided to focus on the former two countries due to methodological challenges and the limited scope of the research. More importantly, two additional factors influenced my decision to narrow the analytical scope. First was the dearth of testimonial accounts by Tunisian migrants during the selected timeframe that directly engaged with themes of im-mobility and dislocation. Second, was my own positionality as a Tunisian researcher, which might have—however unintentionally—introduced inherent biases, such as privileging the Tunisian migratory context and its particularities.

Furthermore, at the inception of this doctoral project in 2020, there had already been significant scholarly contributions on the illegalised (trans) migration patterns and dynamics characterising the post-2011 Tunisian revolution context (Boubakri & Potot, 2013; Hedfi, 2013; Mastrangelo, 2018; Salzbrunn et al., 2015; Salzbrunn et al., 2017; Souiah, 2019; Giusa, 2018), while marginal attention had been given to its neighbouring countries, Algeria and Morocco (Souiah, 2013, 2016, 2020; Stock, 2019; Tétu, 2011). In this thesis, I not only examine a set of heterogeneous (counter-)narratives around the variegated manifestations of unauthorised migrants' immobility and displacement with reference to the two aforementioned countries, but I also engage in a comparative study that accounts for their historical, geographic, and cultural specificities, as well as the legal frameworks governing their migration management.

In order to grapple with the complexities of contemporary migration issues and the subsequent problematic nature of mainstream representations on both sides of the Mediterranean, a succinct yet thorough historicised examination of the national contexts and colonial histories of Algeria and Morocco is essential. Indeed, by analysing the historical legacies, economic circumstances, and socio-political dynamics that have shaped migratory trends and patterns from these nations to Europe, we gain a nuanced understanding of the dynamics driving present-day illegalised migrations. Both nations endured colonial rule primarily under France, albeit to varying degrees,[20] with Algeria from 1830 to 1962 and

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[20] Algeria and Morocco underwent markedly different experiences under French colonial rule, particularly in terms of the duration and severity of oppression and exploitation (Natter, 2014). Algeria endured a brutal occupation from 1830 to 1962, during which the colonial settlers controlled every aspect of Algerian life through forcible assimilation of indigenous population into French culture (resulting in extensive repression of local customs and identity), land eviction and appropriation of Algeria's natural resources. This culminated in the Algerian War of independence (1954-1962), marked by extreme violence and substantial loss of life with approximately 1.5 million

Morocco from 1912 to 1956. Additionally, Spain maintained partial control over Morocco during this period, especially in the northern regions. These colonial experiences substantially influenced the character of post-colonial migrations from both countries. Algerians primarily migrated to France as factory workers during the colonial period, a trend that intensified following Algeria's independence in 1962 (Natter, 2014). The Évian Accords established a privileged mobility regime between the two countries, allowing Algerians to travel solely with an identity card. As such, this period marked Algeria's emergence as "a migration-sending" nation, while France remained "a migration-receiving" country (Adamson, 2024). Initially, many Algerians migrated to France seeking better economic opportunities—predominantly in the construction and manufacturing sectors—owing to high unemployment and socio-economic precariousness in Algeria, which were among the deleterious consequences of the colonial enterprise. Thus, the Algerian-French historical entanglements, coupled with the presence of established Algerian communities in France, rendered the latter a primary destination for Algerian post-colonial migrants. However, this migration was complicated by rising racism and xenophobia in France, culminating in increased social tensions. On 19 September 1973, Algerian President Houari Boumediènne implemented a unilateral ban on migration to France in response to the rise of racist incidents targeting Algerians. While the immediate effect of this authoritarian measure was minimal, it nonetheless marked a more assertive stance from Algeria in its post-colonial dealings with the former coloniser (Collyer, 2012). Although France remained a *de facto* destination for Algerians, the stringent regulations introduced by the Pasqua Laws of 1986 and 1993 related to the conditions of entry, stay, and residence of foreigners, succeeded by the implementation of the Schengen Convention in 1995, considerably restricted immigration options. The figure of the *ḥittiste*[21] (a term derived from *ḥit,* meaning 'wall' in

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Algerians killed in the fighting (Shillington, 2013). In contrast, French colonialism in Morocco operated under a protectorate system established by the 1912 Treaty of Fez, which allowed some local legal traditions to persist alongside French law. Within this structure, economic exploitation meant the extraction of mineral resources, as well as advancements in the agricultural sector primarily designed to cater to the French market. Tens of thousands of colonialists moved to Morocco, acquiring vast tracts of fertile land for their own benefit and establishing interest groups that continually pressured France to intensify its economic dominance over the country. While uprisings were common during the early colonial period, particularly among Amazighs/'Berbers', resistance in Morocco became more visible in the 1940s and 1950s with the National Liberation Movement calling for Moroccan independence through the creation of a para-military force orchestrating attacks against French (and Spanish) settlers, which culminated in military hostilities with approximately 1,000 Moroccans killed during the fighting (Joffé, 1982). Morocco was granted formal independence on 2 March 1956, a year after the formerly exiled Sultan of Morocco Mohamed V's announcement of the end of the French Protectorate. Accordingly, the distinct colonial histories of Algeria and Morocco profoundly shaped their post-colonial trajectories, determining their political and socio-economic structures in different ways.

[21] To understand the meaning of the symbols used to represent the sounds of Arabic letters, see transliteration table (Appendix D).

Maghrebi dialects) became emblematic of the increasing despair among young Algerians who spent their days leaning against walls—a literal and symbolic gesture reflecting their sense of out-of-placedness in both the family home (owing to lack of private space) and disillusionment with the system in a more general sense (Souiah, 2013). This situation foreshadowed the emergence of *harga* (i.e., a form of unauthorised migration whereby Maghrebi migrants burn their identity papers to cross into Europe via the Mediterranean Sea on board of make-shift boats in order not to be identified and deported to their origin country) as a potential way out of socio-economic insecurity. Moreover, the Algerian Civil War, which erupted in the early 1990s—a brutal conflict between the government and various Islamist groups following the cancellation of elections that the Islamic Salvation Front was poised to win—significantly exacerbated the situation, resulting in widespread human rights abuses, significant casualties, and a profound societal divide (Collyer, 2012). The chaos that ensued compelled many Algerians to flee the country with large numbers seeking refuge in France[22] (UNHCR, 1995). Moving from the 20th-century landscape of conflict and instability to the 21st-century context, it is important to note that although Algeria did not experience the same level of upheaval as its neighbours during the so-called 'Arab spring'[23] of 2011, the uprisings nonetheless had a profound impact on its migration dynamics. Economic stagnation and political repression under Abdelaziz's Bouteflika's regime, coupled with unemployment rates exceeding 25% (International Labour Organisation, 2014), intensified aspirations for reform and further reinforced the perception of migration as a viable escape option for disillusioned young Algerians—both men and women (Souiah, 2019). By 2015, the 'migrant crisis' brought international attention to the Mediterranean Sea as a perilous route taken by 'desperate' individuals or 'opportunists' seeking refuge or 'fortune' on its northern shores, respectively. Concurrently, Algeria was 'coping' with the increasing number of 'sub-Saharan' migrants 'transiting' through its territory in a bid to cross into the EU. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abdelkader Messahel, went so far as to declare, "*nous sommes déjà confrontés aux mêmes problèmes que L'Union Européenne*" [We are

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[22] Along with France, Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands, among other European countries, also granted refugee status to Algerian asylum seekers between 1993 and 1994 (UNHCR, 1995). UNHCR, (1995). *CDR Background paper on refugees and asylum seekers from Algeria*. Refworld: Global Law and Policy Database of UNHCR, 1 October. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/39dvnk3j [Accessed 12 February 2022].

[23] The phrase 'Arab Spring' is denaturalised as a Western construct that denotes an oversimplified and linear narrative of transition from authoritarian regimes to democratic governance in some countries of the Maghreb and the Middle East, thereby obscuring the intricate struggles and the heterogeneous outcomes of the uprisings. The word 'Arab' is equally problematic as it excludes the contribution of other ethnic groups composing the complex texture of the region.

already confronting the same pressing challenges as the EU][24], in response to the latter's demands for Algeria to engage in readmission schemes for unauthorised 'sub-Saharan' migrants as a way of 'alleviating' the (perceived) 'migrant crisis' at its doors.

On the Moroccan side, migration to Europe began to take shape in the early 20th century. Under colonial rule, thousands of Moroccans served alongside French forces in both World Wars, a contribution that set the stage for increased migration to European countries from 1945 onwards. After Morocco gained independence from France (and Spain) in 1956, emigration surged as returning Europeans leveraged their networks to recruit labour (Natter, 2014). The post-war economic boom in Europe, combined with the enduring legacies of colonialism, among them the influence of the French and Spanish languages in Morocco, led to a marked preference for France and Spain as potential destinations. During the 1970s, Morocco faced economic decline and political instability following failed coups against King Hassan II, further fuelling young people's desire to emigrate (Berriane et al., 2015). Additionally, Spain's abrogation of the bilateral agreement of 1964—which included (among other provisions) a framework facilitating labour migration for Moroccan workers—as well as the imposition of the Schengen 'immobility regime' in the 1990s, altered the nature of Moroccan migration to Europe with increasing illegalised border crossings via the Strait of Gibraltar making the headlines[25]. As we shift from the 20[th-]century to the 21[st-]century context, new immigration patterns have emerged with migrants and refugees fleeing armed conflicts in 'sub-Saharan' Africa viewing Morocco as a potential staging post to enter Europe (Stock, 2019). Moreover, like its Algerian neighbour, Morocco was impacted by the 'domino effect' of protests of 2011 (though to a lesser extent than Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt), as the government was pressured into implementing a number of comprehensive changes in response to growing popular discontent. Notwithstanding the constitutional and socio-economic reforms promulgated by King Muhammed VI, persistent high unemployment rates and limited economic opportunities continued to drive *harga* to Europe (Natter, 2014). As European nations bolstered border enforcement efforts in subsequent years to 'manage' the escalating 'migrant crisis', migrants opted for illegalised channels, believing that Europe was their most viable option for a better life.[26]

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[24] Perspective Monde (2018). 'Crise migratoire: l'Algérie entre immigration et émigration,' *Perspectives Monde,* 11 October. Available at : https://tinyurl.com/59bafsap [Accessed 1 July 2022].
[25] Berriane et al. (2015).
[26] For a detailed examination of Moroccan *harga* to Europe at the beginning of the 21st century, see Chadia, A., (2007) 'Le" hrague" ou comment les Marocains brûlent les frontières'. *Hommes & migrations*, *1266*(1), pp.82-94.

Another important rationale behind my selection of the Algerian and Moroccan contexts is the impact of their strained diplomatic relations in the past two decades driven primarily by their (ongoing) dispute over the Western Sahara territory (Zoubir, 2020a). This conflict has not only exacerbated tensions between the two neighbouring nations but also significantly influenced their approaches to the migration question, turning it into a tool of geopolitical leverage against each other.[27] Thus, taking their hegemonic narratives around unauthorised migration (in its different manifestations) as a starting point, I further develop the main argument of this thesis by examining counter-narratives by migrants (some of which were co-produced with Western authors), thus providing a more nuanced perspective on Algeria and Morocco's "migrationscapes"[28] through a specific focus on the time period starting from the so-called '2015 migrant crisis' and ending a year before the outbreak of the COVID pandemic. The selected (counter-)narratives were produced in both Modern Standard and dialectical Arabic (variations), as well as in French, reflecting the bilingual identities of Algeria and Morocco, the first serving as their mother tongue while the second functioning as their lingua franca. In both countries, French is a prominent second language and a vital medium of representation and communication owing to the enduring legacies of French colonialism and its 'mobility power' as an international language. Additionally, the interplay between both languages, which often emerges in the form of translingual practices (Rouabah, 2022; Havlin, 2022; Chaka, 2020; Abdelhamid, 2021; Huc-Hepher, 2021)—or the crossing and blending of different language systems—especially performed by Algerian and Moroccan unauthorised migrants in their digital narrativisations of

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[27] Algeria-Morocco relations have been marked by significant crises since their respective independence, particularly the 1963 Sand War and the Western Saharan War from 1975 to 1991, both stemming from their disagreement over the political status of Western Sahara and resulting in periodic yet prolonged closures of their shared land border (Rachidi, 2022). This longstanding rivalry and mutual distrust have influenced all aspects of their diplomatic relationship. Morocco claims sovereignty over Western Sahara, considering it an integral part of its historic land, while Algeria backs the Sahrawi Independence Movement, spearheaded by the Polisario Front. Notwithstanding a ceasefire declared in 1991, the conflict remains ongoing, marked by intermittent violence and diplomatic stalemate. Periodic clashes between Moroccan forces and the Polisario Front have continued, particularly since the resumption of hostilities in late 2020, undermining regional stability and exacerbating the humanitarian crisis in Western Sahara. For a comprehensive historical overview refer to Rachidi, I., (2022). 'Morocco and Algeria: A long Rivalry.' *Sada*, May 3, 2022. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/mub55zpx [Accessed 1 September 2023]. Furthermore, tensions between the two neighbours have escalated, it seems, into a 'media warfare', wherein unauthorised 'sub-Saharan' migrants are often used as scapegoats. In Algerian and Moroccan mainstream media, both the Algerian-Moroccan and Algerian-Nigerian borders have been portrayed as sites for condemning arbitrary expulsion and inhumane deportations practices. This strategy has allowed both countries to divert attention away from their border violence and human rights abuses whilst emphasising one another's mistreatment of migrants. See for example, *Le Maroc refoule 5000 migrants dans des conditions inhumaines vers l'Algérie* and *Algérie: La souffrance des migrants expulsés*. Youtube videos available at: https://youtu.be/0tU52iqyg14?si=9A89QcXllfdXS3QD
https://youtu.be/SOV3xqDvof4?si=5HX0hqnA-EtlRklh [Accessed 2 October 2022].
[28] I borrow this term from Hoerder, D., (2014) 'The weak and the powerful: a longue-duree and comprehensive perspective on diasporas'. *Diasporas. Circulations, migrations, histoire*, (23-24), pp.30-49.

their migratory imaginaries and journeys across social media platforms, are also closely examined. As a multilingual researcher, my positionality is enhanced by my identity as a native Arabic speaker—being able to navigate and articulate the diverse variations of Arabic with both fluency and nuance—, my knowledge of French having been the principle medium of my pre-university education, as well as my proficiency in English being the focus of my higher education specialisation and current teaching. In these regards, I believe that I am well-positioned to engage with the diversity of the Arabic and French language texts selected for this study using English as a medium for analysing, interpreting, and communicating the research findings. Thus, the multilingual dimension of this thesis constitutes a valuable contribution to the study of contemporary migration representations as it illuminates previously obscured epistemologies originating from the southern rims of the Mediterranean.

Following Anniina Rantakari and EeroVaara (2024), I interpret narratives as "temporal discursive construction[s] that provide means for individual, social, and organisational sense making" (320), and counter-narratives as "stories people tell and live, which offer resistance, either implicitly or explicitly, to dominant cultural narratives" (Bamberg & Andrews 2004: 1). The ineluctable friction arising between the diverse ways of knowing, experiencing, and narrating contemporary forms of illegalised (North-)African-European migrations by specifically foregrounding the view from the southern Mediterranean side has not yet been thoroughly tapped into, and thus constitutes a central thread of this research.

The 'crisis' element in the Euro-centric construction 'refugee/migrant crisis' is undoubtedly problematic as unauthorised migration from the African continent to Europe predates 2015, with its origins tracing back to 1995 when the Schengen border regime was implemented (EL-Tayeb, 2011; Mazzara, 2019). Resultantly, the Western Mediterranean route,[29] for instance, has become one of the mostly used passages by Maghrebi unauthorised migrants mainly of Moroccan[30] and Algerian origins attempting to reach the Spanish coasts (Abderrezak, 2016, 2009; Chena, 2015; Souiah, 2016). While some tend to remain in Spain, others decide to pursue their journey to another EU country,[31] usually France owing to its postcolonial 'ties' with their country of origin, as outlined earlier. Similarly, an increasing

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[29] The Western Mediterranean route encompasses three distinct pathways from North Africa (mainly Morocco and Algeria) to the southern Spanish coasts: across the Strait of Gibraltar from Tangier to Tarifa, from Morocco and Mauritania to the Canary Islands or, via land routes through the (fenced) enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, which share borders with Morocco (Malakooti & Fall, 2020).

[30] From 2008 to 2017, on average 34,227 Moroccans were found to have crossed in unauthorised ways into 28 States of the European Union (Fargues, 2020).

[31] In 2014, North Africans represented 10% of all arrivals to Europe, 1% in 2015, 1.4% in 2016, 12% in 2017, 19% in 2018 and 12% again in 2019 (Malakooti & Fall, 2020).

number of illegalised migrants from West and Central African countries—Guinea, Ivory Coast and Cameroon among others[32]— have started using this route since the year 2000 (Boubakri, 2013; De Haas, 2007; Flahaut et al., 2016).

The migrants who attempt to cross the Mediterranean border via unauthorised means are referred to in Maghrebi dialects as *harraga*,[33] which literally translates as sea or road 'burners'. Be they North, West, or Central Africans,[34] these (trans)migrants' cross-border undertakings could be read as subversive acts of 'escape' from the residues of European colonialism[35] (Papadopoulos et al. 2008; Squire, 2022). Dependency theorists, such as Susanne Bodenheimer (1971), argue that the end of colonial rule did not put an end to colonial domination. Historically, control has been maintained as "the value transfers of profit have continued to flow" (Kvangraven et al., 2017: vi) from the ex-colonised countries to the 'neo-colonial' centre. As such, it is reasonable to argue that the *harraga*'s act of escape emanates from a 'burning' desire to "disrupt spatialised inequalities and longer histories of power and violence" (Squire, 2022: 1060). Finding themselves bordered in a presumably borderless world, unauthorised migrants struggle to transcend their immobility by appropriating movement and claiming space. (Casas-Cortez et al., 2015).

The increasing militarisation and fortification (Omizzollo & Sodano, 2018) of European borders have proven, it seems, counterproductive as these bordering strategies have incited hundreds of thousands of people from both ends of the African continent i.e., Maghrebi nationals as well as those originating from what is commonly—yet inaccurately—referred to as 'sub-Saharan Africa', to risk their lives by crossing the Mediterranean Sea in a bid to enter an internally borderless European Union. In this context, the latter's mainstream media have

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[32]UNHCR (2005) estimated that in 2004, for instance, approximately 120,000 unauthorised migrants attempted to traverse the Mediterranean Sea. This figure included 27,000 individuals originating from Ghana, Mali, Senegal, and Cameroon. In the year 2016, Gambia, Ivory Coast, and Cameroon were among the top five countries of origin of the illegalised migrants who crossed into Spain via unauthorised routes (UNHCR, 2016).

[33] In Maghrebi dialects *harraga* (plural form of *harrag*), is a morphological derivation of the word *harga* (or *hrig*) and is commonly used to refer to 'sea/road burners', i.e., those who decide to embark on perilous journeys across the Mediterranean Sea to reach the so-called European 'El Dorado' in makeshift boats (*pateras*) or Zodiacs (more recently referred to as 'taxi boats'), or scale the barbed wire fences separating Morocco from the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla. *Harga* (pronounced with the velar plosive sound /g/) is a non-standard Arabic nominalisation of the trilateral verb 'ħa-ra-qa' (ح ر ق), meaning to burn or set something on fire. It is important to add that although all the Arabic words containing the letter ح referred to in this thesis are transliterated using the symbol ħ, I have exceptionally used *h* for the word *harga* and its derivatives (i.e., *harraga*, *hrig*) to align with the spelling used in the scholarly literature. The fire connotations embedded in the aforementioned words are addressed in depth in Part Three.

[34] Despite recent changes in gender migration dynamics, marked by the growing movements of female migrants from (North-)Africa to Europe (Belhorma, 2021), men remain the predominant gender within (unauthorised) migrant populations. These migrants are chiefly single men or men who travel without their families (Lahlou, 2018).

[35] I expand on this aspect further in the ensuing chapters of this thesis.

framed illegalised border crossings as a threat to European societies' order, security and identity through a perpetual diffusion and reinforcement of a crisis rhetoric, making 2015 a year historically marked by 'unparalleled' and almost "unmanageable" unauthorised migratory flows into Europe (Mazzara, 2019). The recurrence and multiplication of images of overloaded migrant 'unseaworthy' boats carrying 'faceless bodies' in distress have consolidated the narrative of migration as a security problem and an emergency issue, purportedly demanding immediate attention and drastic responses from European decision-makers and their Maghrebi 'partners' alike. Thus, the securitisation approach and the externalisation[36] of migration policies have enabled European countries to fortify the discourse on border management enhancement and involve its former colonies in the latter process.

As a result of these exclusionary, racialising, and hence dehumanising representational strategies, "the average European perceive[d] the continent as experiencing an unprecedented 'invasion' of desperate others, […] threatening [their] state order" (Mazzara, 2019: 1). In her monograph, Reframing *Migration: Lampedusa, Border Spectacle and the Aesthetics of Subversion* (2019), Federica Mazzara convincingly demonstrates that this perception is the inevitable outcome of an ensemble of governmental decisions and actions including an increased patrolling of EU borders on the one hand, and the dissemination of "a false narrative that Europe does not have enough resources and space to accommodate a 'disproportionate' number of foreigners" (1), on the other. She elaborates further, arguing that the militarised and securitised approach adopted by the EU to manage migration is a way of criminalising migrants' border crossing attempts and thus legitimising their "illegalisation". As such, migrants are not 'illegal' but rather are "illegalised" (Tazzioli & De Genova, 2016) through discursive and contextual manipulations. Further reinforcing this contention is French scholar Catherine Mazauric's assertion (2012: 11) that "from the stand point of International Law what is criminal is not the fact that an individual emigrates, what is criminal is the fact that a public authority prevents him from doing so".[37]

In this spatial hierarchisation-based "postcolonial politics of class and race" (Tazzioli & De Genova, 2016: 16), 'boat migrants' are immobilised, i.e. denied entry into EU spaces due to their unauthorised status. Interestingly, there seems to be a sense of parallelism between the

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[36] A range of migration scholars, policy makers, and media professionals use the term 'externalisation' to refer to border management beyond the 'migrant receiving nations' by involving their neighbouring countries or the sending and transit states in the process. Border externalisation encompasses a number of border surveillance strategies and rescue operations (Stock, 2019). I elaborate further on this concept in Part One through a close examination of Morocco and Algeria's cooperation with the EU on unauthorised migration management.
[37] My translation.

EU's practice of spatial bordering— through its discriminatory migration policies— and its (actual) discursive 'immobilisation' and illegalisation of migrants through representation (Chouliaraki, 2017). Indeed, combined, the rapid circulation of photographs, dissemination of news footage capturing specific moments of migrants' boat journey, and mainstream print and online press use of derogatory terminology (Eberl et al., 2018) in their coverage of the latter, have tended to 'freeze', or 'immobilise' migrants within specific frames, hence the neo-colonial dynamics of immobility, displacement and crisis in Euro-centric representations of illegalised migrations. The widespread use of words such as 'illegal', 'irregular', and 'clandestine' (Duvell, 2006) has the potential to instill fear and insecurity towards these 'undesired Others.' Accordingly, one is driven to pose the following question: Are not these constructions of the 'migrant crisis' implicative of a *crisis of migrant representation,*[38] or, more concerningly, an epistemic crisis (re)produced to frame the movements of people from Europe's erstwhile colonies as illegitimate, dangerous, and with serious implications on its perceived 'cultural purity' and economic stability and security?

As Italian philosopher Georgio Agamden (2013) observes, "today 'crisis' has become an instrument of rule. It serves to legitimise political and economic decisions that in fact dispossess citizens and deprive them of any possibility of decision" (Tazzioli & De Genova, 2016: 11). Therefore, by constructing unauthorised migratory movements as yielding a state of crisis, i.e., one that is characterised by emergency and exception due to its ensuing 'chaos', the EU legitimises its draconian border policies and naturalises the immobilisation (arrest, detention, and deportation) of those who 'do not fit' into the refugee/victim frame, or those who are commonly perceived to be 'economic parasites'.[39] Interestingly, this epistemic crisis, or "epistemological impasse" (Tazzioli & De Genova, 2016: 10), to use Janet Roitman's phrase, signals the extent to which the EU has been incapable of coping with its colonial loss, or what Paul Gilroy (2005) calls "postcolonial melancholia".

The crisis element is undoubtedly epistemological, a deliberate knowledge gap that the EU decision and discourse makers have created and used to obfuscate Europe's colonial ruinations (Stoler, 2013) and its consequent impact on the displacement of contemporary migrants, more specifically those 'stuck' or immobilised at its borders or confined in its detention camps. At the heart of this process of 'crisis discourse' perpetuation is not only the

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[38] My emphasis.
[39] Also referred to as 'economic migrants'.

absence of alternative knowledges but also an epistemic manipulation performed to further nourish and reinforce a sense of ignorance towards the 'Other'.

In a seminal article entitled "(B)Orders of Immobility: Politics of movement and poetics of the frontier", Nabil Echchaibi (2020) thoroughly elaborates on Ann Laura Stoler's (2011) concept of "colonial aphasia", or Europe's "deliberate labour of forgetting and evading [the monstrosities of its colonial] history" (Echchaibi, 2020: 292), by proposing a closely related conception, that of "border aphasia". Echchaibi explains that the function of the "aphasic border" is to contribute to a collective sense of active oblivion of Europe's colonial past and the "crises" that it instigated in its former colonies, perpetuating cycles of instability and underdevelopment. He writes, "the aphasic border contributes to this deficit of remembering and erase[s] the evidence that we can witness the ordeal of crossing either as a breach to sovereignty or a spectacle of ahistoric inhumanity" (293). Further, he denounces this "disjuncture between words, things, and context"[40] and compares this representational deficiency to "a pathology that generates and perpetuates"[41] the dehumanising spectacle of nameless and massively quantified migrants attempting to cross into Europe. By the same token, reflecting on the 'crisis' frame, Fatima El Tayeb (2011) calls the EU's deliberate repression of migrants' voices and, by extension, their (hi)stories, an "active process of forgetting" (xxiv)— hence the pressing need to re-member (to recall the French verb *remembrer* i.e., re-collect) or bring together the different fragments of the latter's stories by adopting a decolonial framework that accounts for their plural subjectivities and perspectives.

Further, the deployment of the securitarian and humanitarian frames (Eberl et al., 2018; Mazzara, 2019; Tazzioli & De Genova, 2016; XU, 2020) has functioned as a powerful tool to build and fortify the crisis narrative. In her deconstruction of the 'crisis' label, Mazzara identifies the aporias inherent in the humanitarian discourse by demonstrating that "what appears to be a counter-narrative to the hegemonic representation of 'boat people'[42] sustained by political, legal, and mediatised discourses, ends up serving exactly the same narrative" (7). This, in turn, "contribut[es] to the objectification of migrants as an indistinct group".[43] Be they constructed as criminals or helpless victims awaiting rescue, the migrants, according to Mazzara's analysis are subjected to a process of "spectacularisation". In this narrative articulation, they are portrayed as displaced, de-individualised, and hence de-politicised masses "triggering feelings of pity"

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[40] Echchaibi (2020: 293).
[41] Ibid.
[42] Inverted commas in original citation.
[43] Mazzara (2019: 43).

(Mazzara, 2019: 43). Thus, these simplistic dichotomous portrayals of the migrant 'Other' contribute to the perpetual undermining of their agency and 'authority', hence the imperative to explore 'Other' or "re- formulate Other-wise" (Ben Beya, 2012: 23) migrants' experiences and cross-border journeys and hence, "dis-place these dis-articulations"[44] by foregrounding the view from the southern borders of the Mediterranean.

As part of its outsourcing of border control management, the EU has been imposing growing pressure on its Southern Mediterranean counterparts to curb the 'flow' of unauthorised migrants through the signing of Bilateral and Partnership Agreements, and in return for generous financial packages.[45] Indeed, the EU has sought to boost cooperation with the Maghreb countries within the framework of the European Mediterranean Association Agreements (EMAA). The EU's financial support for the economic transition of the countries of the Maghreb was mainly implemented through the MEDA programme.[46] Significant funds were allocated to foster development, especially in rural areas, and discourage the (illegalised) emigration or *harga* attempts of these countries' nationals, as well as to control the movement of 'sub-Saharan' transit migrants attempting to cross into Europe (De Haas, 2008). Morocco and Algeria's migration policies have changed considerably since the end of the 1990s (Lahlou, 2018) in order to meet the EU's demands regarding 'South-North' border cooperation.

The introduction of migration laws that criminalise what Algerian and Moroccan policy makers and media professionals discursively refer to as 'illegal' or 'clandestine' entry, stay, work, or exit, as well as the establishment of Migration border regime directorates and observatories not only attest to the persistent dependence of these Maghreb countries on their former colonisers, but also unveil the structural deficiencies and unequal postcolonial power dynamics underpinning contemporary North African-European relations. Thus, in the context of Maghrebi Migration discourse, in all its forms—political, legal, or media—constructs like '*émigration clandestine/illégale*' or their Arabic equivalents '*hijra siria/ hijra ghair char3ia*'[47] are derogatory labels deployed to criminalise migrants and therefore, to legitimise their immobilisation. In so doing, they replicate their European (and former colonisers) neighbours' discursive manoeuvres, as I shall demonstrate more thoroughly in Part One.

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[44] Ben Beya (2012: 23).

[45] European Commission (2018). *Western Mediterranean Route: EU reinforces support to Morocco,* https://tinyurl.com/25mkm7nt [Accessed 30 September 2022].

[46] EUR-Lex (n.d.). *Meda Programme*, https://tinyurl.com/4sthhtd6 [Accessed 30 September 2023].

[47] These derogatory phrases are frequently used in Moroccan and Algerian news coverage (Sarikakis, 2017), as shall be explored in depth in Part One.

Ironically, despite failing to represent accurately the plight of migrants, the use of both securitarian and humanitarian tropes has resulted in the creation of discursive fissures. To address these gaps, numerous counter-representation actors from both sides of the African continent have engaged creatively and critically in subverting the hegemonic discourse on unauthorised migration, aiming to provide an alternative perspective by mobilising a range of counter-narratives and diverse border imaginaries. The Western Mediterranean route, for instance, with its multiple borders, has functioned as one of the major topoi around which such constructions found shape.

Thus, in a postcolonial spirit of 'writing back' (Ashcroft et al., 2006), a growing number of both local and transnational writers of North, Central, and Western African, as well as European origins have attempted to articulate *harraga*'s experiences in different discursive modes: in fictional works[48] like novels, plays and poems (Mazauric, 2012; Abderrezak, 2016; Scarabicchi, 2018). Since these productions have tended to foreground the migrant's voice by constructing them as narrator and/ or protagonist, they could be considered a sub-genre of the larger field of migration literature. To denominate this illegalised migration-centred fiction, US-based Moroccan scholar Hakim Abderrezzak (2009) proposed the appellation "Il-literature" or "*hrig* fiction" (461). The first is a neologism, a compression of the terms "illegal (ised)" and "literature", a way, as he puts it, of "appropriating illegality"[49] or formulated differently, a way of appropriating the perspective of illegalised migrants. The second expression includes the Maghrebi word attributed to unauthorised migratory patterns (along with *harga*), '*hrig*', which literally means "burning the sea or the road".[50] By illustration, novels like Tahar Ben Jalloun's *Partir* (2006), Boualem Sansal's *Harragas* (2006), Youssef Ellalami's *Clandestins* (2000), Hamid Skif's *La géographie du danger* (2006) among others, attempted to aesthetically re-construct the different ways in which *harga* is imagined, prepared for, experienced and experimented with by Maghrebi *harraga*. Similarly, a number of Central and West African writers like Marc Alexander Oho Bambe, Muhammed Mbougar Sarr, Fatou Diome, Aminata Sow Fall, have adopted this counter-narrative spirit. Like their North African counterparts, these

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[48] Fictional works also encompass migration-themed filmography and realistic documentaries on migrants' journeys. See for instance, Grassilli, M., (2008) 'Migrant cinema: Transnational and guerrilla practices of film production and representation,' *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *34*(8), pp.1237-1255; Rings, G., (2016). *The other in contemporary migrant cinema: imagining a new Europe?*. Routledge; Trencsényi, K. and Naumescu, V., (2021), 'Migrant Cine-Eye: Storytelling in Documentary and Participatory Filmmaking', *Visual Methodology in Migration Studies. New Possibilities, Theoretical Implications, and Ethical Questions*, pp.117-140.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid.

writers have sought to write a 'counter-history' (De Certeau, 1993) to challenge dominant representations of South-North unauthorised migration.

Additionally, on the northern side of the Mediterranean, a significant number of literary works authored by European writers and journalists, and inspired by *harraga*'s 'true stories',[51] have attempted to debunk the reductive EU media portrayals of (North-)African-European cross-border journeys. Notwithstanding their counter-narrative potential, the aforementioned fictional works remain paternalistic articulations of a less privileged other's (Pedwell, 2016) migratory experiences, hence my choice of excluding them (following careful consideration) from the corpus of texts initially selected for this study. I have therefore opted instead for documentary narratives or rather migrant testimonials authored by migrants yet co-produced with Western collaborators in order to examine the extent to which they offer alternative ways of engaging with unauthorised migrants' experiences of 'stasis' and "stuckedness" (Schewel, 2019), and to investigate, more specifically, the (de-)colonial dynamics undergirding the co-authorship enterprise, as I shall explore in detail in Part Two.

More importantly, as a potential counter-narrative response to the stigmatising discursive constructions of illegalised migrations on both sides of the Mediterranean Sea, Algerian and Moroccan *harraga* have appropriated social media spaces by posting on their Facebook walls or on public *harga*-themed Facebbok pages, and on YouTube "hypershort stories" (Darcy, 2008). These online-shared accounts have often been articulated in complex multimodal ensembles (Kress, 2009; Kress & van Leeuwan, 2001), conveying their experiences of forced immobility or what I refer to as 'immotility'. The latter specifically refers to the 'incapacity' of would-be migrants (i.e., those who are willing to migrate but do not (yet) have the means to materialise their migratory aspirations) to cross transnational borders owing to the increasingly stringent Schengen visa policies[52], as well as the feelings of 'out of placedness' generated by such a condition. Far more severe than immobility, immotility—a term borrowed from biological terminology—denotes a pathological state whereby *harga* dreamers find

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[51] For a comprehensive analysis of these works, see for instance, Scarabicchi, C. (2018). *The Migrant's Corner: Representing Mediterranean Migrations in Contemporary French and Italian Culture. Unpublished doctoral dissertation).* Royal Holloway, London.

[52] The Schengen Visa application process is often frustrating and time-consuming, highlighting the significant obstacles to potential (authorised) cross-border mobility for Moroccan and Algerian nationals. According to the TLS contact online platform, applicants are required to submit a comprehensive array of documents in addition to a valid passport: round-trip ticket reservation, travel insurance, proof of accommodation in destination country, and sufficient means of subsistence for the planned stay. Moreover, they are required to provide evidence of socio-economic stability in their country of origin (e.g., a bank account statement, marriage certificate, family book, etc.), recent employment documentation, pay slips, as well as a certificate of affiliation to the relevant national security fund.

themselves 'crippled' and paralysed by both internal and external borders. Indeed, the incapacity (rather than inability) to move is often the result of systemic and structural constraints and could potentially transform into a prolonged prison-like situation. Part Three offers a comprehensive analysis of Algerian and Moroccan (would-be) *harraga*'s digitally mediated accounts around the diverse manifestations of immobility and immotility, expressed in Arabic, French or in a subversive translingual fashion, thus establishing them as an intriguing and valuable area for investigation and analysis in light of the 'migrant crisis' context mapped out earlier.

Central to the discussion are the complex religious and cultural allusions woven into their digital narratives, as well as their influence on their identity (re)fashioning and their articulations of forms of online resistance as attempts to counterbalance the essentialist representations of *harga* in both their source and target societies. In this context, Islam not only mediates their conceptualisation of their migratory imaginaries, the cross-border journey, and arrival at the desired destination, but also shapes the ways they grapple with and envision the grim possibility of perishing at sea. As I shall elaborate further in Part Three, religion—namely allusions to the Qur'anic *sourats* [chapters] and *ayats* [verses] and the Hadith[53]—provides not only a moral and cultural framework within which *harraga*'s digital narratives are articulated but also serves as a decolonial force, empowering *harraga* and intensifying their resistance against (neo)colonial ideologies and bordering practices. To this day, there seems to be a conspicuous dearth in critical works that address these forms of online (counter-)representation by privileging the view from the southern side of the Mediterranean Sea and thereby unsettling formerly taken for granted epistemic formations surrounding the 'migrant crisis'.

This thesis thus engages with a curated collection of (counter-)narratives around *harga* to Europe by specifically drawing attention to Algerian, Moroccan and 'Sub-Saharan' *harraga*'s experiences of im-mobility and displacement. By confronting the latter's (un)mediated testimonial accounts of their cross-border journey with the often toxic narratives disseminated by mainstream media on both sides of the Mediterranean, one of the research objectives is to investigate the strategies deployed by the (co-)authors to enact a 'dissident gaze' (Rancière, 2009) across different narrative 'spaces' or genres. Moreover, as this study accords priority to the southern Mediterranean perspective, it questions the extent to which the 'crisis' of migrant representation evoked earlier could apply to the Maghreb countries' constructions of unauthorised migrants. To this end, it particularly explores the different discursive strategies

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[53] In Islam, the *Hadith* refers to the recorded narrations and actions of Prophet Muhammed, serving as an important source of knowledge and guidance to Muslims, complementing the teachings of the Qur'an (Abd al-Rauf, 1983).

used by Moroccan and Algerian mainstream media agencies in their representations of both 'sub-Saharan' transmigrants' as well as Moroccan and Algerian *harraga*'s Mediterranean journeys. Comparatively, there seems to be an uneven balance in the scholarly literature on media representations of illegalised migrants, as critical works have thus far extensively focused on how the EU (rather than on their transit or source societies) has depicted them. Put differently, the ways in which migrants' immobility experiences (in pre- and post-migratory spaces, as well as in transit hubs) are portrayed in Maghrebi media, and in the counter-narratives that have emerged as a reaction to the latter remain largely underexplored to date.

More specifically, along with its exploration of Algerian and Moroccan mainstream media narratives, the thesis offers a close reading of recently published '*récits de migrants/récits de témoignage'* [testimonial narratives] co-authored by 'sub-Saharan' migrants and Western journalists and anthropologists. The corpus of texts includes Victor Eock and French journalist Nicholas Balu's (2016) *La rage de survivre: Récit d'un migrant*, Kouamé and French author Lionel Duroy's *Revenu des Ténèbres: Le récit bouleversant d'un jeune migrant* (2018), and Jackson Abena Banyomo and Morocco-based Canadian anthropologist Catherine Therrien's *Celui qui échoue devient sorcier* (2019).[54] What these testimonial accounts have in common is that they privilege the view from the margin, grant the 'un-author-ised' migrant a certain degree of 'author-ity', and offer an account of the migratory journey with all its obstacles by placing the 'journeyer'[55] at the centre of the narrative. Additionally, owing to the dearth of published testimonials authored by Algerian or Moroccan *harraga*, I engage with a selection of their Facebook and YouTube-shared stories, which I consider, as equally indispensable sources of knowledge, providing alternative and unedited gazes on the phenomenon of North-African *harga* to Europe.

The study further aims to take im-mobility and dis-placement to another level of analysis by first categorising them into different 'nuances' as they occur throughout the unauthorised cross-border journey and approaching them from different angles depending on the perspectives that the narratives offer. More specifically, throughout this thesis, I experiment with the semantics of im-mobility, dis-placement, and crisis by not only examining them as (neo-)

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[54] To my knowledge, no English translation of these three texts is available. I therefore provide translations for all the quotes and extracts selected for the analysis in Part Two.

[55] Although I deploy the term 'journeyer' in this research context—recognising its somewhat archaic roots dating back to the mid-1500s—I find it apt for describing individuals involved in (unauthorised) migration. This choice reflects the multifaceted and arduous nature of their migratory experiences, underscoring the challenges, uncertainties, and transformative aspects of their journeys. Additionally, by using the word 'journeyer', I aim to foreground the progressive and open-ended nature of the migration process rather than romanticise it as merely a form of travel or adventure.

colonial conditions experienced by or imposed on migrants, but also by applying them as lenses through which to read the status of the latter's narratives, i.e., their (non-)circulation across (trans)national borders and digital spaces. These im-mobility dynamics are also explored in depth specifically through the analysis of Arabic and French as both 'borders' and 'bridges' in the (mis)communication of *harraga*'s stories and identities by drawing on the concepts of the (digital) counter-archive (Leese, 2022; Huc-Hepher, 2015) as well as digital memory (Appadurai, 2019). In so doing, this thesis problematises the latter's often precarious status especially in relation to *harraga*'s online-shared narratives as they could be subject to "dispersal", "loss" (Hoskins, 2017; 2018b), and hence 'crisis', turning into what I idiosyncratically refer to as 'cyber cinders'. This figurative locution is inspired by Jacques Derrida's poetic phrase "*Il y a là cendres*" [cinders there are] (Derrida & Luckcher, 1991; 2014), which encapsulates the interplay between the notions of absence, transience, and historic memory remnants.

In order to explore these multifarious forms of (counter-) (hi)stories and examine their experimental and transformative potential, as well as the different ways in which *harraga*'s border experiences are narrativised, published, posted, disseminated, and archived in a broader context of competing narratives around the 'migrant crisis', I pose the following set of interrelated (sub)questions following the tripartite thematic structure of the thesis:

- What narrative and discursive strategies are used by Moroccan and Algerian mainstream media actors to construct *harraga*'s im-mobilities and displacement, and how do these constructions further 'immobilise' them within specific frames of reference? What narratives emerge out of these discursive manipulations and what impact do they have on local audiences' perceptions of both 'sub-Saharan' transit migrants and Moroccan and Algerian *harraga*? To what extent do these Maghrebi countries' media narratives reproduce or 'clone' the EU media's representational strategies, and in what ways is the 'crisis' rhetoric instrumentalised, and to what end?

- How far do the selected co-authored testimonials function as potential counter-narratives to mainstream media constructions of illegalised 'sub-Saharan' migrations and what alternative ways of engaging with migrants' experiences of transit (im)mobility and forced dislocation in Morocco and Algeria do they offer? What are the implications of the Western-'sub-Saharan' collaborative writing enterprise on the migrant protagonist's agency, as well as on the (transnational) (im)mobility of his story? Put differently, what (de-)colonial dynamics

emerge in the process given that French is the means of expression in this context? At what level, if any, does the crisis of migration representation occur?

- In what ways are Moroccan and Algerian (would-be) *harraga*'s social media platforms fertile grounds for their narrativisation of their pre-migration 'stuckedness' and their articulation of their imaginary displacements as forms of (temporary) resistance? How do these digital interfaces function as counter spaces for the subversion of the Maghrebi-European immobility regime? What cultural (counter-)narratives emerge out of these subjective representations and language practices, and to what extent do they represent a potent decolonial force that de-links from dominant Maghrebi and European narratives around *harga*? Lastly, what role does digital memory play in the im-mobilisation/immortalisation of *harraga*'s stories?

By charting the selected (counter-)narratives and exploring the (de-)colonial dynamics undergirding their production and reception, this study offers a comprehensive and nuanced view of a phenomenon as complex as that of contemporary (North-)African unauthorised migration. Before outlining the different thematic parts of this thesis, I first lay out the ground work for my analysis of the multifarious im-mobility tropes identified in the three distinct spaces of representation by reviewing the existing scholarly literature on the media and (non-)fictional (counter-)narratives on (North-)African *harga* to Europe. Second, I lay out the research frameworks informing this study and detail the rationale behind my choice of an interdisciplinary toolkit encompassing not only theoretical insights derived from immobility scholarship but also robust and innovative concepts from the burgeoning field of digital migration studies. Third, I present the hybrid methodological approach underpinning this study, which integrates multimodal, critical discourse and narrative analytical frameworks, while highlighting their capacity to yield valuable insights into the complexities inherent in migration representation.

Immobility in EU media narratives and in harga-centred (non-)fiction: A literature review

The following literature review first evaluates the most pertinent critical works, which have examined European—mainly French and Spanish—mainstream media narratives around contemporary unauthorised Mediterranean migrations. As briefly discussed earlier, the specific focus on France stems from its (colonial) historical connections with the origin countries of (North-)African *harraga*. Similarly, I engage with the Spanish media context as Spain has for the past two decades served as a strategic entry point to the EU given its close geographic location to the northern shores of both Morocco and Algeria. I particularly draw attention to the

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uneven balance in the scholarship between the Northern and Southern Mediterranean as unauthorised migrants' portrayals in the Moroccan and Algerian media have thus far been scantly explored in their own right. Second, I retrace the most significant research conducted on the representations of *harraga*'s (im)mobility in (North-)African *harga*-themed (non-)fiction and identify the knowledge gaps to be addressed.

Mainstream mass media actively establish the frames of reference that readers or viewers use to construe and discuss public events (Tuchman, 1978). When migrants are positioned within the discursive architecture as 'illegal', 'clandestine', and 'alien', they are portrayed in ways that frame them as criminals and therefore as worthy of rejection, punishment, or exclusion (De Genova, 2002). Similarly, by portraying certain migrant groups, for instance, as 'deserving refugees' (Clark et al., 2023)—i.e., as passive and helpless victims in urgent need of assistance— the media reinforce "the racialised codes of deservedness that condition refugee acceptance" (Xu, 2020: 14). Put differently, these humanitarian discourses communicate a dehumanising rhetoric that presents the Western reception of illegalised migrants as an act of generosity rather than a right (Xu, 2020). These discursive patterns thus reproduce the 'North-South' power inequalities by mobilising binary sets: 'legitimate refugee versus economic migrant'/ 'culturally and economically prosperous West versus backward Other' (Le Espiritu, 2014). By consuming and internalising such toxic narratives around unauthorised migration, audiences inevitably develop xenophobic attitudes towards migrants (Kondor et al., 2022). To this day, an increasing number of critical works have engaged with the deconstruction of EU media narratives surrounding illegalised African-European migration (De Haas, 2008; Mazzara, 2019; Xu, 2020; Meeusen & Jacobs, 2017; Musolff, 2015), with most of the existing literature having emerged after the onset of the 'Migrant/Refugee Crisis' in Europe. More specifically, a considerable body of research has examined the constructions of the so-called 'boat migrants', 'refugees', and 'economic migrants' in European mainstream news outlets (Eberl et al., 2018). However, among them only few have offered comparative studies of media discourse across destination countries (Xu, 2020). Likewise, even fewer have investigated the media stories produced by the sending states and comparatively approached the news discourses on the southern side of the Mediterranean. Indeed, a cross-national comparison allows for a movement beyond methodological nationalism on the one hand, and contributes to a critical examination of the transnational circulations of often stigmatising and racialising discourses around unauthorised migrants, and the ideologies underpinning them, on the other (Wimmer & Shiller, 2003). Additionally, such analyses illuminate our understanding of the impact that the media

have in shaping public opinion (Lewis, 2001), perceptions, and attitudes towards specific migrant groups.

In his 2011 book *Couvrir les migrations*, Jean Paul Marthoz observes that the European media's framing of migrants as either 'criminals' or 'victims' is very reductionist and often too simplistic, event-dependent, and reactionary, thereby generating alarmist narratives around illegalised Mediterranean migrations. In effect, the mobilisation of "*des images choc*" [shocking images], "*formules grandiloquentes*" [elaborate/pompous expressions], and "*des titres racoleurs*" (67) [sensationalist titles] serves to reinforce "the myth of invasion" (De Hass, 2008) and intensify anti-migrant sentiment in European societies (Belghazi, 2007). As Hein De Haas (2008) succinctly puts it,

> Media and dominant policy discourses convey an apocalyptic image of an increasingly massive exodus of desperate Africans fleeing poverty and war at home in search of the European 'El Dorado', crammed in long-worn ships barely staying afloat. […] Millions of sub-Saharan Africans are commonly believed to be waiting in North Africa to cross to Europe, which fuels the fear of invasion (1305).

This view is further consolidated by J.M. Eberl et al. (2018) in their critical review of 78 studies on EU media representations of migrants since the year 2000 wherein they demonstrate that despite the variety of framings, the European discourse on immigration has often been negative and conflict-centred (van der Linden & Jacobs, 2017). More specifically, certain mainstream media outlets rely on the securitisation, economic threat (Baker Beall., 2009), and victimisation frames in their construction of the migrant 'Other' (e.g. D'Haenens & Delang, 2001), which inevitably culminate in increased stigma, fear, and polarised views regarding unauthorised migration among the general public.

Further, in a comprehensive comparative analysis of media coverage of 'the migrant and refugee crisis' in 17 European countries, Susanne Fengler (2020) shows that migrants and refugees are often portrayed as masses of people, i.e., collectively as a group rather than individuals, and their voices are strikingly under-represented. Narrowing down the focus to the French media context, Fatma Ben Saad-Dusseaut (2017) finds that (North-)African unauthorised migrants are often constructed within a victimising rhetoric in different French daily newspapers, namely *Le Monde, Le Figaro* and *Libération*. She contends that although the socio-economic reasons pushing migrants to flee their pre-migration settings are foregrounded in these media outlets, there is nonetheless a specific focus placed on how France is 'invaded'

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by these 'burdensome' 'waves' of migrants, hence reinforcing the (false) narrative of 'migrant invasion' evoked earlier. Likewise, in another comparative study between different French mainstream and alternative media platforms, Andressa Bittencourt (2021) finds that 'sub-Saharan' migrants are predominantly portrayed as a burden on French society rather than a potential work force that could contribute to the economic and cultural development of the nation (Georgiou & Zaborowski, 2017).

As far as the Spanish media context is concerned, the securitarian and humanitarian tropes have been pervasive in news discourse surrounding (North-)African illegalised migrations since the turn of the 21st century. For instance, in a study carried out by the Ethical Journalism Network (Sarikakis, 2017), Spanish award-winning journalist José Miguel Calatayud critically assessed the performance of Spanish journalists during the 'Migrant/Refugee Crisis' in an attempt to give an overall picture of the nature of migration coverage in Spain. Based on his analysis, the Spanish press tended to distort certain migration stories by reducing the complexity of the migration phenomenon to two simplistic narratives. The first features 'desperate' 'sub-Saharans' "storming the [Moroccan-Spanish] fences" (58) or crossing the Mediterranean Sea on board of overcrowded dinghies. The other dominant migration narrative depicted Moroccan unauthorised immigrants as criminals involved in drug trafficking, which clearly indicates a sense of continuity with *harraga*'s representations in early 21st century Spanish media coverage (Belghazi, 2007). By illustration, Ricard Zapata-Barrero (2008) conducted a study on Spanish society's perceptions of (illegalised) Moroccan migrants in the early 2000s and found that they had come to be automatically associated with two main images: that of the 'boat migrant' or that of the 'drug dealer'. He also noted that by this time, Moroccan *harga* to Spain had become a highly politicised and mediatised issue, leading a large proportion of the Spanish population to develop what he called "maurophobia", or the fear of the '*Maures'* [Moors]—a historical term used primarily to refer to the 'Berbers' and Arabs of North Africa who invaded the Iberian Peninsula in 711. Thus, in light of Zapata-Barrero's analysis, Moroccans (and by extension Maghrebis), had been 'frozen' in history through these derogatory discursive associations with their Moor ancestors. Accordingly, the findings show the extent to which negative media constructions can shape public attitudes and increase hostility towards 'undesirable' migrant groups. Within the same context, a study carried out by Eliezer Crespo Fernandez and Maria Martinez Lerola (2008) showed that in the early 2000s, The Spanish Press tended to portray African migrants as a burden to Spanish society as well as a threat to both its security and national integrity through the use of hyperbolic numeric figures

and the mobilisation of disturbing images featuring 'masses' of 'boat migrants' *en route* to Europe's southern shores.

Another seminal critical contribution that complements the aforementioned views is Marta Montagut and Carlota M.Moragas-Fernandez's (2020) analysis of the evolution of the 'refugee figure' and its representations in the Spanish press throughout the 'migrant crisis' period. Applying critical metaphor analysis in their examination of refugee framing in Spanish newspapers between 2015 and 2017, the authors identified two predominant frames: a water-themed construction of 'boat people' achieved through the use of water mass and wave imagery along with the trope of the refugee as 'trouble-maker'. These findings also appear to resonate with those presented in earlier scholarship on the media representations of African-European migrations, thereby reinforcing a sense of thematic and historical continuity.

Thus far, the cited literature on European media's portrayals of migrants and refugees since the beginning of the 21st century has tended to waver between two major frames: Migrants as a security threat or as victims seeking refuge in Europe. Whilst the first relies on the criminalisation of migrants by deploying threat and danger-centred metaphors, the second tends to reduce migrants and refugees to people bereft of agency and 'authority'. These reductive views have served to reinforce not only the unequal postcolonial power dynamics between the two sides of the Mediterranean Sea but more importantly, to delegitimise and deny unauthorised migrants entry into their territories. In these representations, the root causes of illegalised migration are scarcely addressed, thus obscuring the enduring consequences of colonialism—namely, the lasting disruption of local economies and the persistent geopolitical divisions that continue to drive displacement—and perpetuating, in so doing, a narrow and de-historicised understanding of migration.

On the southern side of the Mediterranean Sea, 'sub-Saharan', Algerian, and Moroccan *harraga*'s cross border attempts have received growing attention from mainstream media in both Morocco and Algeria (Di Tota, 2015; Souiah, 2016). However, to this day, very few scholars have addressed the different ways in which the *harrag* figure is depicted in Algerian and Moroccan media discourse (Souiah, 2013, 2016; Belghazi, 2007, Carling, 2007), hence the necessity to examine the latter closely and juxtapose them with alternative narratives that challenge their assumptions regarding the *harga* phenomenon.

Since the mid 1990s, *harga* from Africa to Europe has not only been reported in news media accounts but it has also been thematised in a significant number of (North-)African

literary (non-)fiction of French expression.[56] Additionally, it has been explored thematically across a wide range of (North-)African cultural representations beyond the literary sphere, and has increasingly become a topic of utmost interest to scholars, especially in the field of 'Francophone' studies (Abderrezak, 2016). More particularly, emphasis has been placed on the multifacetedness of the Maghrebi and 'sub-Saharan' *Harrag* figure (Redouane, 2008, Mazauric, 2012). Among the leading scholarly publications is *Clandestins dans le texte maghrébin de langue française* (Redouane, 2008), which brings together academic contributions on the aesthetic representations of *harraga*'s experiences in literary narratives with a special focus on their "psychologies" and their so-called "departure syndrome". In this collaborative academic work, the authors argue that the act of 'burning' the Mediterranean Sea represents the *harraga*'s attempt to challenge the hegemony of 'Global North' exclusionary border regimes and consequently, the (neo)coloniality of migration policies. Although my focus is on digital rather than literary narratives, the contributors' insights illuminate my understanding of Algerian and Moroccan (would-be) *harraga*'s migratory desires, their subversive conceptions of the cross-border act, and its aftermath.

Claudine Lécrivain offers another insightful analysis of the Maghrebi *harraga*'s defiant re-mapping of their spatial identity. She convincingly argues that *harraga* creatively overcome the distance between two antagonistic spaces, i.e., the northern and the southern sides of the Mediterranean by adhering to what she calls "*une illusion scénique*" [a scenic illusion] (Lécrivain, 2014: 79). Through a close reading of four Moroccan novels of French expression, she aptly unveils the theatrical devices deployed by their authors and contends that the migratory project is carried out in a symbolic way via the *harrag*'s reverie mode, which transforms the contemplated northern coasts of the Mediterranean Sea into a 'stage' upon which their (imagined) new identity performances are enacted. To overcome their condition of stasis, the prospective migrants project themselves as actors imaginatively appropriating spaces that are

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[56] This study dispenses with the label 'francophone' as it has through time acquired neo-colonial undertones (Hargreaves, 2006). Although originally the expression 'francophone literature' was used to designate any literary production written in French, it has become widely used to refer to those produced by authors living outside Metropolitan France, i.e., by writers from the former French colonies (Katz, 2011). The term is inconsistent and misleading since not all authors using French as a medium of literary expression live outside France. Additionally, the adjective 'francophone' downplays the other languages that the 'francophone' writer masters, be they local variations of their mother tongue or other foreign languages. Even though I do not engage with French-speaking (North-)African authors in this thesis, my review of the existing literature encompasses references to some of their *harga*-centred works, hence the relevance of this comprehensive note. All references to the 'francophone' label will be henceforth placed between single quotation marks. I devote a section in Part Two on the (neo)coloniality of the French language in my discussion of collaborative writing involving 'sub-Saharan' migrants and Western authors.

denied to them in the 'fictive reality' of the novels. Although Lécrivain engages with the *harrag* as a literary construct, her creative conception of the 'scenic illusion' has inspired my analysis of *harga* dreamers' journeys *in situ* through their imaginary projections of a potential life in the fantasised Eldorado as conveyed in their digital posts.

In her 2012 monograph entitled *Mobilités D'Afrique en Europe: Récits et figures de l'aventure,* Catherine Mazauric examines a broad spectrum of (non-)fictional narratives composed by (North-)African and European writers in French, which depict *harraga* as adventurous 'journeyers' rather than 'illegal aliens' (as portrayed in mainstream media discourse). Mazauric reads *harraga*'s illegalised cross-border act as a heroic attempt and a form of resistance against the former colonisers' criminal bordering practices thereby displacing focus to the very source of migrant illegalisation. Mazauric weaves a thorough analysis of the migrant/adventurer while reflecting on the very etymology of the word *harrag*. She writes "*ils (harraga) grillent les frontières et* […] *brouillent les dimensions spatiales et symboliques*"[57] and in doing so, "*construisent leurs propres règles de voyage*"[58] (25). It is indeed by unsettling dominant migration representations that a number of (North-)African and European authors have attempted to challenge and thereby break away from the Euro-centric racialising narratives 'mounted' against the migrant 'other'. Undeniably, Mazauric's contribution to the critical literature on the literary delineations of *Harraga* offers "*des regards autres*"[59] [alternative gazes] *vis-à-vis* the *harga* phenomenon by inviting future researchers to further explore the ambivalent concept of the border (in its physical and symbolic manifestations), as well as its refashioning(s) in counter-discursive spaces. This argument is further fleshed out in her 2013 article "Portraits de l'Autre dans quelques récits de migration trans-mediterranéenne" wherein, as the title suggests, she explores the identity (re)constructions of 'sub-Saharan' migrants within transit spaces following their encounters with the Maghrebi 'Other'. Particularly noteworthy is her contention that, despite their differences, once on board of the dinghy, 'sub-Saharan' transmigrants and Maghrebi *harraga*—departing either from the northern coasts of Algeria or Morocco— experience the Mediterranean border in similar ways. Thus, by accounting for the different implications of the Mediterranean frontier, Mazauric stresses the importance of rethinking this liminal body of water at the threshold between two different continents in a postmodern context, while interrogating the place that literature holds in a globalised world.

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[57] [They burn borders and blur spatial and symbolic boundaries].
[58] [They construct their own cross-border rules].
[59] Ibid.

Mazauric's subversive postcolonial reflections on the figure of the *harrag* as hero/adventurer defying a historic enemy—the former coloniser—, lays the foundation for new deconstructive readings of mainstream discourse around unauthorised migration by extending the discussion to the context of the 'migrant crisis' in Europe. Drawing on her insights, I thus stretch the conversation around *harraga*'s subversive acts to the digital realm, and specifically transpose her 'border crisis' metaphor, to Facebook users' creative overturning of digital walls and appropriation of online spaces to visibilise their im-mobility and displacement narratives as these particular 'spaces' have remained, to my knowledge, largely uncharted. Additionally, I explore recently published co-authored testimonial accounts that deal more explicitly with migrant's condition of im-mobility and displacement while creatively engaging with their semantic potentialities, hence underscoring their complexity and multifacetedness.

Caterina Scarabicchi (2018) offers yet another significant research contribution centred on early 21st-century European cultural representations of *harga*. While acknowledging their import in making the migrant story heard across transnational borders, she nonetheless points out that such productions are problematic as they entail different forms of "ventriloquism" (111). Although, as she puts it, "borrowing the migrant's voice"[60] is initially an act of literary activism, it nonetheless reinforces neo-colonial power asymmetries as the cross-border narrative "remains controlled and orchestrated by EU authors".[61] As Scarabicchi rightly observes, the appropriation of the migrant's voice by a European artist may not necessarily empower or grant *harraga* a certain degree of agency, on the contrary, it culminates in further dramatising their victimised condition. Moreover, she demonstrates that in their attempt to re-humanise the border-burner, European artists often end up romanticising their journeys and in so doing, generate "fictional and highly mediated renditions of the migratory experience" (266). Notwithstanding their attempt to offer counter-hegemonic portrayals of the 'migrant Other', the literary, cinematic, and spatial narratives which Scarabicchi examines remain problematic spaces and their re-mapping of 'the migrant corner' is yet to be questioned. The author thus concludes that the majority of these texts are "doomed to confine the migrant's story to a *marginalizing corner*[62] in the present historical moment" (270), hence the need to displace the focus to narratives wherein the unauthorised migrant negotiates a certain degree of authority over their story (Leese, 2022). As such, this thesis aspires to widen the scope of narrative

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[60] Scarabicchi (2018: 111).
[61] Ibid.
[62] My emphasis.

analysis and further enrich the scholarly debates around migrants' immobilities and dis-location as experienced along their migratory journeys. Extending Scarabicchi's elaboration of the notion of ventriloquy to the context of co-authorship, I examine the neo-colonial dynamics undergirding the process of writing with or on behalf of the migrant, as well as the symbolic forms of bordering it entails in relation to the (re)construction of migrants' identities.

Along similar lines, albeit in a different context, Nahrain Al-Mousawi (2012) foregrounds (North-)African writers' investment in distinctly re-mapping the Mediterranean from the perspective of those who have attempted to cross it via unauthorised channels. Al-Mousawi's fundamental contribution to the existent research on *harga*-themed cultural representations is her examination of a migrant-centred literature produced mainly (but not exclusively) in Arabic. What particularly captivated my interest in Al-Mousawi's work is her observation that migration narratives do not depict migrant characters as being 'out of place', but rather "as part of a journey, with roots and a prior identity, allowing for the mapping of an interdependent relationship of uneven development that connects the Northern and the Southern shores" (33). While aligning with the second part of her argument related to North-South power asymmetries, this thesis nonetheless purports to offer an alternative reading to (would-be) *harraga*'s condition in pre-, post-, and transit spaces. I proceed by testing the hypothesis that Maghrebi *harraga* do feel 'out of place', always already displaced both in the '(m)other nation' and on the 'Other' side of the Mediterranean through the analysis of their digital narratives. This 'neither here nor there' interplay is explored in depth with reference to their language practices and their symbolic spatial reconfigurations. In this way, I further complexify the metaphorics of the Mediterranean Sea as an ambivalent space mediating two problematic conditions of (would-be) *harraga*'s unplaceability.

Complementing both Scarabicchi and Al-Mousawi's views, Hakim Abderrezak's(2016) critical insights on the Mediterranean Sea as a fertile locus of theories interrogating the counter-narrative potential of Maghrebi *harga*-focused cultural representations are equally fundamental to my examination of *harraga*'s online shared Mediterranean imaginaries. Throughout his analysis, Abderrezak demonstrates that early 21st-century representations of *harga* in Maghrebi 'illiterature', cinema, and music radically diverge from the reductive accounts disseminated by mainstream media of this phenomenon. At the centre of his explorative study lies the question of how the "white middle Sea" (223) has been transfigured into a maritime zone of conflict, or as he metaphorically describes it, a "seametery" (72) entombing the countless migrants who perish in its depths. Further, Abderrezak calls for a margin to centre shift (a change of position,

as it were) of the Mediterranean Sea and 'its burners' within the framework of international migration studies. He argues that an in-depth investigation of Maghrebi *harraga*'s stories can offer a revisionary reading of the *harrag* figure, thereby rehabilitating its status. Clearly, the title of his book—*Ex-Centric Migrations: Europe and the Maghreb in Mediterranean Cinema, Literature, and Music*—encapsulates this instance of gaze 'dis-placement'. It is worth pointing out that in spite of the comprehensive nature of his study, Abderrezak nonetheless privileges Moroccan cultural renditions of the *hrig* phenomenon (over other Maghrebi representations) focusing on early 21st century and hence pre-'migrant crisis' literary, musical, and cinematic productions. He revisits the latter productions while reflecting on the 'migrant crisis' events rather than analyse them against its backdrop.

Using an interdisciplinary lens, Souiah et al. (2018) further enrich the discussion on Maghrebi cultural narratives by focusing critical attention on the different ways in which the *harga* phenomenon is depicted in a selection of Algerian novels, Tunisian films, and *harraga*'s online spaces. By incorporating examples of digital narratives, the authors offer new and indispensable gateways through which to view *harraga*'s self-representations and migratory imaginaries. Building on the authors' findings, I extend the scholarly discourse by examining *harraga*'s digitally mediated narrativisations of their experiences of im-mobility and deterritorialisation by mobilising a larger multimodal corpus, incorporating the Moroccan migratory context and highlighting the decolonial dimensions of their digital representations.

Whilst most of the scholarship has thus far predominantly focused on representations of *harraga*'s imaginary spatial re-configurations and the different fashions of their (self-activated) mobilities as conveyed in (North-)African illiterature, very few studies have foregrounded *immobility* as a multifaceted concept, phenomenon, and condition despite being an integral part of any migration process (Salazar, 2020). Although bound within the realm of literary discourse, Mariangela Palladino's (2018) exploration of US-based Moroccan author Laila Lalami's *harga*-centred 2006 novel, *Of Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*, illuminates key aspects regarding the fruitful transformations generated, paradoxically, by the characters' 'forced immobility' after their failure to migrate to Spain. In Palladino's view, the characters' reconciliation with a once undesired condition could be read as "a disjunction with dominant migration discourses" (Palladino 2018) on the one hand, and as a postcolonial "rupture with past structures of domination" (Clifford, 1994: 302, cited in Palladino, 2018: 85) on the other. Additionally, I apply her re-elaboration of the 'trip *in situ*' metaphor to my reading of *harga* dreamers' digital

projections of their European imaginaries, specifically highlighting the therapeutic potential of these practices.

Overall, the cited critical contributions are invaluable for an understanding of the ambiguous patterns of *harraga*'s (im)mobility as re-constructed in (non)fictional narratives on both sides of the Mediterranean. However, broadening these perspectives by exploring more representative as well as more recent non-fiction, documentary-like *hrig*-centred narratives, and transcending the semantic 'borders' of *mobility*, *immobility*, and *dis-placement* is essential for drawing a more comprehensive picture of *harraga*'s complex migratory imaginaries and practices in a globalised yet intensely bordered world.

Im-mobility (counter-)narratives through an interdisciplinary lens: Theoretical, conceptual, and methodological frameworks

The neo-colonial dynamics underpinning contemporary (North-)African *harga* to Europe should be examined in light of the "(im)mobility regime" (Schiller, 2013; Souiah, 2019) framing 'South-North' migration governance. Indeed, the phrase "(im)mobility regime" encompasses states' implementation and perpetual reinforcement of border *policies, practices and discourses*[63] and thus entails the incorporation of both the *symbolic* as well as the *material*[64] dimensions of *harraga*'s immobilisation across different spaces, that is, in pre-, post-migratory spaces, and the transit hubs in between. As established earlier, in the past two decades, increasing scholarly attention has been devoted to the study of the different forms of bordering to which 'Global South' citizens have been subjected as a consequence of the imposition of the Schengen visa policies and Europe's externalisation of its borders to its former colonies in the Southern Mediterranean. From a state-centred viewpoint, immobility as a spatial and temporal bordering mechanism (Jacobsen et al., 2020) manifests under myriad forms and across three distinct spaces: stringent regulations governing would-be migrants' exits, racialising policies framing approaches to transit migration, and migrants' interception and arrest along unauthorised routes, and "non-arrival regimes" (Castles, 2003: 14)—detention, waiting, deportation— in EU destination countries. Thus, illuminating my analysis of 'sub-Saharan' and Maghrebi *harraga*'s narrativisation of their border experiences are the conceptual lenses of 'forced' (Stock, 2019) and 'involuntary immobility' (Carling, 2002), respectively. The adjectives 'forced' and 'involuntary' though seemingly interchangeable, carry subtle semantic

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[63] My emphasis.
[64] My emphasis.

differences, which impact the ways in which they are interpreted and applied particularly in relation to (unauthorised) migration patterns. Building on her fieldwork observations of the precarious lives of 'sub-Saharan' migrants stuck in Morocco, Inka Stock conceptualised forced immobility as a condition in which individuals are systematically restricted from movement owing to socio-political, economic, and language barriers outside their origin country. Relying on testimonial evidence, Stock aptly demonstrates that 'sub-Saharan' *harraga* feel 'trapped' in transit, and thus unable to cross into Europe owing to their doubly bordered condition—as non-citizens and potential 'illegal'(ised) border-passengers. Drawing on Stock's insights, I examine forced immobility as a central theme in the selected co-authored testimonials and analyse the ways in which it is transposed into narrative form. I also extend the analysis of the 'transit trap' trope to my examination of Moroccan and Algerian hegemonic actors' strategies of discursive 'entrapment', instrumentalising 'sub-Saharan' *harraga*'s 'transit' status to dis-place them to the margins of *un*-representation. The notion of 'involuntary immobility' applies more to Moroccan and Algerian would-be *harraga* as it aptly translates their 'desire' to migrate while also accounting for their inability to materialise this aspiration due to the draconian Maghreb-EU immobility regime. Informed by Carling's postulations that would-be migrants are unable to fulfil their migratory aspirations owing to their already economically, socially, and politically bordered condition in their origin country, I advance the argument that involuntary immobility is not merely the consequence of states' restrictions on people's movements but that it could be understood as a more severe form of 'immotility', or 'incapacity' to move beyond one's limited "centre of gravity" (Schewel, 2019: 329). In doing so, I foreground the ensuing feelings of '*3ajz*' (an extreme form of powerlessness) and prison-like entrapment experienced and narrated by *harga* dreamers on digital platforms.

Further, what is particularly pertinent in Carling's argument is the implied notion of volition or will to cross borders, which I elaborate upon in my analysis of *harga* dreamers' migratory imaginaries and the ways in which they transcend their feelings of 'stuckedness' through what I refer to as 'wilful and wakeful waiting'—a conceptual combination inspired by Sarah Ahmed's (2014: 21) notion of "wilful subjects" and Shahram Khosravi's (2020: 205) distinctive formulation of "wakeful navigation". Both the concepts of 'wilfulness' and 'wakefulness' entail myriad forms of subjective and collective resistance, resilience, and agency while also alluding to political acts of border contestation and subversion mediated by the forces of consciousness and "vigilance" (Khosravi, 2020: 206) or attentiveness to the potentialities of 'not-yet-ness'. Although I slightly dis-place these two conceptual lenses to the North African

harga context and apply them to a religion-informed reading of would-be *harraga*'s border imaginaries and practices, the findings they yield are, I believe, invaluable to appreciate the counter-narrative potential and hence the decolonial character of their digital discourses.

To further underscore would-be *harraga*'s temporary strategies of resistance against their state-induced immobility in their pre-migration environments, I draw on Noel Salazar's (2020) theorisations of the interrelated notions of mobility, immobility, and imagination by specifically investing the latter concept in my analysis of the fluid boundary characterising *harga* dreamers' im-mobile journeys. Challenging traditional anthropological takes on mobility and immobility, Salazar argues that the former is an integral part of the latter and therefore, neither should be studied in isolation, given their intrinsic interconnectedness. In light of this, I deploy Gilles Deleuze's (1995) conceptual fusion of motion/motionlessness—which he conveys in his 'trips *in situ*' metaphor—to read *harga* dreamers' digitally projected 'imaginary displacements' (Appadurai, 1988). These immobile voyages occur *in loco* and are deeply transformative, or, as Deleuze (1995: 11) puts it, "are trips in intensity", momentarily altering the state of being of the virtual journeyer into one of becoming.

Moreover, as my analysis equally incorporates the digitally mediated narrativisation of *harraga*'s cross-border movements along with their imaginary renditions, I elaborate on their strategies of immobility resistance by looking into the ways in which they document their subversive movements (Squire, 2022) across the Western Mediterranean border. In this context, the autonomy of migration approach (Mezzadra & Nielson, 2014; Mezzadra, 2011; Papadopoulos et al, 2008) is a potent lens through which to "advanc[e] perspectives that foreground the subjectivity of migrant mobilities" (De Genova et al, 2018: 241) and view illegalised migration as a "creative […] and productive"[65] force whereby *harraga* challenge the neo-colonial border regime. The latter's resistance to material forms of both state-induced immobilism and the EU's racialising border mechanisms draws attention to their agency as autonomous subjects defying South-North space-time inequalities. This spirit of border contestation could be further illuminated by Martina Tazzioli's (2015) theorisation of 'counter-mapping', which she defines as a set of subjective practices whereby unauthorised migrants reverse the order of hegemonic cartography by (re-)imagining, re-purposing, creating, and opting for alternative maps to cross to "Fortress Europe" (Casas et al., 2015). Drawing on these insights, I specifically engage with (would-be) *harraga*'s creative re-uses of already established

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[65] Ibid.

maps and the new meanings they infuse into them in a bid to counter-narrate the normative cartographic regime. That said, my autonomy of migration-informed analysis of *harraga*'s im-mobilities eschews both a romantic conceptualisation of their journeys as well as a mechanistic reading of their migratory projects, which "treat [them] as […] inert objects at the mercy of the 'push' and 'pull' of structural forces" (De Genova, 2018: 241).

Further reinforcing the theoretical import of autonomy of migration and facilitating its application are recent developments in digital migration studies, which aim to highlight the agency-enhancing opportunities (Ponzanesi & Leurs, 2022) that digital technology provides to migrants. With its focus on migrants' digital migration practices along with their subjective and affective dimensions, digital migration scholarship has sought to challenge the dominant narrative around illegalised migration as a "crisis, invasion, and/or problem".[66] As such, reading *harga* through the lens of autonomy and with a specific focus placed on *harraga*'s appropriation of the digital sphere—as a potential site for the contestation and subversion of borders[67]—generates novel perspectives on how they creatively overcome their immobility. In this way, the digital interface becomes a promising entry point through which to view their personalised "border imagery" (Risam, 2022) and "imaginaries" (Salazar, 2020) ,as well as their resistance practices against the Maghreb-EU immobility regime. Additionally, drawing on the theoretical premises undergirding digital migration studies allows for a gaze displacement from the image of the immobilised migrant as a "screened" object as constructed by hegemonic biometric discourses to that of the hyper-connected subject (Ponzanesi, 2019; Diminescu, 2008) subversively navigating online spaces to further migratory aims.

Relatedly, migrants' increasing use of digital communication channels has facilitated the establishment of different forms of "digital connectivity" (Panzanesi, 2019: 549) through the building of online mediated diasporic communities, or "diasberspace[s]" (Huc-Hepher, 2016), enabling thereby the consolidation of solidarity and feelings of belongingness (Ponzanesi & Leurs, 2022). Arguably, the borderless quality of social media platforms equally makes possible the articulation of alternative aesthetic and political engagements with migrant death through the creative re-purposing of immobile/immobilised body imagery, triggering online spectators' feelings of empathy (Ibrahim, 2018). In this way, digital spaces enable the generation and dissemination of potential alternative narratives around the (un)grievability (Butler, 2016; Mazzara, 2020) of migrant lives. Thus, following these interdisciplinary insights, I read

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[66] Ponzanesi & Leurs (2022: 103).
[67] Ibid.

harraga's Facebook pages and YouTube-shared narrative videos as sites wherein dead *harraga* are granted 'authority' as their individual cross-border stories are posted and circulated by *harga* page administrators (henceforth referred to as 'admins'), liked and commented upon by followers, and, as a result, become storable data, which can be (re)-accessed by social media users. Therefore, complementing digital migration scholars' premises regarding migrants' cyber resistance are the theoretical perspectives advanced by researchers in digital memory studies concerning the "inherently archival nature […] of the memory of the multitude", which Andrew Hoskins (2017: 3) conceptualises as "the defining digital organisational form of memory"[68] characterising the 21st century. In his view, digital memory—unlike traditional forms of archives which are, as he puts it, "locatable, […] institutional, […] and external to the self"[69]—is rather hybrid as it blurs the distinction between the public and the private, the symbolic and the material (Huc-Hepher, 2015), offering fluid ways of storing "individual, social, and cultural imaginaries" (Hoskins, 2017: 4) through hyperconnectivity. While foregrounding the (counter) archival potentialities of social media spaces, I also account for the paradoxes inherent in digital memory when examining the im-mobility dynamics of *harraga*'s stories. I particularly draw on Hoskins' (2018b) contention that digital content, regardless of its form, is contingent upon users' connection activities and re-search efforts to re-activate it, hence the problematic status of *harraga*'s social-media-shared counter-narratives. Thus, aligning with both 'the immobility turn' in migration studies and 'the connective turn' in media and memory studies, this thesis seeks to advance the discussion around migrants' digitally mediated border imaginaries and practices in a bid to foreground alternative gazes on *harga* to Europe.

Prior to this, I referred to the threefold nature of the 'immobility regime' as an amalgamation of policies, practices, and discourses and thus far, I have mapped the theoretical and conceptual constellations informing my reading of the former two dimensions as well as *harraga*'s ways of resisting hegemonic bordering practices. Migrant immobilisation also occurs at the level of representation as illustrated by Kevin Smets' (2019) concept of "symbolic immobility", which centres not "so much on bodily [non] movement" (653) but rather on how "fixedness" is experienced at the discursive level. The strategic confinement of unauthorised migrants in "mediated representations […] by societal actors"[70] is at the heart of Smets' semantic reconfiguration of immobility. Thus building on his conceptual elaboration, I read

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[68] Ibid., p.1.
[69] Hoskins (2017: 4).
[70] Smets (2019: 656-657).

Moroccan and Algerian hegemonic representations of *harraga* as forms of symbolic immobilisation, which freeze them in dehumanising metonymic constructions, reducing thereby their complex stories into moving fragments of sensationalist news. In so doing, I weave together two interconnected concepts—symbolic immobility and "metonymic freezing" (Appadurai, 1988: 36)—from distinct disciplines into a productive reading of hegemonic narratives around (North-)African *harga* to Europe. Relatedly, Lilie Chouliaraki (2017) proposes the concept of "symbolic bordering" in her critical examination of Western news media's appropriation of migrant selfies, which she defines as a "technolog[y] of power" (81) that serves to reinforce "orientalist […] narratives" (86) through editorial reframing strategies. Although her analysis centres on Western media outlets' re-use or "remediation" of migrants' "digital testimonies" (78) and the power hierarchies that underpin such hegemonic practices, I apply her conception of symbolic bordering to my reading of the co-authored testimonials with a view to demonstrating the extent to which collaborative writing involving a Western author and a 'sub-Saharan' migrant entails a manipulation of the latter's story, and hence practices of voice-displacement. In this sense, writing for or with the migrant can be problematic as the latter's story can be 'rescued' from the abyss of invisibility provided that it is composed in French and published and marketed in European "spaces of publicity" (78).

Symbolic bordering, as Chouliaraki aptly demonstrates, albeit in a different context, translates into forms of "ventrilocation" (90) of migrants' testimonies, or voice appropriation, hence the im-mobilising dynamics of remediation. These fruitful conceptual perspectives are supplemented with another equally important dimension related to the multifarious nuances of im-mobility and dis-placement, namely the (de-)coloniality of language. Two specific aspects are examined within the larger framework of Decolonial Thinking (Quijano, 2000; Mignolo, 2007): the im-mobility power of the French language and the decoloniality of *harraga*'s translingual practices.

Before I lay out the theoretical premises governing my analysis of the neo- and decolonial politics of the representation actors' language practices and their implications on the (non)circulation of (North-)African *harraga*'s im-mobility narratives, it is important to reiterate that the rationale behind my choice of this interdisciplinary framework is informed by my positionality as a 'southern' multilingual researcher working across two academic settings, in Tunisia and the United Kingdom, teaching English studies in the former and specialising in applied languages in the latter. Thus, as a 'Global South' researcher affiliated with a 'northern' institution, I take it to be my ethical duty to advocate for decolonial perspectives, and more

specifically, foreground alternative ways of engaging with *harraga*'s narratives while critically questioning the ongoing coloniality of language (Quijano, 2000; Veronelli, 2015) and exploring subversive ways of challenging it.

For the past thirty years, 'the modernity/coloniality-decoloniality' collective project—"a network of US Latina/Latin American, and Caribbean scholars from a variety of disciplines" (Veronelli, 2015: 109)—has explored the ramifications of an epistemic "decolonial turn" (Mignolo, 2011: 47), which entailed "a de-linking from the modern, political episteme articulated as right, centre, and left"[71] and a subsequent "opening towards another thing, on the march, searching for itself in the difference".[72] As such, this approach foregrounds the perspectives, life experiences, and subjective histories and languages of peoples from the 'Global South' with a view to critiquing "the failures of Euro-centred modernity" (Veronelli, 2015: 109). By accounting for the "pluri-versity of many local histories" (Mignolo, 2011a: 44), and thus de-centring (Mignolo, 2007) northern historiography, decolonial scholars engage in what Aníbal Quijano (1991) calls "*Desprenderse*" or "epistemic disobedience".[73] While prioritising previously bordered or distorted knowledges, decolonial scholarship also unpacks the residues of colonialism on contemporary postcolonial social, political, and cultural structures. Amid the rubble of imperial remnants (Stoler, 2013), the coloniality of language persists perpetuating the (mis-)conception of postcolonial subjects as 'inferior' or "simple communicators" (Veronelli, 2015: 118) owing to the limited mobility power of their indigenous languages. Building on these premises, I examine the undergirding politics of co-authorship through a specific focus on the problematic dimension of the French language as a means to 'rescue' and hence disseminate the subaltern's testimony, and how this process ultimately 'dis-members' the very story it seeks to preserve (Thiong' O, 2009). Thus, the decolonial conceptual framework offers a potent lens through which to discuss the relation between race and language (Veronelli, 2015) and the neo-colonial power asymmetries underpinning the collaborative production of the migrant's story, as well as their implications on its (im)mobility across transnational borders. Along these lines, I present a metaphorical reading of the complex dual dimension of the French language as border/bridge.

In essence, decolonial praxis (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018) extends beyond scholarly practices of epistemic de-linking (Mignolo, 2007) to incorporate previously silenced

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[71] Mignolo (2011:50).
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid, p.45.

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epistemologies and in doing so, celebrates the vibrant plurality and the profound differences that define our shared humanity. As Maldonado-Torres (2016) observes, decoloniality dismantles hierarchies based on difference and produces "counter-discourses, counter-knowledges, counter-creative acts, and counter-practices that […] open up forms of being in the world" (10). In this vein, (would-be) *harraga*'s digitally mediated reflections on their im-mobility and symbolic and material dis-placements using their Arabic dialects or playful hybridisations of the latter and the French language, could be read as subversive translingual acts whereby they defy the enduring coloniality of language. Extending Gabriela A. Veronelli's argument regarding the 'de-coloniality' of language, I examine *harraga*'s (counter-)narratives as forms of linguistic disobedience or 'dissensus', to use Jacques Rancière (2009) phrase, thereby drawing attention to their plural and dynamic identities as they appear on the digital interface. Accordingly, this pastiche-like theoretical and conceptual framework, albeit relying on both 'northern' and 'southern' scholarly references, is deemed fitting for the examination of the mosaic of (counter-)narratives emerging from the southern side of the Mediterranean around (North-)African *harga* to Europe.

Furthermore, in order to explore and examine the variety of (counter-)narratives selected for this study, I relied on a time-bound, multi-method qualitative research design that incorporates the analysis and interpretation of a comprehensive multimodal corpus. The latter encompasses a variety of Algerian and Moroccan mainstream online news texts, images and footage, testimonial accounts co-authored by 'sub-Saharan' migrants and Western journalists and anthropologists, as well as digital hypershort (counter-)stories, visuals and videos posted online by Algerian and Moroccan (would-be) *harraga*. Indeed, the heterogeneity of the selected sources not only captures the multifarious articulations of the multifaceted phenomenon of unauthorised migration, but also contributes to mitigating biases that might arise from a homogeneous unimodal (text-based only) corpus. As Ruth Breeze (2014: 304) rightly observes, "by focusing so narrowly on the written text, we are not doing justice to the […] phenomenon [under investigation] in its fullest manifestation". Therefore, factoring in other "semiotic resources"—(static and moving) images, sound, colour, layout, symbols and gestures—(Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; Kress, 2012) in the construal of particular discursive or narrative acts allowed for a more rigorous understanding of the topic under discussion. More importantly, in this research context, images also play a storytelling function or as Maud Pérez-Simon (2020)

puts it, "l'image [est] narrative et narratrice" (para.2)[74]. He argues that images contribute in the organisation of events, the establishment of connections with the reader/viewer, providing thereby explanations, supporting ideological messages, and conveying a wide range of emotions.[75] As such, images can take on the role of the narrator, hence their analytical and methodological significance in the present study.

By engaging with a wide variety of 'modes' (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001) conveyed via diverse genres and across different 'spaces'—media platforms, co-authored and digitally mediated migrants' testimonials—this thesis offers a versatile, multi-perspectival, and hence nuanced insights into the representational intricacies of illegalised migration. In Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen's view (2001), "modes" are resources, which enable the simultaneous production of discourses "on the page or the screen [and their distribution] to their addressees" (Breeze, 2014: 304). In my analysis, I particularly drew on the multimodal method[76] to account for the interplay between the textual and audio-visual sources selected for this study, in the *formation* and *disruption*[77] of narratives around unauthorised migration.

As mentioned prior to this, the primary sources were produced and published between 2015 and 2019—a timespan beginning with the 'migrant crisis' in Europe and ending a year before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. This time period was characterised by an unprecedented media coverage on both sides of the Mediterranean of the phenomenon of (North-)African-European unauthorised migrations, as well as a concomitant production of narratives that aimed to counterbalance the often dehumanising portrayals of *harraga*. As the foci of my study are migration representations generated in and about Algeria and Morocco as pre-, transit or post-migratory spaces, data selection meant carefully incorporating media outlets, which were (and still are) widely viewed by the aforementioned countries' local audiences, having a substantial impact on public opinion. I first carried out a google search to identify and select mainstream[78] news channels that broadcast their content on YouTube like

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[74] [Images are both stories and storytellers]. My translation.
[75] Ibid. Translated from French.
[76] In their book *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* (2020), Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen elaborate on Michael Halliday's Systemic Functional Theory (SFT)—which explores the interaction of language and non-linguistic resources in the production of meaning—by specifically examining the connections between visual semiotic resources as well as the meanings they generate when grounded in a particular context. In their proposed framework, Kress and van Leewen also develop the concepts of composition, modality, and framing (Jewitt, 2009, 2014), and discuss the potential of multimodal designs in communicating discourses and ideologies.
[77] My emphasis.
[78] It is important to note that with the advent of the digital age, the meaning of 'mainstream media' has shifted, expanding beyond traditional outlets (e.g., newspapers, cable news) as a growing number of televison and radio channels have transitioned to online streaming. The news outlets selected for this study tend to align with the

2M Maroc, E-Chourouk, and An-Nahar TV among others, owing to their accessibility. Indeed, some Moroccan and Algerian news portals operate on a subscription-based model or are geographically restricted, limiting thereby access to their content for a 'glocal' (global and local) audience who may not afford to pay for their services. For this reason, these outlets were excluded from the study corpus.

Accordingly, I opted for free-access news platforms as they could be viewed by anyone and at any time, making their material visible than others, and thus more impactful. The audio-visual content was retrieved by entering keywords like '*hijra ghair char3ia*' [illegal migration], '*hijra ghair mounadhama*' [irregular migration], '*migration clandestine*' [clandestine migration], '*harraga*', '*operations de rapatriement de migrants irréguliers*' [repatriation operations of irregular migrants] into the YouTube search function. I have also navigated a number of bi/multilingual newspapers' websites, which cater to a wide and varied readership like *Algérie 360 (Algerie360.com)*; *le jour d'Algérie (lejourdalgerie.com), Hespress, Le Matin and liberation.ma* (Morocco) among others, and selected news articles, which report on unauthorised migration. Some of the illustrative photographs of the latter sources featuring Algerian, Moroccan, and/or 'sub-Saharan' migrants in a condition of im-mobility and displacement were equally incorporated into the media corpus. The data was then organised, coded in terms of the different nuances of im-mobility/immobilisation and dislocation tropes, then divided into sub-themes (e.g., arrest, interception, death). After having identified the recurrent thematic patterns and terminological (mis)uses in the construction of illegalised migrants and their Mediterranean journeys, I analysed the sources with reference to the socio-political and legal contexts of Morocco and Algeria within the selected timeframe.

Having mapped the media and "policyscapes" (Mettler, 2016) of the aforementioned countries as part of the dominant narrative around illegalised migration, I set out to look for documentary narratives (co-)authored by 'sub-Saharan', Algerian and, Moroccan *harraga* with Maghrebi or Western writers. Owing to the limited scope of this thesis and its thematic focus on immobility, I decided to examine the three co-authored testimonial accounts mentioned earlier, prioritising depth over breadth. I performed a close reading of the sources and meticulously organised the selected quotes with the thematic focus in mind and thoroughly examined them by accounting for the contextual specificities of production and publication. As far as Part Three is concerned, data collection, extraction, and analysis were also carried out via

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official geovernment narrative at least insofar as migration-related matters are concerned, while also catering to a broad audience.

keyword search like '*harraga Algérie*', '*harga Maroc*', among others, using Roman/Latin and Arabic Alphabet, on both Facebook and YouTube. The rationale behind my choice of public Facebook pages was grounded in ethical considerations related to privacy of shared content as well as copyright issues. All the selected *harga* Facebook pages and YouTube channels are accessible to the general public and, to my knowledge, do not raise ethical concerns.[79] Scrolling through the selected pages, I took screenshots of photographs, caricatures, music, and selfie videos and subsequently organised them into themes and sub-themes following the method deployed in Parts One and Two.

While in Part Two prominence was given to the textual content over for instance, the books' front covers and the authors' promotional videos (the paratextual elements)[80], in Parts One and Three, which deal with media and digital representations respectively, texts, images, sound, music videos, as well as gestures were given equal consideration on account of their significant contribution for meaning-making (Kress & Leeuwen, 2001). Each part closes with a synthesis of the findings related to immobility tropes, their (counter-)narrative potential, the possible impact of the content on target audience, as well as a critical reflection on the notion of 'crisis' with regards migration representation.

Further, the curated data was scrutinised with careful attention to the complexity of its content, structure as well as the stylistic formulae used to construct Algerian, Moroccan, and 'sub-Saharan' *harraga*'s im-mobilities. In a symbiotic partnership, I deployed Critical Discourse (CDA) and Narrative Analysis (NA) (Souto-Manning, 2014) to examine the arsenal of terms used to (counter-) narrate migrants' journeys from (North-)Africa to EU-rope as well as to identify the recurrent im-mobility and displacement tropes used to (re)construct migrants' identities in the selected multimodal texts. This analytical approach combination— resulting in Critical Narrative Analysis (henceforth referred to as CNA)— was deemed fitting as both methodological frameworks (CDA and NA) value the context wherein the narratives were produced (Fairclough, 2013) and foreground the layeredness and complexity of the narrated experiences offering thereby a rather holistic view of unauthorised migration 'representation'

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[79] Even though the selected Facebook pages are publicly accessible, I have taken precautions to protect users' identities by redacting names (retaining only pseudonyms or page names) and partially blurring the faces of individuals in the photographs that I retrieved and (re)used for the purpose of analysis.

[80] It is important to underscore that paratextual elements are inherently multimodal as they encompass interviews, promotional videos, illustrative maps, and photographs. Although the multimodal approach is more prominently applied in Parts One and Three, its application in Part Two is more limited. This is primarily due to the extensive focus on textual analysis, which constrained the scope for engaging with the interaction of modes composing the testimonial accounts' paratextual environments.

and communication[81] whilst attending to the significance of addressees or sign-recipients' (potential) responses (Kress, 2009). While CDA is "a powerful tool to study social phenomena" (Wood and Kroger 2000, referenced in Souto-Manning, 2014:160) through language in use, NA (Riessman, 2008) is a valuable method to investigate how both institutions and individuals "make sense of the world" through linguistic expression (Van Dick, 1993; Souto-Manning, 2014) and the narratives they construct in the process. Similarly, NA offers vigorous ways of assessing the different narrative components constituting the selected texts regardless of their generic identity. In the data analysis phase, special emphasis was placed on constructs like narrative structure, focalisation (Genette, 1980), and positioning given the multi-angled character of the selected (counter-)narratives. As such, CNA—as a hybrid qualitative methodological framework—enabled me to "bring together the micro (personal) and the macro (social or institutional) views to the forefront, connect small-scale events […] and broader discourses and contexts [illuminating thereby complex] meaning-making processes"[82]. CNA thus facilitated the deconstruction and "demystifi[cation] [of] the social construction of reality, […] and [the reframing of] social interactions as places for norms to be [exposed,] challenged and changed".[83] As Uwe Flick (2007) aptly notes, a multiple method qualitative approach is effective especially when dealing with a plurality of communicative modes as it offers a deeper and thorough understanding of the subject matter under investigation compared to a single-method research design. It equally preserves the consistency and cohesiveness of the research topic throughout the data collection, extraction, and analysis phases.

Moreover, as van Hulst et al. (2024) contend, CNA smoothly operates within the interpretivist paradigm as it yields a rich set of meanings and readings valuing situated perspectives and knowledges. As such, this paradigm enhanced my examination of the religious allusions woven in the *harraga*'s testimonial narratives and thereby illuminated socio-cultural understandings of the migratory phenomenon, as well as its symbolic dimensions. The rationale behind my selection of the aforementioned multi-method qualitative research design was that it rendered data analysis and interpretation a flexible and creative process. Additionally, the

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[81] Gunther Kress's (2008) distinction between *representation* and *communication* elucidates how media (or other) content is both created and received. While representation refers to the ways in which the depiction of events, people, or ideas is shaped by the creator's interests, cultural context, ideological stance and intentions, communication focuses on how these constructions are made available to an audience, influencing the ways in which they interpret and (then) engage with them. As such, communication involves placing the meanings that have been materialised as signs (or texts) into a relationship with others in the environment, making them known to a target recipient.

[82] Souto-Manning (2014: 163).

[83] Ibid.

combined methodological frameworks were deemed appropriate due to their potential to provide a comprehensive understanding of the varied constructions of im-mobility and displacement experienced by unauthorised migrants along their cross-border journeys regardless of the generic differences of the selected narratives and the media wherein they were articulated and through which they were distributed.

While valuable, flexible, and insightful, together the interpretivist approach and Multimodal CNA have several limitations. First, the collected data is non-exhaustive and hence limitedly representative of the complex phenomenon of illegalised migration from (North-) Africa to Europe. Subsequently, the research findings cannot be generalisable to broader populations (in 'sub-Saharan' Africa and the Maghreb) owing to its focus on Algeria and Morocco, and its specific attention to the notions of im-mobility, dis-placement, and crisis. Being integral parts of a qualitative research design, the aforementioned methodological frameworks generated (often) lengthy analyses and complicated at times the process of synthesis due to the heterogeneity of the collected data. Similarly, the coding and thematic (sub-)division of the curated sources proved to be exceptionally time-consuming. The sheer volume of the data required careful attention to detail in order to ensure consistency and accuracy during the analytical process. Further, repeated adjustments were required to maintain a systematic thematic organisation and to avoid redundancy and confusion. Resultantly, this considerably prolonged the analysis phase beyond the initially allotted timeframe and thus affected the timeline set for the interpretation and synthesis of the research findings.

As outlined earlier, initially this study aimed to incorporate both the Tunisian migratory landscape and the narratives of female *harraga* from 'sub-Saharan' Africa and the Maghreb. However, given the limited scope of this thesis, the complexity of these migratory dynamics, and the scarcity of both im-mobility-themed co-authored testimonials and digital narratives shared by female migrants in online spaces, I decided to exclude these aspects. While the inclusion of the gender perspective could have substantially enriched the research, this decision was made to ensure focus and consistency. That said, further research is warranted in these areas.

Notwithstanding the constraints of the study's dataset and the limitations inherent in qualitative multimodal CNA and the interpretivist approach, the findings offer multiple ways of engaging with the (counter-)narratives surrounding *harga* through a specific thematic focus on migrants' im-mobility, dis-placement, and crisis. In both Parts two and Three, I juxtaposed the findings to the ones presented in Part One and assessed the extent to which the co-authored and

digitally mediated testimonials (respectively) serve as counter-gazes to the media representations of unauthorised migration.

Thesis Outline

In order to address thoroughly the research questions, this thesis unfolds in three distinct and multi-layered parts, each reflecting the complex and composite nature of narrative-focused migration research. The analytical content is structured into three consecutive parts (One, Two, and Three). This tripartite thematic structure is informed by the genre of and the space(s) wherein the selected (counter-)narratives were produced, namely mainstream media, co-authored testimonials, and digital hypershort stories, respectively. Each of the three parts elaborates on the patchwork-like composition of the (counter-)narratives in its own unique way, offering a fresh perspective on the phenomenon of *harga* from different angles. Further, the title of each part idiosyncratically encapsulates the multifarious semantic nuances of im-mobility, dis-placement, and crisis, the latter two being integral parts of the former. As its title suggests, Part One 'places the lens' on Moroccan and Algerian mainstream media outlets' representations of *harga* by applying the concepts of "symbolic immobility" (Smets, 2019) and "metonymic freezing" (Appadurai, 1988) to examine the ways in which *harraga* are essentialised in dehumanising constructions and hence dis-placed to the margins of representation. This thematic part concludes with a critical reflection on the two Maghrebi countries' 'crisis' of hospitality towards 'sub-Saharan' migrants and their flagrant migration misgovernance in a broader sense. Featuring two chapters, it first screens the Maghreb-EU immobility regime by mapping Algeria and Morocco's policy and 'mediascapes'[84] offering thereby a clearer understanding of the intricate and contingent relationship between migration policy discourses and the media's role in consolidating the narratives they generate. This examination thus provides insight into the politics of unauthorised migration representation in these two North-African contexts. While Chapter One examines the immobilising impact of laws and labels on 'sub-Saharan' *harraga*, Chapter Two builds on the former by stretching the analysis to

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[84] Popularised by prominent Indian-American anthropologist Arjun Appadurai in his framework for understanding the dynamics of global cultural flows established in his influential essay "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy" (1990), the concept of 'mediascape' particularly refers to the transnational distribution of media content and the ways in which it impacts socio-political and cultural realities. The suffix '*scape*'—originating from the word '*landscape*'—encapsulates the interconnection between the sender, message, and the receiver and influences the ways we view the media scene and engage with the multifarious narratives emanating from it. In the context of the present qualitative research, the term '*mediascape*' is, I believe, well-suited as it incorporates both the macro and micro levels of analysis and effectively captures the fluid interplay of media infrastructures, content, and audience interaction with the content disseminated by mainstream media outlets in Morocco and Algeria.

encompass the strategies used by hegemonic actors to deter (would-be) *harraga* of Moroccan and Algerian origins from undertaking the illegalised journey to Europe through a specific focus on the tropes of migrant interception, arrest, rescue, and death. This chapter closes with a critical examination of the *double-entendre* of the 'moving' potential of images of *harraga*'s dead bodies, as well as a summary of the research findings by reflecting on the *crisis* of migration management in both Algeria and Morocco. As the biased and fragmented media 'snapshots' of 'sub-Saharan' and North-African migrants produce reductive narratives around *harga*, parts two and three enact a shift in focus to examine the extent to which both mediated and unmediated testimonials can offer alternative and more balanced perspectives on this multifaceted phenomenon.

In Part Two, I 'dis-place the lens' to analyse the three co-authored testimonial narratives mentioned earlier with a specific focus on their varied narrativisations of 'sub-Saharan' migrants' transit im-mobilities and subsequent dislocation in limbo spaces. Divided into two chapters, it first critically reflects on the idea of co-authorship involving unauthorised migrants, Western journalists, and anthropologists. Combining the concepts of "symbolic bordering" (Chouliaraki, 2017) and "ventriloquism" (Smith 1998; Davis, 1998), the analysis foregrounds the limits of writing with or on behalf of migrants by deconstructing the neo-colonial dynamics undergirding the production and circulation processes of the co-authored testimonial narratives. Thus, what thematically unites Chapters Three and Four is the concept of co-authorship as a problematic space for the articulation of the migrant's voice. As such, chapter three first maps the context of collaborative writing by presenting Morocco and Algeria—the geographical foci of this study—as spaces of 'impossibility' wherein 'sub-Saharan' migrants' mobilities are impeded and their stories censored, which compelled them to seek publication venues elsewhere. I then explore the ramifications of what I refer to as 'the rescue' of the migrant's border story by drawing attention to its conditionality. I argue that to be 'saved' from the abyss of oblivion, the migrant's testimonial narrative must fit into strict parameters, which are controlled by the Western co-writers and publishers. Among these conditions is the use of the French language in the collection, writing, and marketing phases of the story production, hence the neo-colonial dis-memberment (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong' O, 2009) of the migrant's voice and identity. This sets the tone for my analysis of the Western authors' editorial ventriloquial manoeuvres in Chapter Four with a specific emphasis on narrative structure and character (re)construction. I demonstrate that through instances of discursive ventriloquy (Jacklin, 2005), the Western authors end up articulating three archetypal migrant figures with which a Western

(as well as a French-speaking Maghrebi) audience can easily identify. Thus, these ventriloquised portrayals culminate in the consolidation of categorical fetishes like the 'deserving refugee', 'the economic migrant', and the successful migrant who turned 'transit into a new home', thereby maintaining (to varying degrees) the dehumanising neo-colonial power dynamics undergirding contemporary migration representation. The chapter concludes with critical reflections on the crisis of (re-)mediation and the resultant im-mobility of (different degrees) empathy. Ultimately, I comment on the co-authored narratives' limited counter-narrative potential in addressing derogatory media accounts on both sides of the Mediterranean.

In the final part, I 'replace the lens' by examining a selection of multimodal digital hypershort stories posted by Algerian and Moroccan (would-be) *harraga* on Facebook and YouTube. Unfolding in two chapters, this part radically diverges from the media and co-authored testimonials owing to the un-mediated and un-edited decolonial gazes it offers regarding the ways in which *harga* dreamers and practitioners experience and experiment with their im-mobility in virtual spaces. Combining theoretical and conceptual resources from immobility and digital migration studies, Chapters Five and Six engage with the digital corpus in different ways following a threefold configuration of the migratory journey. I particularly probe into its subversive and material dimensions, as well as the ways in which the (would-be) *harraga* online communities elevate the status of the migrants who died on their way to Europe, challenging thereby the normative ungrievability of their lives. To ensure clarity, I divide their narrativisation of *harga* experiences into conceptual pairs: *material immobility vs virtual mobility*, *cross-border movement vs digital captures*, and *death vs online immortalisation*. Religious allusions as a leitmotif are highlighted in my analyses and so is the role played by their language practices in cementing the decolonial spirit of their counter-narratives. The part concludes with a meditation on the ways in which *harraga*'s online-shared accounts challenge both Maghrebi and Euro-centric migration representations while also reflecting on the often-problematic nature of digital memory in preserving a counter-archive 'from below'.

The conclusion summarises the main findings of each analytical part and discusses the extent to which they contribute to the interdisciplinary field of migration research while acknowledging the limitations of the present study and suggesting areas where future research on migration narratives is required.

PART I— 'Symbolic im-mobility', 'semantic dis-placements', and migration management crisis in Algerian and Moroccan hegemonic narratives around *harga* to EU-rope[85]

Chapter One—Screening the Maghreb-EU 'immobility regime': The immobilising power of laws and labels

"The spectacle of border enforcement yields up the thing-like fetish of migrant 'illegality' as a self-evident 'fact', generated by its own supposed act of violation."

—Nicholas De Genova, *Spectacles of migrant 'illegality': The scene of exclusion, the obscene of inclusion* (2013: 1182).

This chapter contributes to the first thematic part of the thesis—which engages in a comprehensive yet non-exhaustive analysis of forms of 'symbolic im-mobility' (Smets, 2019) and 'semantic displacements' as they 'occurred' in a selection of Algerian and Moroccan mainstream media narrative fragments around (North-)African *harga* to Europe between 2015-2019—by specifically examining the immobilising impact of laws and labels on *harraga*. By the phrase 'immobilising impact', I am specifically referring to the ways in which hegemonic language shapes and constrains the identities, (hi)stories, and actions of the represented subjects, trapping them in dehumanising symbolic constructions. Both laws and labels function as framing devices whereby hegemonic discourse makers place boundaries around specific groups of "'unwanted' or 'undesirable' non-citizens" (De Genova, 2013: 1181), limiting thereby their opportunities and agency. The choice of terminology, imagery, and narrative set up in specific documented migrant scenes are accounted for in the analysis of the interplay between Algeria and Morocco's legal and media discourses. As Nicholas De Genova (2013) rightly observes, these "discursive formations […] uphold and propagate the notion of migrant 'illegality'" (1181) and "must be understood to be complexes of both language and image, of rhetoric, text and subtext, accusation and insinuation, as well as the visual grammar that upholds and enhances the iconicity of particular fetishised figures of 'illegal' immigration".[86] Fetishisation generates archetypal migrant figures, and thus restricts audiences' understanding of *harraga*'s complex migratory journeys. Fetishisation also culminates in the reduction of *harraga*'s identities to law transgressors. Consolidating this contention is a study carried out by the 'Ethical Journalism Network' in 2017 on the ways countries from both sides of the Mediterranean cover migration, wherein prominent Moroccan journalist Salehedine Lemaizi and Algerian reporter Faten Hayed reported that the media representations of illegalised migration in their countries were predominantly characterised by sensationalist rhetoric and stereotypical portrayals, and tended

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[86] De Genova (2013: 1181).

to be security-oriented and often contingent upon inaccurate police reports (Sarikakis, 2017). In the second section of this chapter, I further illustrate this argument by comparing the two countries' 'discursive management' of *harga* with a specific focus on the media outlets' labelling strategies and their impact on the social perceptions of migrants.

In light of this threefold conception of immobility/immobilisation occurring at the level of laws, labels, and audience engagement, this two-section chapter first details the EU's externalisation policies by foregrounding the neo-colonial 'theatrical' dynamics underpinning them, hence my use of De Genova's (2013) phrase "spectacle of illegality" (De Genova, 2013) and Paolo Cuttitta's (2014) metaphor of "border play". After mapping the context wherein the EU cooperated with its southern neighbours to erect its 'immobility regime', I shift the focus to Algeria and Morocco's policyscapes to scrutinise the laws governing their migration management. This, in turn, sets the tone for my examination of a selection of narrative 'snapshots' (Leese, 2022) of media representations around 'sub-Saharan' transit migrants in Morocco and Algeria and Maghrebi *harraga*'s moments of immobility and immobilisation on the Western Mediterranean route. In this analytical context, 'snapshots' are understood as visual and verbal news segments characterised by a narrative quality rather than stories in a more traditional sense. More specifically, I place the lens on state-owned media platforms and scrutinise instances of terminological (mis)uses and 'abuses' with a view to extracting dominant narratives around *harga* and their potential impact on local audiences. In this way, I offer a holistic reading of the various *harga*-centred 'communicative situations' (Kress, 2009), i.e, by accounting for the relations between modes and their complementariness in meaning-making.

1.1 Navigating policyscapes: Algeria and Morocco as extensions of the EU's 'border play'

Since the turn of the 21st century, Algeria and Morocco—which have historically been considered sending countries—have witnessed significant changes in their migration trends mainly due to the growing number of 'sub-Saharan' migrants transiting through their territories on their way to Europe via illegalised channels (Lahlou, 2013). While some of these transmigrants have managed to cross into the European continent, others have faced obstacles due to the increasingly stringent regulations against what Moroccan and Algerian policy makers refer to as "illegal or clandestine" migration. Accordingly, both Morocco and Algeria have gradually turned from 'source' to 'transit', and 'destination' countries (Lahlou, 2013; 2018). The illegalisation of unauthorised (North-)African-EU migrations is not solely a response to

these two countries' security concerns but also, and more importantly, an answer to their European neighbours' migration management externalisation demands (Belguendouz, 2005; Boubakri & Mazella, 2005).

Although Morocco and Algeria have cooperated with the EU to varying degree (Lahlou, 2018), they have nevertheless contributed—through their border policies, practices and discourses—to the fortification of the (North-)African-EU 'immobility' regime. Owing to their strategic geographical location between 'sub-Saharan' Africa and a borderless European Union, and their triple role in the African-EU migration system, Morocco and Algeria have increasingly become extensions of the latter's "border play" (Cuttitta, 2014). Indeed, this concept metaphorically conveys the EU's border politics as a 'performance' drawing attention to its theatrical (i.e., fabricated) nature. Through the verbal and visual constructions of migrant immobility within spaces of 'clandestinity', 'illegality', 'precarity', and 'marginality', Moroccan and Algerian public and mediatised discourses, I argue, tend to 'secure' the continuity of the European Union's performative politics of *harraga*'s immobilisation and consequent dis-location in "zones of non-being" (Fanon, 1952). In these respects, Morocco and Algeria, could be apprehended as 'laboratories' for the EU's border management 'experiments' on the one hand, and as strategic 'observatories' from which to (re)view and assess the different narratives surrounding the *harga* phenomenon, on the other. It is important then to investigate these two countries' 'immobilising' policies as well as the different semantic dis-placements performed by public authorities in their construction of the migrant figure in order to understand the discursive manipulations of migratory 'realities' in their mainstream media representations.

In this sense, Morocco and Algeria do not only 'manage' unauthorised migration through the policing of their borders but they also do so through their hegemonic discursive practices. Indeed, through its practices of border externalisation, the EU has been ensuring ways of 'exporting' its fabricated 'migrant crisis' to its southern Mediterranean counterparts. As Martina Tazzioli and Nicholas De Genova (2016) contend, the EU has sought to 'dis-place' its borders to its 'poorer' neighbours and in doing so, it has attempted to "convert its 'crisis' into a neo-liberal test of postcolonial responsibility" (9). Although this EU-Maghreb migration management process began at the beginning of the 21st century, it has become substantially more conspicuous in recent years coinciding with the EU's intensified circulation of a "false [migrant and refugee crisis] narrative" (Mazzara, 2019: 10).

It has been well-established by scholars that Morocco and Algeria's domestic migration policies have been conceptualised to serve their national interests and foreign policy

goals (Lahlou, 2018; Zardo & Loschi, 2020). As a point of departure, it is important to underscore that in Moroccan and Algerian law, any unauthorised entry into, stay in, or exit from the national territory are codified as punishable *criminal*[87] (rather than administrative) offences. Although both countries have sought to reform, to varying degrees, their migration policy framework throughout the past two decades, the implementation of these (pseudo) changes has been impeded by both national and foreign policy concerns (Lahlou, 2015). Before proceeding further, it is crucial to point out that both Morocco and Algeria ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 protocol, as well as the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant workers and their Families. The ambiguity and narrowness of the aforementioned international legal frameworks have often been instrumentalised by Moroccan and Algerian public authorities in various media outlets to overshadow the complex mixed-flow nature of migrants' movements.

As far as Morocco's migration policyscape is concerned, Law 02-03 (Appendix A), which came into force in November 2003 in the aftermath of the Casablanca terrorist attacks, explicitly criminalised unauthorised emigration and immigration, as well as 'assistance' networks, and doubled the number of border guards to 8000 (Natter, 2014). The law marked an important shift in Moroccan authorities' attitude towards the phenomenon.[88] Furthermore, this legal framework established the Migration and Border Directorate, as well as the Migration Observatory during the same year, prompting the elaboration of a National Strategy to Combat 'Illegal' Migration (SNIA) (Natter, 2014). The institutionalisation of migration surveillance was, as Mehdi Lahlou (2018: 3) explains, a way of "streamlin(ing) working methods, refin(ing) analytical tools, and optimis(ing) the deployment of operational units to monitor clandestine infiltration points". Accordingly, Morocco's migration policy framed the phenomenon of unauthorised migration as a security problem to be challenged and for which solutions should be sought. These initiatives were applauded by the EU, which granted Morocco 'special partner position', enabling the latter to pursue what De Weden (2010:13, cited in Natter, 2014: 16) calls "a diplomacy of migrations".

As such, Morocco used its migration control policy as an indirect foreign policy tool (Thiollet, 2011: 13) to "push [itself] back onto the European agenda" (Natter, 2014: 18). Indeed, the National indicative Programme (NIP), which committed €115 million to Morocco's

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[87] My emphasis.
[88] Ibid.

migration-related projects[89] attests to the 'success' of the latter's "diplomatic move" (Natter, 2013: 18). Algerian geographer and migration specialist, Ali Bensaad (2005) also observes that after years of geo-political isolation, Morocco announced its willingness to cooperate with the EU on matters related to its border externalisation underscoring the so-called security issues it had been facing as a result of illegal(ised) migrations from 'sub-Saharan' Africa since the turn of the 21st century. The security argument was thus deployed by Morocco in order to establish itself as 'a potential partner' to the EU in their (collective) fight against 'terrorism' and 'organised crime', such as human trafficking and smuggling. In its political discourse, the institutionalisation and the politicisation of the migration question was justified by a double logic: increasing border militarisation and surveillance to promote national security (as a response to the Moroccan public's increased desire for security in the post-Casablanca attacks) on the one hand, and guaranteeing regional security owing to Morocco's strategic position, on the other. To consolidate this border security narrative, and the criminalisation of unauthorised migration, Moroccan authorities implemented a media strategy to "frame Morocco as a transit-state victim of its geographical position" (Natter, 2014: 20), which (putatively) made its borders 'vulnerable' to 'clandestine' 'sub-Saharan' African migrant flows. This, in turn, enabled policy makers to overshadow the sensitive topic of Moroccan (unauthorised) emigration.[90]

By deploying the geographical determinism argument (i.e., its shared borders with the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, and the 14km Gibraltar strait separating Morocco from Europe), as well as foregrounding figures related to the increased numbers of 'sub-Saharan' migrants transiting through its territory, Moroccan authorities have 'managed' to frame the latter as a potential security threat to be fought by "mobilis(ing) all human and material means necessary"[91] and as "a plague [with] negative repercussions on economy and society".[92]

Ten years after the adoption of Law 02-03, Morocco announced a 'new national migration strategy'[93] to initiate a regularisation campaign of an estimated 40.000

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[89] A total sum of €5 million was allocated for establishing a governmental framework to regulate authorised emigration to Europe based on demand (using a quota system); €40 million to enhance border security and reduce cross-border crime and unauthorised emigration, and €70 million to boost the economic development of Morocco's northern areas, which are considered to be the 'source' of unauthorised emigration (Natter, 2013).
[90] Ibid
[91] "Mr Vitorino sees Moroccan Minister of the Interior in appeal for 'shared responsibility and solidarity' in fight against illegal immigration." (2003). *Agence Europe*, 4 July. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/mtmvaumf [Accessed 4 october 2022].
[92] Natter (2014: 20).
[93]Azdem. M & Ziou Ziou., A. (2017) "The National Immigration and Asylum Strategy (NIAS): the uncertainty revolving around refugee policies and reflected in the desire for integration and border control," *Madar Network***, 17 June. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/3vbuw8tk [Accessed 4 October 2023].**

'undocumented' migrants. This policy shift was partly due to growing pressure and lobbying from civil society groups like the Moroccan Association of Human Rights (AMDH) and The Anti-Racist Defence and Support Group of Foreigners and Migrants (GADEM) to adopt a more human rights-based approach to the migration question. Although the latter humanitarian organisations did acknowledge the importance of integrating the security aspect in migration policy, they nonetheless highlighted the indispensability of the human-rights protection aspect that was neither visible in the law nor in the government's practices with regards to migrants' treatment (Jacobs, 2019).

It is also important to add that it is too reductive a reading to argue that Morocco's migration policy reform was solely the by-product of NGOs' efforts to establish a more migrant-inclusive approach. As Anna Jacobs (2019) rightly observes, Morocco's migration policy revision can be understood by examining its diplomatic relations with both the EU and Africa. She maintains that in terms of foreign policy, Morocco is asserting itself as a counter-terrorism and migration ally for the European Union and key member states, while also shifting focus towards African institutions, more specifically the African Union and ECOWAS.[94] This move towards Africa is a reflection of the continued importance of Morocco's position on the Western Sahara in its foreign policy.

Accordingly, Morocco's approach to the phenomenon of unauthorised migration is clearly punctuated by its double diplomatic move, that is, containing the movement of 'sub-Saharan' *harraga* to Europe by 'encouraging' them to settle in Morocco and framing the regularisation of the latter as a diplomatic overture to display to its African 'neighbours' its openness towards 'sub-Saharan' migration with a view to re-integrating the African Union (Jacobs, 2019). Arguably, owing to its dual focus on securing its interests in the African continent and maintaining partnership relations with the EU, Morocco's reformed migration policy has had a visible contradictory effect. Notwithstanding King Muhammed VI's 'humanitarian' and 'inclusive' rhetoric, reports of human rights abuses and migrants' limited access to basic needs and services have been published by NGOs like Amnesty International and Human rights Watch, as well as by local human rights organisations like GADEM. Similarly, international news channels like *France 24* and *Al Jazeera*, for instance, denounced Morocco's harsh crackdowns on migrants in marginalised urban areas and in the forest of Gourougou near the Melilla fences, not to mention the unlawful massive deportation operations carried out between

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[94] ECOWAS stands for the Economic Community of West African States.

2017 and 2018.[95] Thus, it is in view of these policy changes, contradictions, and the subsequent climate of xenophobia and racism that characterised the post-migration reform social landscape that my analysis of Moroccan media representations of migrants' moments of immobility shall be examined.

As in Morocco, Algerian Law criminalises unauthorised migration and regulates the movement of both Algerian nationals and foreigners. However, unlike its neighbour, Algeria's response to the EU's externalisation pressure historically differs on account of its 'cautious' attitude towards Euro-African cooperation on migration management (Zardo & Loschi, 2020). Notwithstanding President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's active diplomacy efforts during the early 2000s, which culminated in Algeria's signing of bilateral readmission agreements with Italy and Spain, the ratification of the Palermo Protocols against human trafficking and the establishment of the International Organisation of Migration in 2009, the country has endeavoured to maintain a rather isolationist foreign policy.[96] Unlike its Moroccan neighbour, Algeria neither negotiated a mobility partnership, nor did it involve itself in the Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF). While some critics and policy analysts[97] have argued that this is partly due to Algeria's dominant economic position in the region, others have contended that this attitude is firmly grounded in the development of its national security regime and its postcolonial resistance to its ex-coloniser's cooperation incentives.

Although different from Morocco in its approach to and understanding of EU-African migration management cooperation, Algeria has nonetheless framed unauthorised migration in line with its security-oriented goals. In addition, like its neighbour, it has often foregrounded its geographic vulnerability and border porosity (despite intensified militarisation) as key arguments to criminalise unauthorised migratory flows from 'sub-Saharan' countries. In June 2008, Algeria adopted Law 08-11 (Appendix B) defining the latter as criminal offences punishable by a one to six-year prison sentence and establishing legal procedures for migrants' expulsion from its territory.[98] Additionally, the law stipulates that foreigners residing in Algeria and wishing to work can acquire residence permits only if granted work authorisation (Teevan, 2020). According to this framework, the migrants who have crossed into Algeria via

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[95] Amnesty International (2018). *Morocco: Relentless crackdown on thousands of sub-Saharan migrants and refugees is unlawful.* 7 September. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/3xep43dz [Accessed 4 October 2022].
[96] Zardo & Loschi (2020).
[97] ReliefWeb (2018). *Algeria's migration policy conundrum*, 4 July. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/4e5m3twy [Accessed 4 October 2022].
[98] Amnesty International (2018). *Algeria: Forced to leave: Stories of injustice against migrants in Algeria,* 20 December. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/uhts3sj5 [Accessed 4 October 2022].

unauthorised routes can in no way 'regularise' their status (*Journal Officiel*, 2008). In this sense, Algeria's domestic migration policy immobilises unauthorised migrants legally, physically, and socially.

A year later, in February 2009, Algeria amended its penal code (Appendix C) by introducing the criminal offence of "illegal" exit for both its nationals and foreigners, punishable by up to a five year-prison sentence in case of involvement with smuggling networks. Algerian public and media officials, like their Moroccan counterparts, have repeatedly sought to cloak their human rights abuses[99] through discursive manipulations, i.e., by adopting a 'humanitarian' rhetoric and falsely framing, for example, mass deportation operations as '*retours volontaires*' [voluntary returns] or 'rapatriements'[100] [repatriations]. Notwithstanding Algerian Prime Minister Abdelmajid Tebboune's declaration in 2017 to 'regularise' the status of 'undocumented' migrants, Algeria's migration management has continued to operate according to Laws 08-11 and 09-01.

In brief, more than fifty years after its ratification of the Refugee Convention, Algeria still lacks a clear legal framework for migrant workers and asylum seekers despite their growing presence on Algerian soil. The laws criminalising unauthorised migration have, since their adoption, remained relatively unchanged, allowing for the legitimisation of certain inhumane operations carried out to arrest, expel, and deport migrants.[101] On the Moroccan side, notwithstanding the government's initiation of the 'regularisation' campaigns, which marked a shift in paradigm from 'transit' to 'destination' country and the 'humanitarian' and 'humanist' overtones of the King's political rhetoric,[102] Morocco has not fully 'managed' to promote the respect of migrants' rights (regardless of their status). Like its Algerian neighbour, it has not ceased to arbitrarily arrest, expel, and deport migrants and in doing so, has failed to live up to its national and international law commitments (Amnesty International, 2018). As Jiménez-Alvarez et al. (2021) point out, while Morocco has leveraged its so-called humanitarianism-

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[99] According to human rights organisations' reports, these abuses often included mass deportations of 'sub-Saharan' migrants to the Algerian-Nigerian border (such as the ones carried out in 2017 and 2018), summary expulsions, frequent crack downs on migrants, and the destruction of their makeshift camps.

[100] El Moudjahid. « *Les migrants illégaux Nigériens regagnent leur pays : l'Algérie a pleinement rempli son devoir humanitaire* », (04/07/2018).

[101] Although this thesis focuses on the 2015-2019 time frame, it is important to add that the two Maghreb countries' migration policies have remained quite unchanged even after the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, further aggravating the already precarious situation of unauthorised migrants. For a comprehensive review of migration policy updates in the Maghreb see, Mixed Migration Centre (2023). *Quaterly Mixed Migration update: North Africa 2023*. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/b87awj9t [Accessed 4 January 2024].

[102] « Discours de SM le Roi à la nation à l'occasion du 63ème anniversaire de la Révolution du Roi et du Peuple » (2016). *Maroc.ma,* 20 August. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/9c7x6mjb [Accessed 4 January 2022].

oriented approach as a foreign policy instrument, the 'realities' on the ground reveal persistent abuses of migrants' rights, particularly in border areas, as shall be demonstrated in my analysis of 'sub-Saharan' migrants' testimonials in Part Two.

1.2   Mapping Morocco and Algeria's mediascapes: Labelling as 'symbolic fixedness'

This section offers a rather comprehensive, though non-exhaustive, analysis of a multimodal corpus of news narratives in French and Arabic, encompassing a wide array of internet-based textual and audio-visual sources, national television footage, and photo stories around the *harga* phenomenon in government-owned media outlets in Morocco and Algeria. Using a context-grounded CNA (Souto-Manning, 2014), I unpack the mechanisms underpinning hegemonic portrayals of migrants and retrieve what the public and mainstream discourses attempt to conceal. More particularly, my critical narrative examination (while attending to the role, specificity, and interaction between for instance, the visual, verbal, gestural, and spatial 'modes' used), focuses on the constructions of *harraga*'s immobility (in its different manifestations), the immobilising impact of labels, and the ways in which they contribute to the dis-articulation of their stories. Through strategies of 'symbolic im-mobility' and 'metonymic freezing' the media reduce specific groups to a single symbol or feature, thereby eliding their diversity and turning them into stereotypical figures. Together, 'symbolic immobility' and 'metonymic freezing' generate myriad forms of 'symbolic violence' (Hall, 1997; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), whereby state actors maintain social hierarchies and consolidate power structures.

Labelling or the act of (mis)naming migrants is an integral part of the politics of migration representation. In André Barrinha's (2011) words, labelling is a powerful rhetorical device whereby "a particular subject or entity is reduced to a single idea" (163). Indeed, the attribution of certain descriptors to migrants—which is one of the most elementary forms of the latter's stigmatisation in mainstream media discourse (Di Tota, 2014)—contributes to the production of specific collective imaginaries. Once the label is assigned, the (migrant) subject is (dis)identified according to a set of characteristics, motives, and behaviours (Bhatia, 2008) as well as an ensemble of measures and practices against the labelled subject are automatically "routinised in the daily life of states, communities and groups" (Barrinha, 2011: 164). In this sense, the power of words can be destructive to the unauthorised migrant but (potentially) constructive to the 'host' society as it enables it to establish dichotomies through which social cohesion can be secured (Di Tota, 2014).

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As the act of labelling the 'other' is not context-unbound, it is inserted "into a discursive structure that incorporates and limits its reach and meaning" (Barrinha, 2011: 165). Accordingly, attributing labels to the migrant 'Other' is a political tool used by public authorities and media agencies to 'manage' unauthorised migration at the discursive level. These discursive management operations, I argue, consist of masking certain meanings and manipulating others and in doing so, perform semantic dis-placements of the migrant concept/figure and simultaneously trap the latter within symbolic constructions (Smets, 2019). In this regard, Didier Bigo (2002: 64) points out that "the primary problem [in migration representation] is […] discursive in that the securitisation of migrants derives from the language itself and from the different capacities of various actors to engage in speech acts". Political actors, media professionals and security agents, Bigo continues, tend to create and perpetuate a "truth about a link between crime, unemployment, and migration" (64). Resultantly, the 'migrant Other' becomes confined within the boundaries of political and public discourse as an "outsider, inside the State" (Sayad, 1999; cited in Bigo, 2002: 66).

In what follows, I deconstruct the terminological fabric underpinning Moroccan and Algerian mainstream media constructions of migrant 'clandestinity', 'illegality', and 'un-documentedness', as well as the detrimental impact that these forms of derogatory (un)naming have on 'sub-Saharan' migrants' identities, more specifically.

1.2.1 'Immobilising' constructions of the 'clandestin sub-Saharien' in Moroccan and Algerian news media

Notwithstanding the 'liberalisation'[103] of media, national networks in Morocco supply very institutionalised news programmes through which the official version of events is communicated to national audiences (Benchenna & Marchetti, 2021). Likewise, in Algeria the flow of news information is still largely controlled by the government despite human rights

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[103] Before the 1990s, the media environment in both Morocco and Algeria was authoritarian and partisan. Starting from the beginning of the 20th century, the media landscape started to witness slight changes due to political liberalisation and democratisation. For instance, the rise of Arab satellite broadcasting allowed for the establishment and the development of new commercial TV and radio stations. The latter however, only experienced a brief phase of openness. It is argued that this was mainly due to the new constitution's lack of clarity in its definition of media freedom in Morocco. Similarly, in Algeria, in 1991, President Chedli Bendjdid and Prime Minister Mouloud Hamrouch introduced a reform package the objective of which was to put an end to the State's monopoly over public life. The reform consisted in giving the possibility to journalists and businesspersons alike to lawfully own and operate print media (Boserup, 2013). Notwithstanding these changes, the audio-visual sector, as well as a number of media agencies have remained under the stewardship of the Ministry of Communication (ibid).

activists' efforts to protect press freedom. In both countries, migration-related issues, which used to be relegated to the periphery of the news agenda at the beginning of the 21st century, have started to gain growing visibility in mainstream news media especially with the perceived increase in the number of 'sub-Saharan' migrants passing through Moroccan and Algerian territories in a bid to cross into Europe via unauthorised channels.

As outlined in the introduction to this chapter, the coverage of (unauthorised) migration in Morocco and Algeria has been characterised by sensationalism and stereotyping. Journalists' "linguistic indecisiveness" (Sarikakis, 2017: 99) and limited knowledge about migration-related matters have culminated in the production of xenophobia-inducing narratives and clichéd images of 'sub-Saharan' migrants.[104] The repeated (mis)use and abuse of the French label '*clandestin*', or its Arabic equivalent '*mouhajer serri*' have permeated mainstream news discourse in Morocco and Algeria (Souiah, 2016; Di Tota, 2014). It has been reported that labelling often times occurs even prior to migrants' identification.[105] Put differently, migrants, 'sub-Saharan' in particular, tend to be incontestably pre-defined as 'clandestine', i.e., unruly, and therefore potentially threatening individuals, which ultimately allows for "the negation of their human rights" (Mazzara, 2019: 31). Migrant 'clandestinity' is thus produced, 'manufactured', and circulated by public and media discourses to market the image of a nation that is 'in control' of its borders (Bigo, 2002; Mazzara, 2019).

Notwithstanding King Muhammed VI's decision to reform Morocco's migration and Asylum policy in 2013, which culminated in the regularisation campaigns of 2014 and (later 2017) of more than 40.000 'undocumented migrants', mainstream media commentators have continued to use labels like '*migrants irréguliers*' or '*clandestins*' when referring to the 'non-regularised' migrant population living in Morocco. Likewise, in Algeria with the exception of a few politicians and public authorities' restricted use of the still derogatory (but perhaps less criminalising) adjective '*irrégulier*' following the recommendation of the International Organisation of Migration (IOM), the '*clandestin*' label has permeated official and mainstream media discourse. Further exacerbating 'sub-Saharan' (and Maghrebi) *harraga*'s image is the persistent fact that mainstream media generally content themselves with reporting the 'official' versions of information issued by the Defence ministry and press releases from the local authorities.

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[104] Ibid.
[105] Based on migrants' testimonies, Human Rights organisations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch reported that a significant number of 'sub-Saharan' refugees and asylum seekers had been dis-identified as '*clandestins*' and/or 'illegals'.

As Massimiliano Di Tota (2014: 3) observes, in Morocco "*si on regarde la télévision, si on lit les journaux, ou si l'on écoute la radio, on remarque* […] *que sur les questions concernant la migration, l'obsession de la clandestinité occupe tout l'espace public*".[106] A pertinent example of an effective multimodal construction of migrant 'clandestinity' can be found in a news footage aired by the Moroccan (state-owned) TV channel *2M* 2 July 2015[107] depicting a group of police officers bursting into an apartment presumed to be 'illegally' occupied by 'clandestine' 'sub-Saharan' *harraga* who intend to cross into Europe from Tangiers (Fig. 1). In The French version of the news piece, the migrants are referred to as "*squatteurs*" [squatters] and the whole sequence of events or operation is framed as "*une chasse aux clandestins*" (Fig. 2). The Arabic language reportage of the same 'event' features phrases like "*iħtilal ghair qanouni*", which literally translates as 'illegal invasion' to describe the migrants' alleged unauthorised occupation of the flat. Also, the vague reference to their ethnic identity through the use of the homogenising umbrella adjective "*ifriqi*" [African] is a way of associating 'illegal' and 'clandestine' practices to the increasingly 'threatening' presence of the people from the 'other' end of the African continent. In fact, in Morocco, the label 'African' is reserved for black-skinned people of 'sub-Saharan' origins (as opposed to black-skinned Moroccans) and is loaded with negative connotations. Defining the 'black-skinned', 'clandestine' migrant as 'African' ironically implies that Moroccans are non-African in spite of the fact that Morocco is a natural extension of the African continent. Additionally, the narrative that the footage generates simplistically divides Africa into two colours: black and white. This racialised construction of Africa is rooted in history. French journalist Laurent De Saint Perier explains that the Sahara Desert has for long been perceived in the Maghrebis' collective imaginary as "a barrier separating a white, Arab-Muslim, and civilised Africa, and a Black Africa—a wild jungle inhabited by fierce beasts and sorcerers condemned to live in chaos".[108] These phantasmagorical articulations of Black Africans as agents of disorder equally find their traces in the everyday news media framings of 'sub-Saharan' *harraga* as suggested by the footage. From a discursive point of view, the combination of the label '*clandestin*' and the terms ' *chasse*' and '*iħtilal'* activate the frame of the migrant as security threat to be 'hunted down' and hence immobilised. Accordingly, the

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[106] [If we watch the television, read the newspapers, or listen to the radio, we notice that on issues related to migration, the obsession with illegality dominates public discourse]. My translation.
[107] Video Available at: https://m.YouTube.com/watch?v=ixSuT4icaOs [Accessed 4 January 2022].
[108] De Saint Perier. L., (2014). « Racisme : Au Maghreb, les Noirs sont-ils des citoyens comme les autres ? ». *Jeune Afrique,* 29 April. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/82wnb8f2 [accessed 4 October 2022]. My translation of the original French citation (para.10).

terminology in the news footage is deployed to legitimise the violence perpetrated by the security forces against the migrants who are depicted as a danger to the community. Additionally, the serious tone of the reporter and his frequent accentuation of the labels mentioned above add a layer of gravity to the overall multimodal narrative ensemble.

Fig 1. Still taken from a news footage broadcast by the Moroccan (state-owned) channel *2M*. The caption translates as "Tangiers: Moroccan security forces put an end to African migrants' illegal invasion (occupation) of flats".

Combined, the explicit use of criminalising language along with the dehumanising 'hunt' metaphor are overshadowed by the 'heroic' performance of the security forces who have accomplished their duty of protecting the members of the 'endangered' community by arresting these 'squatters'. From a narrative perspective, the scene is constructed following a simple tripartite plot structure: the set-up (the arrival of the security forces at the 'invaded' building), the conflict (the clash between the 'heroic' national security forces and the 'foreign invaders'), and the denouement (the arrest of the migrant 'villains'). The overly simplistic aspect of this multimodal representation echoes the classic 'goodie/baddie' narrative which plays into moralistic tropes and places the security forces on the moral high ground. The footage on 'migrant clandestinity' discussed above, closes with a sense of relief expressed by the local inhabitants interviewed by the journalist (Fig. 2). After having successfully 'chased' the 'enemy', the public order forces—the protagonists in this narrative construction—have restored peace, security, and stability in the neighbourhood. Interestingly, the framing of the scene has deliberately foregrounded the heroic action of the Moroccan police forces as well as the voices of the Moroccan inhabitants, and backgrounded those of the 'chased' migrants, de-authorising them in the process. As such, the sign-maker(s) effectively established a sense of cohesion between the different visual, aural, gestural, and textual modes deployed in this communicative act. Similarly, the violence performed against the dwellers, i.e., the police's *forced* entry and

(unauthorised) intrusion of the journalist's camera in the private spaces of the migrants, the subsequent exposition of their privacy, and their public denigration are framed as inconsequential. This type of simplistic dichotomy-based narrative representation usually generates stereotypes, making migrants appear as agents of disorder and thus as highly problematic (Di Tota, 2014). Pertinent to my analysis of the '*clandestin*' cliché is Stuart Hall's (1997: 259) definition of the act of stereotyping in cultural representation:

> Within stereotyping, […] we have established a connection between representation, difference, and power. However, we need to probe the nature of this power more fully. We often think of power in terms of direct physical coercion or constraint. However, [there is also] the power in representation, the power to mark, to assign, and classify; of *symbolic power, of ritualised expulsion*.[109]

Thus, from the vantage point of the 'host' society, the re-establishment of a 'lost' social cohesion and a 'disrupted' national identity is contingent upon hegemonic representational practices' generation of a 'fixed', i.e., normalised and naturalised image of the 'African' Other. As Didier Bigo (2002: 63) puts it, "the security process itself is the result of the mobilisation of the work of political discourses, and of practices of security agencies based on the argument of danger and emergency."

Fig 2. Still taken from a news footage broadcast by the Moroccan (state-owned) channel, *2M*. A Moroccan citizen is speaking on behalf of the local community about the collective sense of relief after 'sub-Saharan' squatters' arrest by Moroccan security forces.

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[109] Emphasis in original quote.

Clearly, these constructions run counter to Morocco's historically multi-ethnic and multicultural identity as poetically expressed by the late King Hassan II in an all-encompassing tree metaphor: "Morocco is a tree, its roots deeply anchored in Africa, breathing life into Europe through its leaves".[110] However, as Driss El Ghazouani (2019) rightly points out, this narrative of a "stable, tolerant, and multicultural Morocco masks significant underlying social tensions in a highly unequal society".[111] Ostensibly, the ill-treatment of 'clandestine' 'sub-Saharans' on its soil lays bare the contradiction between theory and practice.

The label 'clandestine' serves, in this context, as a discursive legitimisation of migrants' rights abuses regardless of their status. It is worth supplementing this analysis with a contextual reference. As pointed out earlier, the year 2015 (which also corresponds to the year wherein the aforementioned news segment was broadcast) saw massive coverage of the 'Migrant or Refugee crisis' in Europe. However, during this same year, Morocco witnessed a relative "migratory peace" (Lahlou, 2018) following the launching of the regularisation campaign. The rather displaced alarmist tone of the news report could be read as a discursive strategy to show both national and international audiences that Morocco is upholding its international commitments towards the EU in terms of its border management cooperation to fight against 'illegal' migration. The end shot of the footage shows the 'clandestine African squatters' helplessly running away from the security forces with their bindles on the back. The zoom out effect of the camera contributes to the visualisation of the migrants as a dispersed, de-individualised mass, metaphorically embodying and metonymically standing for the 'Other' side of Africa. Further reinforcing the unity of this anti-migrant multimodal narrative is the intermodal synergy between the visual and spatial management of the scene, and the body language of the represented subjects culminating in the contrast-based image of a group of inhabitants standing close to each other in solidarity awaiting the journalist to give them voice on the one hand, and of scattered escapees fleeing from authorities, which reinforces their dis-belongingness to the community.

A similar sensationalist narrative on migrant 'clandestinity' is conveyed in a news footage entitled "*Migrants clandestin* [sic] *d'Afrique: Faut-il que l'Algérie les régularise*?"[112] shared by the Algerian (government-owned) online channel *EchorouknewsTV*, 6 August 2016

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[110] M.C., Corbier. (2010). « Comment le Maroc veut séduire ses frères Africains ». *Les Echos*, 8 July. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/bddsekat [Accessed 29 September 2022]. Para.2 (my translation).
[111] El Ghazouani., D. (2019). "A growing destination for sub-Saharan Africans, Morocco wrestles with immigrant integration." *Migration Policy Institute*. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/4uk9h945 [Accessed 4 January 2022].
[112] [Clandestine African migrants: Should Algeria regularise their status?].
Video Available at: https://tinyurl.com/bdd3ptx6 [Accessed 4 January 2022].

(Fig. 3). Amplifying the urgency of the message is the bold font used in the title. As in the *2M* video segment, the inaccurate ethnic and geographical labels 'Afrique/ Africains' is deployed to refer to 'sub-Saharans'. The footage opens with a third person narrative voice emphasising in a rather dramatic tone, that "*le phénomène clandestin continue de s'accroître*" [clandestine migration is on the rise] despite the various operations of "*rapatriement*" [repatriations] carried out by Algerian authorities. Accompanying the footage voice-over is a sequence of images featuring a large number of stranded 'sub-Saharan' migrants under a bridge. The construction of the '*clandestin*' figure in this video sequence is achieved via visual zoom in/out effects. The use of extreme wide-shot magnifies the visualisation of a 'mass' of migrant 'bodies' clustered within the same space, thereby systematically activating the trope of 'clandestine migration' as a threat. This is complemented by the reporters' (hyperbolic) assertion of the 'dangers' entailed by this "*clandestinité anarchique*" [anarchical clandestinity]. Although the securitarian argument is smoothly embedded within the multimodal arrangement through for instance, the allusion to migrants' potential 'criminality', which is visually reinforced by the unsanitary conditions wherein they live, the humanitarian tone is nonetheless much more pervasive. By illustration, the shift in camera perspective from the 'massified' migrant bodies to a quick close-up of a horde of flies buzzing around a dump of waste gives viewers a sense of the contaminated environment wherein they lead their precarious lives (Fig. 4), eliciting mixed feelings of sympathy, fear, and repulsion. Near the end of the footage, an Algerian citizen comments on the migrants' health-endangering situation lamenting the absence of sanitation and decent living conditions while reflecting on the harmful impact of the latter on the well-being of the neighbouring communities. The combination of the visual and spatial modes creates a double effect whereby the migrants are represented both as victims of their plight and as a safety and sanitation concern for the local populations. Thus, the securitarian-humanitarian combined trope is communicated with efficacy by the semiotic actors to viewers through both intramodal (use of font and terminology) and intermodal weaving (sound of flies and waste imagery).

Fig 3. Still taken from a news footage broadcast by the Algerian (State-owned) channel, *EChourouk TV,* featuring a wide-shot of a group of 'sub-Saharan' migrants stranded under a bridge in Algiers.

Fig 4. Still from a news footage broadcast by the Algerian (State-owned) channel, *Echourouk TV* showing migrants' squalid camps.

Accordingly, the narrative developed by the news footage centres around the idea that unauthorised migrants represent a 'surplus burden' owing to their 'unplaceability' on Algerian soil, which necessitates their urgent 'repatriation'. It is reasonable to argue that the theme of un-belongingness brings the *2M* news footage and that of *Echourouk TV* into an intertextual relationship despite subtle differences in terms of their visual semiotics (conveyed by the dispersed migrants' imagery in the former and the clustered bodies in the latter).

Additionally, im-mobility is a key trope in both narratives. While in the first, 'sub-Saharans' are pictured as an im-mobile danger, in the second one they are framed as stuck and inactive. Indeed, this immobility/inactivity not only serves to emphasise their incapacity to 'do'

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something about their predicament, but also foregrounds their inability to 'do' much about their representation owing to their strategic de-authorisation, conveyed through the flagrant unequal distribution of voice. In both multimodal framings, none of the 'sub-Saharans' is granted the right to reflect on their marginal status. Accordingly, immobility and dis-placement are experienced at the material and symbolic level. Migrants are 'frozen' within spaces where they should not be (squatted flat, under a bridge), and their stories are, resultantly, suspended in the abyss of obscurity. Accordingly, the label '*migrant clandestin*' acts as an anchoring point in these hegemonic multimodal narratives. The label becomes an instance of "discursive bordering" (Van Kooy et al., 2021) obstructing any potential for meaningful engagement with the migrant 'Other.' Through the (mis)use and abuse of the label '*clandestin*,' rhetors in both national contexts depict migrants as being unable to 'move' and 'act.' Second, they are symbolically 'paralysed' through the use of metaphor and metonymy despite the plurality of their stories, voices, and migratory aspirations, and the complexity of their individual and national histories.

Shifting attention to more left-leaning media outlets such as the Moroccan weekly magazine *Telquel*[113] and the Algerian French language daily newspaper *El Watan*, one can observe common discursive trends. Although both agencies are known for their 'anti-government' stance, they nonetheless seem to reproduce the same hegemonic patterns when it comes to the representation of the phenomenon of unauthorised migration. Notwithstanding the comprehensive aspect of their news articles content, they nevertheless tend to rely heavily on the official press releases and police reports to re-construct narratives around migrants.

In these respects, labelling as a form of 'symbolic fixity' (Smets, 2019) both downplays the dynamic nature of the migratory act and *freezes* the *harrag*[114] within a prescribed hierarchy of being. Through the politics of labelling, public and media discourses in Morocco and Algeria, have 'managed' to convert the sub-Saharan' migrant into an inflexible and stable signifier/signified to guarantee the continuity of the Us/Them binary, replicating in the process the ex-coloniser's codes of representation. The migrant 'other' is therefore discursively and symbolically 'fenced' and 'captured' in marginal spaces.

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[113] See for example, Dibondo. D. (2016). « Maroc-Espagne: Trois fois plus d'immigrés clandestins ces trois derniers mois. » *Telquel.ma*. 6 June. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/24v8mctr [Accessed 4 January 2022].

[114] My emphasis. I deliberately mobilise this 'ice/fire' conceptual interplay to set the stage for my analysis of Algerian and Moroccan *harraga*'s digital (counter-)narratives in Part Three, which, as I shall demonstrate, challenge the EU-Maghreb immobility regime by documenting the ways in which they 'set the sea on fire', upsetting thereby physical and symbolic borders.

It has been reported that a large number of the 'intercepted', 'arrested', 'expelled' and 'deported' migrants are often refugees and asylum seekers (Amnesty International, 2018). The inability and unwillingness of state authorities to distinguish between these 'fabricated' migrant categories further draws attention to the instrumentalisation of the opacity of 'clandestinity' in public and media discourses. This is exacerbated by the linguistic inaccuracy and editorial inconsistency of some news agencies like the Moroccan *Yabiladi*, *Elkhabar, Libération* (Sarikakis, 2017). Likewise, in the Algerian context, *El Watan* and *ElMoudjahid* coverage of unauthorised migration is characterised by terminological imprecision and confusion.[115] For instance, words like '*Sub-Saharien*', '*clandestin*', '*Africain*', '*illégal*', tend to be used interchangeably within the same discursive spaces.

Supplying their audiences with an arsenal of interchangeably usable words such as '*sans-papiers*', '*clandestin*', '*illégal*' to name a few, public and mainstream narratives in Morocco and Algeria further complicate the terminological picture. For scholars, critics, and researchers in migration studies, unpacking these toxic discursive constructions by exposing their symbolic and embodied impact on unauthorised migrants serves to build a solid basis for the examination of the latter's first-hand accounts as a potential form of narrative 'counter-attack', turning the space of *harga* representation into a 'battlefield'.

1.2.2 Entrapped in 'transit'

The title of this sub-section is revelatory of the power of language to define, restrict, and entrap. Indeed, as we shall see in Part Two, 'sub-Saharan' migrants tend to depict their experiences of 'transit' in Morocco and Algeria as 'traps' (Collyer, 2007) in their co-authored testimonials. In what follows, I engage with the constructions of the 'sub-Saharan' (trans)migrant figure and unpack the (mis)use of the 'transit' label in Moroccan and Algerian news media spaces.

As discussed earlier, both Morocco and Algeria have for a long time been considered as stop-overs and gateways for 'sub-Saharans' *en route* to Europe. Although many of them do decide to settle there, many others, finding living conditions unbearable, decide to cross into Spain via the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla bordering Morocco or via the Mediterranean Sea. In the media, not only unauthorised migrants but also asylum seekers, refugees, and even migrants with temporary residence, are often erroneously referred to as being

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[115] Sarikakis (2017).

'in transit' (Khrouz, 2015). This label or 'categorical fetish' (De Genova, 2013) is highly problematic as it ensnares migrants in a limbo situation where in the eyes of the Law of the 'transit' nation, they are 'non-citizens'. Frank Duvell (2008: para.1), for instance acknowledges that the 'transit' concept resists definition, emphasising that it is "scientifically blurred […] and politically loaded". He also adds that it is an umbrella term typically applied to mixed migration flows, which often leads to conceptual and terminological confusion.

Put differently, because they are only '*de passage*' and therefore not 'legalised' residents, their access to basic needs like health care, housing, or the job market is blocked. In an insightful reflection on the transit concept, Nadia Khrouz (2015) observes that the latter has gained increased importance in Moroccan public and media discourse since the beginning of the 21st century but has particularly been over used in the spectacular migration 'crises' in Spain's North African enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla in 2005.

Furthermore, the label has been so extensively used to the point where its meaning has become indisputable.[116] Khrouz specifies that it has been almost predominantly used over the past two decades to refer specifically to 'sub-Saharan' migrants. By the same token, the vagueness and ambiguity of the notion tend to often be drawn upon to refer to diverse (migratory) situations[117] and to mask the transit country's unwillingness to facilitate migrants' access to basic needs. As such, the concept helps to consolidate political projects, i.e., those who are considered 'settled' are deemed to have rights, migrants who are in transit are not. They are thus systematically excluded from civic, social, and economic participation. Bradeloup (2014), for instance, concludes that from the perspective of Moroccan migration policy, the transit figure can be understood as an excuse to convert migrants into 'rightless' beings. In other words, it enables governments to maintain the idea that rights and citizenship are tied to nationality and to long-term settlement. The transit label has therefore become a "political code for unwanted migrants" (Duvell, 2008, np). More importantly, it has also been instrumentalised by Maghrebi countries to negotiate development aid schemes with the EU. Khrouz (2015: 86) elaborates:

The image of a massive influx of sub-Saharan migrants in transit with a view to crossing into Europe at any cost has led to the perception of the Maghreb countries as striving to alleviate

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[116] Khrouz (2015).
[117] Ibid.

Europe's burdens rather than managing a migration issue that equally concerns them, whether temporarily or in the long run.[118]

Accordingly, the politicisation of the transit label facilitated their access to financial and technical support in the field of migration management (Duvell, 2008). This argument is illustrated in an article published by *Echouroukonline*[119] (20 October 2018) with the sensationalist title, "35 Million Illegal Immigrants creep from the Sahel Region towards Algeria", in which the journalist reports the words of the director of migration-related affairs in the Algerian Ministry of Interior:

> The *security measures* in the South of the country represent the first barriers to the border with Europe. Algeria *offers a great service* to Europe, because if Algeria tolerates *illegal immigration*, there will be a *dangerous migration* flowing towards the European continent.[120]

References to 'transit' migration in Moroccan and Algerian news media often take the form of exaggerated and alarmist reports. Words like 'masses', 'millions', and 'waves' serve to sustain the myth of invasive/uncontrollable transit as illustrated by the example above. One of the outcomes of these discursive practices culminated in the launching of the project "*promotion de la santé et de la protection des migrants vulnérables en transit par le Maroc*" [promotion of health and protection of vulnerable migrants in transit through Morocco] by IOM in 2018,[121] the objective of which was to offer humanitarian assistance to vulnerable transmigrants. Contrary to political discourse, Law 02-03 contains a number of repressive measures and guarantees in no way the rights and the protection of migrants. Instead, it criminalises and penalises migrant 'illegality'. As opposed to the humanitarian/humanist rhetoric adopted in 2013 after Morocco's declaration of a new migration and asylum strategy, 'clandestine' migrants are often referred to in news media as being in 'transit', and are therefore not the 'responsibility' of the nation (Khrouz, 2015).

While acknowledging the importance of increased border surveillance, Morocco's official press organs like *Maghreb Arabe Press (MAP)* and *Le Matin* have tended to portray

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[118] My translation of the original French quote.
[119] "35 Million illegal immigrants creep from the Sahel Region towards Algeria, Europe". (2018). *Echourouk Online*, 20 October. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/3r2us6j5 [Accessed 4 January 2022].
[120] My Emphasis.
[121] Paillard., S. (2018). « Maroc: Lancement d'un projet de protection des migrants en transit. » *Yabiladi*. 02 August. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/v9uk7ta [Accessed 4 January 2022].

transmigration in a way that emphasises the country's efforts to regularise 'undocumented' migrants and facilitate their 'post-regularisation' social integration. Khaled Zerouali, director of Migration and Border Surveillance at the Ministry of Interior, lauded "*la pertinence de la (nouvelle) politique migratoire*" [the importance of the new migration policy], which enabled the protection of migrants from human trafficking networks.[122] By reiterating the so-called 'humanist', and 'inclusive' character of the reformed migration strategy, Zerouali diverted the attention of the media away from the continuous massive crackdowns on migrants' makeshift camps in the forests of Gourougou in Nador, near the Spanish enclave of Melilla and Belyounes, near the enclave of Ceuta, as well as the violent raids in urban ghettos (Amnesty International, 2018). The 'hyper-mediatisation' of Morocco's alleged 'exemplary' migration policy can be read as an instance of 'illegality dis-placement' performance as the violence of the State against those who were not 'regularised' has often been visually and discursively marginalised.[123]

Likewise, in the Algerian context, the 'transit' excuse is a predominant feature in the political and mainstream discourse on unauthorised migration. The argument that 'sub-Saharan' migrants are 'not here to stay' or that Algeria is only a transit country (by default) to the EU, is a leitmotif in the narratives that public authorities build around illegalised migrants. In spite of the Algerian government's pseudo-humanist discourse around unauthorised migration in the context of the so-called 'voluntary return' operations, 'sub- Saharans' have often been framed as an additional burden on Algerian economy. As director of migration affairs, Hassan Kassimi, explained in an interview aired on Radio Alger Chaîne 3,[124] Algeria is not responsible for other countries' populations—a declaration which highlighted the inherent double standards-based discourse on unauthorised migration.

As Inka Stock (2019: 40) points out, "policy makers can easily conclude that the phenomenon of transit migration represents 'a security threat' to European governments, in the form of migrants intending to circumvent border controls and enter the EU unauthorised, snatching local jobs". She adds that policy makers and media agents do not generally acknowledge the role of states in conditioning these unauthorised movements and the dependency conditions they have created. In this sense, 'transit migration' is not merely a result

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[122] « Khalid Zerouali : Les pays du Sud ne peuvent pas assumer à eux seuls l'entière responsabilité de protéger les frontières » (2019). *Le Matin.ma*, 22 July. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/yeb9yn86 [Accessed 29 January 2022].
[123] Exceptions, however, can be found in left-leaning media outlets like the French language weekly magazine *Telquel* where human rights organisations' reports of migrants' human rights abuse are often quoted.
[124] Video Available at: https://tinyurl.com/s9ampde2 [Accessed 29 september 2022].

of migrants' individual choices, but rather a construct *produced*[125] by the bordering policies and structural constraints of the 'transit' nation.

The porosity of the transit category (Duvell, 2008) is often instrumentalised to draw attention not only to the temporariness of migrants' stay but also to its 'illegality'. Therefore, through this act of dis-placement, political authorities and media agents discursively manage to conceal their failed responsibility towards migrants and the violation of their human rights. Many unauthorised 'sub-Saharan' migrants, as Inka Stock (2019) demonstrates, are "not in transit [but instead find themselves] forcibly immobilised" (10) and dis-placed due to the increased militarisation and surveillance of the EU's external borders and consequently, cannot pursue their journey. It has also been argued that the 'transit' discourse reveals Morocco and Algeria's reluctance to admit that a growing number of 'sub-Saharan' migrants are made unable to cross into Europe due to their restrictive regime of immobility and are therefore, forced to stay.[126] Stock (2019) also highlights the human costs of frustration, anger, and stress for the migrants excluded from the benefits of citizenship and legal mobility options, and their consequent entrapment in a 'limbo' condition where they are subjected to "segregation, marginalisation, and exploitation" (149).[127] By foregrounding migrants' 'illegality' and backgrounding the source of illegality production, Morocco and Algeria have contributed in perpetuating migrants' state of rightlessness, thereby prolonging their condition of forced immobility.

As such, these dominant simplistic narratives surrounding transit migration have consolidated the routine dehumanisation of forcibly immobilised migrants. By symbolically immobilising them within the boundaries imposed by labels like '*clandestin*', '*illégal*', '*migrants en transit*', not only have Morocco and Algeria managed to obfuscate their own 'crisis' of hospitality (Friese, 2010) but also in doing this, have reproduced the EU's racialised construction of the 'migrant crisis'. In the "illegality industry" (Andersson, 2014) of the EU-Maghreb regime of immobility, discourse makers act reductively by reshaping migrants' (of diverse origins) (hi)stories, aspirations and statuses "to fit the generic mould of illegality" (Andersson, 2014: 14).

In summary, this chapter has examined the policy gaps and inconsistencies with migratory realities characterising both Morocco and Algeria as well as the immobilising impact

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[125] My Emphasis.
[126] Stock (2019).
[127] I shall further elaborate on the existential impact of 'transit' on migrants in my examination of their immobility experiences as depicted in their testimonial accounts.

of migration laws on unauthorised migrants. Drawing on Smets' concept of 'symbolic immobility,' I stretched the analysis to both countries' mediascapes to explore how they contributed in the perpetuation and legitimisation of official discourses by concealing the underlying deficiencies of their migration policy systems. The manipulation of words and the (mis)use of migrant 'labels' have been shown to be enlightening angles from which to analyse the extent to which Morocco and Algeria's unauthorised migration narratives converge despite divergences in the legal frameworks governing their migration management. Having demonstrated through a Multimodal Critical Narrative Analysis the strategies used in mainstream media outlets to construct migrants' 'clandestinity' and 'illegality' within a simplistic combined securitarian-humanitarian rhetoric, in the following chapter, I address other discursive 'parameters', which culminate in the production of *harraga* as figures in 'crisis'.

Chapter Two—'Harga scare': Harraga's 'suicidal' mobilities in mainstream media narratives

As discussed in the previous chapter, multiple labels have been deployed by public authorities and media agents in Morocco and Algeria to frame 'sub-Saharan' African unauthorised migration as a problem or as a national challenge. This framing also encompasses Moroccan and Algerian (would-be) *harraga* whereby hegemonic actors redirect focus from the government's deficiencies by casting the former as problematic figures willing to undertake suicidal journeys to cross into a 'falsely' imagined Eldorado. This second chapter offers other perspectives from which to view the different semantic nuances of 'symbolic im-mobility', displacement, and 'crisis' by engaging in a Multimodal Critical Narrative reading of a selection of hegemonic narratives around *harga* to EU-rope, thus adding thematic depth to the part. The chapter unfolds in two distinct sections: first, it examines hegemonic constructions of *harraga* as pathological subjects, that is, as victims of their own disillusions while highlighting government authorities' instrumentalisation of religious discourse to deflect responsibility for migrants' 'clandestine' departures and displace attention away from their failed domestic policies. In this chapter, I argue that by depicting *harga* as a form of 'suicide', discourse makers frame the phenomenon as fundamentally unethical, inherently immoral and as such, incompatible with Islamic teachings. Second, I scrutinise the ways in which Morocco and Algeria's mainstream news media construct the Mediterranean Sea as a space of migrant immobility/immobilisation, as well as a maritime graveyard 'indifferent' to the drifting motionless bodies of *harraga*, hence consolidating the hegemonic suicide-themed narrative around *harga*. The most salient immobility/immobilisation tropes identified in the selected media narratives encompass *harraga*'s interception, arrest, rescue, and death. Additionally, I demonstrate that the 'moving' images of *harraga*'s dead bodies across local audiences' screens not only shed light on the symbolic dynamics of im-mobility, but also generate what I refer to as '*harga* scare'[128], a politics of representation whereby hegemonic actors—be they politicians, religious authorities or media agencies—instil fear in potential *harraga* and subsequently, deter them from undertaking the (life-endangering) Mediterranean journey all while responding to Europe's border management demands. In the final part of this thesis, I revisit the findings

presented in this chapter and juxtapose them with *harraga*'s (counter-)narratives and lay bare the tensions in contemporary forms of migration representation.

2.1   'Burning minds', 'pathological desires': Harga as 'suicidal madness'

In the national context under examination, terminology related to psychological disorders and moral sterility permeates hegemonic narratives surrounding *harga*. As established earlier, the fire metaphor in the word '*harrag'*, refers to an individual's burning desire to cross the Mediterranean Sea in order to seek better life opportunities in an imagined EU-ropean Eldorado. Additionally, in the Maghrebi cultural imaginary, the *harrag* is often conceived of as someone whose mind is 'on fire' with thoughts about Europe, often to the point of obsession (Souiah et al., 2018). This European Eldorado 'fixation', albeit translated in creative and subversive forms on *harga* Facebook pages (as I shall demonstrate in Part Three), has been instrumentalised in official discourses to convey a negative image of *harraga*. The government has tended to capitalise on this *harga* obsession in hyperbolic ways, thereby framing *harga* seekers as pathological.

Although at the beginning of the 21st century the *harga* phenomenon in Morocco and Algeria scarcely made the headlines, it has only increasingly become visible in the media after Morocco, in partnership with Spain, intensified its border surveillance system, which compelled many Moroccans and Algerians to shift to other routes. Commenting on the *harga* phenomenon in Algeria back in 2009, Bensaad noted that while the country was busy pushing back and repressing 'sub-Saharan' migrants, an increasing number of young Algerian nationals were attempting to make the perilous Mediterranean crossing. Only recently, Souiah (2016; 2021) notes, has the Algerian government acknowledged that *harga* is a political issue. Similarly, in Morocco the same representational trend has been documented as mainstream media have tended to foreground the unauthorised transmigration of 'sub-Saharans', making Moroccan *harraga*'s cross-border attempts less visible than those of the former (Khrouz, 2015). However, as the number of *harraga*'s deaths at sea became increasingly discernible (Abderezzak, 2016), Moroccan authorities started addressing the phenomenon in different spheres of public discourse.

Furthermore, as outlined earlier, one of the major steps taken by the Moroccan and Algerian governments was the criminalisation of unauthorised exits, which, throughout the years, has proven counter-productive. In the face of *harraga*'s 'stubbornness' to brave the seas,

both Algerian and Moroccan policymakers have adopted new deterrence schemes by instrumentalising religious sermons in mosques[129] to foster young people's awareness of the 'suicidal' character of 'boat' journeys. To ensure the effective dissemination of the religious reading of *harga* and its (im)moral implications, state authorities have ensured that sermons are broadcast on religious radio, national TV, and YouTube channels.

Harga has been more often than not compared to an act of self-destruction as the *harrag* puts his liberty and life at risk by crossing borders via perilous unauthorised routes. Although public and media discourses have often eschewed the explicit use of the word 'suicide' when addressing the *harga* phenomenon, they have nonetheless tended to deploy metaphors which allude to its suicidal character. In a declaration made 27 December 2018,[130] the then Algerian Minister of Religious Affairs, Muhammed Aissa, called upon imams to devote their Friday '*Khotba*' [sermon] to raise people's awareness of the perils of *harga* by drawing on the Qur'anic '*ayats*' [verses] which forbid acts of self-harm and to warn them against what he called "*une tentation funeste*"[131] [a fatal temptation]. This awareness campaign was indispensable, he maintained, "*pour chasser les idées noires et battre en brèche leurs illusions*"[132] [to dispel dark thoughts from their heads and dismantle their illusions]. Paraphrasing Aissa's words, the reporter added that religion, along with its implications on national identity, needs to be considered in the effort to combat extremist ideas and alleviate the anxieties of Algerian youth. Notably, the negative language used to depict *harraga* constructs them as impulsive, irrational, and psychologically unsettled.

The notion of 'suicide' can be defined in both psychological and moral terms. In the Muslim religion for instance, the act of ending one's life is established as a sin. Suicide has also been understood, at least in the Arab-Muslim world, as a cowardly act that is usually undertaken by someone who is not mentally stable. In this sense, suicide, as literal self-destruction, is perceived, I argue, at least from the perspective of the Maghrebi societies selected for this study, as indicative of moral sterility and mental 'pathology'. Put differently, *harga* is pathological and hence contagious, which legitimises its containment. By illustration, in the

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[129] « Religion : Les Imams consacrent une partie de leur prêche de vendredi à la sensibilisation au phénomène de la migration clandestine. » (2018). *DK News*, 29 December. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/5n72jjj5 [Accessed 14 January 2022].

[130] Referenced in an article published by the pro-government Algerian newspaper, *El Moudjahid*, December 28 2018.

[131] Ibid.

[132] « La prêche de vendredi consacrée au phénomène de la migration clandestine. » (2018). *Algérie 360*. 28 December. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/3zma99mv [Accessed 14 january 2022]. My translation.

Friday sermons shared on YouTube channels like *Adin Nassiha*[133] and *Nhari tv*[134] the imams, drawing on Prophet Muhammed's *hijra* [migration] narrative as articulated in *Sourat* [chapter] 49 entitled, "*Al-hujurat*" [the Chambers], explained that when migration is 'illegal' and 'self-destructive', it contradicts the fundamental tenets of Islam. Both imams asserted that the Prophet was 'compelled' to migrate from Mecca to Medina as he faced increasing hostility from the Quraysh tribe who opposed his teachings and voiced threats to murder him.[135] They particularly highlighted that the '*mouhajiroun*' (emigrants) praised in the Qur'an, were those who migrated to seek sanctuary and spread the virtues of Islam while insisting upon the so-called 'legal' aspect of their migration. Evidently, the 'legal' argument is quite dis-placed as the globalised—yet bordered—world of the 21st century is radically different from that of the 7th century. As such, the religious narrative has often been leveraged to dissuade young men (and women) from undertaking the perilous crossing and inflict upon those who intend to cross a feeling of guilt.

Thus, the 'illegal' [*ghair char3i*] act of crossing borders—as construed by imams—is presented as a sin [*dhanb*], i.e., punishable by Allah, for which only the *harrag* is to blame. Moreover, the imams underscored the fact that risking one's life by crossing the sea on board of what they called "*qawareb al-mout*" [death boats] is an act of (literal) "*tahlouka*" [self-destruction], and is thus symptomatic of a mental disorder. For instance, the Algerian preacher in *Adin nassiha TV* denounced the "irrational" attitude of Moroccan youth by satirically mimicking their moto, "*yekelni el ħout w le yekelnou e-doud*" [I'd rather be devoured by sharks than be consumed by worms/ I'd rather perish at sea than rot here] which is often translated in French as "*plutôt se faire manger par des requins que vivre avec les Marocains.*" Accordingly, *harraga* are portrayed as suicidal and hence pathological, which clearly downplays the political and existential dimensions they attribute to their migratory journey, as I shall demonstrate in Part Three. Furthermore, one of the *ayats* that the imams quoted in their defence of their stance regarding *harga* as a transgressive and suicidal form of (self-activated) mobility is "*wala tulqu bi'aidikum ila a-tahlukah*" [And make not your own hands contribute to your destruction] (Sourat 'Al-baqarah/The Heifer: 195). As per this religious understanding, *harraga* are framed as morally sterile, ignorant about and deviant from their religion, and mentally unbalanced as they are unable to contain their 'excessive', and hence 'pathological' desire to cross into the

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[133] Video posted 28 January 2017. Available at: https://youtu.be/wrFjJPCv5tA [Accessed 4 January 2022].
[134] Video posted 03 October 2018. Available at: https://YouTube.com/watch?v=D7f0_L4lONM&feature=share [Accessed 29 January 2022].
[135] I elaborate further on the re-purposing of the Prophet's *hijra* narrative when addressing *harraga's* Facebook-shared stories in Part Three.

illusive 'EU-ropean Eldorado'. In this religious framing, *harraga* are held responsible for their migratory 'madness' and its immoral implications. From the preachers' point of view, *harga* entails both the transgression of the Word of Allah and State Law. In this way, the '*harrag*' is constructed as the very embodiment of 'moral' and 'mental' pathology, and thus becomes a *fixed*[136] signified within Morocco and Algeria's discursive immobility regime.

It is sound to deduce that the state's inability and unwillingness to acknowledge its own dys-functionnings and address potential remedies to the phenomenon of *harga* is concealed by these discursive manoeuvres of blame-displacement. Very few politicians, for instance, admit that the immobility regime within (socio-economic and political repression) and beyond the country's borders pushes *harraga* to take deadly risks, to 'burn' the Mediterranean Sea route (as well as their own roots) due to a profound sense of *malaise* resulting from a feeling of being 'neglected' and marginalised—a condition they refer to as '*hogra*', as shall be explored in depth in Part Three. Although the word *harga* is frequently used in popular talk in impoverished neighbourhoods, it has only recently become used, in a somehow cautious way, by public authorities and media agencies either by placing it between inverted commas or adding the expression 'so called' before it. Catherine Mazauric (2012) explains that this reticence is strategic as Maghrebi public and media discourse makers have sought to attribute 'illegality' and 'irregularity' solely to 'sub-Saharan' transmigrants in an attempt to divert public attention away from their own mismanagement of the *harga* phenomenon. Arguably, the less frequent use of the words '*harga/harraga*' and the more common usage of legal terminology could be construed as the state's way of downplaying the 'fiery', and hence subversive character implied by the former, foregrounding thereby the criminal or pathological implications associated with it. In so doing, state actors conceal their misgovernance of migration and the failure of their policies to provide relief and decent livelihoods to the people. Consolidating this view is Salim Chena's (2015) astute observation that *harraga* are assigned the role of the villain in the State's narrative(s) around unauthorised migration:

Les critiques nationalistes dominantes de la harga font de ses protagonistes de *mauvais patriotes*, des *criminels* et des *suicidaires* […] Le harrag se trouve *pris* dans un écheveau relationnel où il devient un individu *à appréhender*, un criminel *à emprisonner*, un mouton noir de la communauté nationale, un client prêt à payer un prix exorbitant pour partir (51).[137]

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[136] My emphasis.
[137] All italics mine.

[The prevailing nationalist critiques of *harga* depict *harraga* as unpatriotic, criminal, and suicidal individuals […] *Harraga* find themselves ensnared in a web of relationships where they are viewed as people to be apprehended, outlaws to be imprisoned, pariahs of the national community, and potential smugglers' customers ready to pay an exorbitant price to leave].[138]

As an integral part of the toxic regime of *harga* representation, these figurative 'pathology'-themed (dis-)articulations reduce *harraga* to self-annihilating creatures. In these 'frozen' metaphors, *harraga*'s complex stories, struggles, and resistance strategies are effectively played down, leaving deep 'cracks' (Khosravi, 2024) in the discourse surrounding *harga*. These gaps are addressed thoroughly in Part Three as I 'replace the lens' by charting (would-be) *harraga*'s online-shared narratives, which offer alternative ways of engaging with the multifaceted phenomenon of *harga* through their strategic reversal and appropriation of Prophet Muhammed's *hijra* narrative and fierce denunciation of their dysfunctional governments' immobilising policies.

In the following section, I examine still and moving imagery of immobile/immobilised *harraga* at sea as conveyed in mainstream media news outlets and reflect on their impact on local audiences by specifically deconstructing hegemonic '*harga* scare' narratives.

2.2 'Harga scare': 'Moving images' of harraga's immobile bodies and the politics of pity and fear

The visual and verbal constructions of immobile/immobilised *harraga*'s bodies in Moroccan and Algerian mainstream news discourse are inscribed in what I refer to as a 'politics of pity and fear' whereby multimodal representations have the power to emotionally 'move' audiences and virtually 'move' across different screens. The narratives that emerge out of this pity and fear-arousing cluster of images are worth examining. As an integral part of their '*harga* scare' politics of representation, hegemonic actors in both Morocco and Algeria tend to 'hypervisibilise' the 'heroic' interception, arrest, and rescue operations performed by border patrol units in an attempt to deter would-be *harraga* from undertaking illegalised sea journeys. These representations prompt us to challenge and decode the very 'migrant crisis'/ 'migrant *in* crisis' construct.

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[138] My translation.

In Moroccan and Algerian news on thwarted *harga* journeys to Europe, symbolic immobility occurs at the lexical and grammatical levels as *harraga* have been often depicted (as opposed to the very semantics of the latter appellation) as passive subjects, or rather as objects of representation:

> Deux Marocains ont *été repérés*, *secourus*, et *déférés* devant la justice. […] Ils ont *été abandonnés* par un passeur.[139]
>
> [Two Moroccans were *intercepted*, *rescued*, and *brought* to justice. […] They had been left behind by a smuggler.]

Through the enumeration of passive clauses, the two nameless Moroccan *harraga* referred to in the above news segment are robbed of their agency as they are acted upon by border defence forces, the law apparatus, as well as by the agents of representation. Put differently, in much the same way as their 'sub-Saharan' counterparts do, Moroccan *harraga* face immobility/immobilisation on three fronts: physically through the intervention of border protection agents, at the policy level as they risk potential imprisonment for having attempted to cross into foreign territories via unauthorised channels, and symbolically through the immobilising/silencing discursive devices deployed by the rhetors in the representation act. Additionally, they are framed as naïve individuals for having entrusted their fate to unscrupulous smugglers, whom after having taken their money, abandoned them to the perilous depths of the Mediterranean Sea. Notwithstanding their brevity, these two sentences extracted from a Moroccan news outlet are very effective in communicating to would-be *harraga* the inevitability of unauthorised cross-border failure and the likelihood of being immobilised at the border as the Royal Navy units—the agents of action implied in the first sentence—are well equipped and trained to curb 'illegal' exits from Moroccan territory. What is also inferred in the aforementioned news construction is that any *harga* attempt will inexorably result in punitive measures as stipulated in Article 50 of Law 02-03 related to 'unlawful' departures from Moroccan soil (appendix A). Thus, the phrase "*déférés devant la justice*" [brought to justice] suggests a range of punitive repercussions encompassing various forms of potential immobility that the arrested *harraga* may face. These consequences entail not only fines ranging from 3000 to 10.000 Dirhams (approximately €280 to €900), representing an additional financial burden

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[139] *La Releve.ma*. 09 August 2015. My emphasis.

alongside the money the *harraga* had already lost to the smuggler who abandoned them in the midst of the sea, but also the more troubling prospect of incarceration for a period spanning from one to six months (appendix A). Furthermore, the agents allegedly involved in 'facilitating' the *harga* journey to Europe are portrayed as potential contributors to *harraga*'s ultimate immobilisation or apprehension at sea. As such, what is communicated via this short news segment is the idea that *harraga* may find themselves potentially constrained by legal obstacles, diminished resources, and the stigma associated with criminalisation, thereby complicating their prospects for future *authorised* migration as a clear criminal record is a prerequisite for securing a Schengen visa. Resultantly, immobility may potentially turn into an existential predicament. It is equally important to add that despite the notably low number of intercepted *harraga*— specifically, two individuals cited in the news piece under scrutiny—this highlights the increasing media focus on the *harga* phenomenon within the larger context of the 'migrant crisis' in Europe, reflecting Morocco's efforts in effectively fulfilling its role as a key actor in the enforcement of European border security measures, in accordance with established bilateral agreements.

It is crucial to emphasise in this context that in 2015, the EU pledged a total of € 234 million Euros for border management initiatives in Morocco via bilateral and regional contracts, intended for use over the period between 2015 and 2021.[140] The allocated funds were designated to support a spectrum of initiatives, including the training of personnel involved in border security, enhancing efforts to combat human 'smuggling' and 'trafficking' networks, and facilitating assisted voluntary returns. While the news piece highlights Morocco's commitment to shielding EU borders and implementing its domestic migration laws, it simultaneously engineers a '*harga* scare' by mediatising the extensive surveillance measures in place to deter potential *harraga* from undertaking unauthorised sea journeys. However, this narrative obscures the dependency framework underpinning the bilateral agreements between Morocco and its former colonisers (namely France and Spain), which significantly impact its sovereignty and autonomy in managing migration. Similar grammatical constructions can be found in Algerian mainstream narratives around the interception, arrest, and rescue operations in which the discursive positioning of border agents and so-called border transgressors rests upon a hegemonic hierarchy of voice (Reissman, 2008). The use of Arabic substantives like "*iħbat*" [interruption/thwarting], "*inkadh*" [rescue], or their verb forms "*yoħbitou*" and "*yonqidhou*"

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[140] European Commission, (2023). "EU Migration Report in Morocco."
Available at: https://tinyurl.com/yc4w979w [Accessed 19 September 2023].

often achieves similar positioning effects, as illustrated by a news headline (Fig. 5) sourced from the Algerian pro-government media outlet *An-Nahar Online:*

Fig 5. Screenshot of *An-Nahar* online News page featuring the headline in Arabic "*A-Dark yohbitou mouhawalat hijra ghair char3ia noufoudhouha 4 chabab fi 3ain tmouchent*" [Coast Guards thwart attempt at illegal emigration involving 4 young people off the coast of Ain Temouchent]. Posted 07 October 2019.

Deprived of voice and agency, *harraga* are reduced to 'floating' numbers on the white page of a news piece or a 'mass' of featureless figures on the viewer's screen, as illustrated by the photograph accompanying the article. In this verbal and visual process of quantification and 'massification', the migrants morph into 'moving' numbers, triggering feelings of fear in the national audiences. Paradoxically, this 'movement' is merely symbolic: the migrant as a mathematical figure is mobil(ised) while their body remains unmoving in the physical space of the sea and 'captured' within the boundaries of the photographed image. In Mazzara's words (2019: 38), this strategy "generates the homogenised and aggregate representations that are decisive for erasing the individuality and political subjectivity of the people on the move". More importantly, the hegemonic actors involved in the construction of the deterrence narrative or '*harga* scare' effectively conceal the root causes of *harga*, i.e, the government's failure in addressing social ills and the inefficiency of its migration policies. Contextually vague, the news piece under scrutiny capitalises on the actions performed by border agents to consolidate the State's *harga* deterrence narrative and elides the historical tensions that Algeria experienced

during the year 2019. Mass popular protests erupted 22 February, known as the '*Hirak*' (meaning mobilisation/movement in Arabic), as a culmination of years of mounting frustration stemming from systemic corruption in the security and bureaucratic apparatus, persistently high youth unemployment estimated at over 25%, a scarcity of job opportunities paralleled with increased border enforcement, which had become more rigorously implemented with the onset of the 'migrant crisis' in Europe in 2015. Additionally, economic stagnation with GDP growth rates falling around 1.5% in 2019 further aggravated the already deteriorating socio-economic and political situation in the country (Souiah, 2020). None of the aforementioned historical details is evoked in mainstream news narratives around *harraga*-interception, foregrounding instead what Cuttitta (2014) calls "the toughness of the border", emphasising thereby the power of Algerian coast guards in "thwarting" any attempt at "illegal" migration. Accordingly, the discursive and narrative constructions of interception and arrest operations across Moroccan and Algerian mediascapes between 2015 and 2019 are contingent upon the visual and verbal framing of *harraga*'s stuckedness at sea or abandonment by smugglers before reaching European territorial waters.

Additionally, their subsequent rescue or death, as I shall demonstrate further in the following examples, relies on the simplistic yet powerful establishment of fear or pity-inducing border imagery. In Moroccan and Algerian mainstream discourse around migrant death at sea, two major trends of representation have been identified. The two predominant narratives that we encounter as we read online news pieces or watch national TV news reportages, waver between impersonal accounts loaded with statistical figures and sensationalist representations, which extensively rely on the mobilisation of horrific imagery such as: "*trois corps sans vie* […] *repêchés par les pêcheurs d'Oran*[141] [three lifeless bodies retrieved by the fishermen of Oran]; "*Un Marocain de 27 ans est mort asphyxié* […] *en tentant d'entrer illégalement en Espagne*"[142] [a 27-year-old-man Moroccan man died due to asphyxiation while attempting to cross to Spain].

Together the dehumanising numerical quantification and (dis) identification of *harraga* function as an inhumanely reductive 'conclusion' (i.e., corpses retrieved by fishermen or asphyxiated bodies, as conveyed by the examples above) to what the official discourse makers perceive as the 'logical' consequence of the former's 'suicidal' attempts to 'burn' the sea. In

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[141] « Trois corps sans vie repêchés.» (2018). *L'Expression DZ*, 27 December. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/5bhtahdb [Accessed 29 January 2022].

[142] «Quatre migrants meurent noyés en tentant de rejoindre Sebta à la nage. » (2015). *Libe.ma*, 4 August, https://tinyurl.com/44hj26ay [Accessed 29 January 2022].

these constructions, numbers, much like labels, stand as a 'border' between the represented migrant 'object' and the emotionally (un)moved local audiences, impeding any genuine empathy or meaningful engagement.

This representational minimalism seems to extend to national TV news footage in both national contexts. However, in these outlets, the narratives that emerge do not solely focus on the numerical aspect, but they also develop into a sensational spectacle of pain and suffering arousing in the spectator a combination of feelings ranging from pity to fear. On the indifferent shores of the Mediterranean 'seametery', images of mothers weeping over the loss of their sons (Fig. 6), a crowd of men in distress trying to reach the area where the retrieved migrant corpses lay to be 'identified', create a tense and morbid atmosphere.

Fig 6. Still taken from a video broadcast by the Moroccan *Alyaoum 24 TV*, shared on YouTube 07 June 2015, featuring a group of people (mostly women/mothers) awaiting the local authorities to identify the bodies of the *harraga* who died at Sea.[143]

Other news footage tends to adopt a more dramatic tone and features more horrific imagery. For instance, a video broadcast on the Algerian Channel *Echorouknews TV,* 14 January 2018, disturbingly opens with the reporter's statement:[144] "Algerian *harraga*'s corpses lying on the shore are a shocking and appalling spectacle".[145] Complemented by the blurry photos of floating bodies "repelled by the sea waves"[146] (Fig. 7), the narrative voice evokes the *harraga*'s illegal(ised) journey on board of "death boats", thereby gesturing to and reinforcing the 'suicidal' character of the act of border 'burning'. In his narrative account, the reporter seems

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[143] Video Available at : https://tinyurl.com/ybrpkxj6 [Accessed 29 January 2022].
[144] Video Available at : https://tinyurl.com/yntm74hw [Accessed 29 January 2022].
[145] Translated from Arabic.
[146] Translated from Arabic.

to allude to the *harraga*'s moto evoked in the first section of this chapter—"*yekelni elħout wala yakelni doud*"—while foregrounding the situational irony, asserting that they have *indeed* morphed into food for fish. The narrator continues to enumerate the different sea shores, which witnessed the tragic and humiliating endings of *harraga*'s lives: the beaches of Mostaganem, Skita and Boumerdes—constructed as characters rather than sub-settings in this narrative—have now become the 'tellers' of these dead migrants' "tragic stories".[147] Ironically, the reporter metaphorically conceals the nation's necropolitics by stating that the furious waves of the sea "forbade" the *harraga* to continue their journey by halting their movement and "pushing them back".[148] As such, the sea, an inanimate liquid border, comes to be absurdly blamed for the immobilisation of *harraga*'s bodies. Within this narrative frame, the Mediterranean Sea becomes an active character playing the double role of witness and murderer (Abderrezak, 2016). In this representation context, the role of the nation and the EU, by extension, in the necropolitical regime of immobility is fully suppressed.

As a trope, the mute(d) and motionless body of the migrant is inscribed within a 'moralistic' or didactic tragic narrative the aim of which is to emphasise the cost of border transgression on the one hand, and dissuade would-be *harraga* from undertaking the perilous sea journey, on the other. The dehumanising display of disturbing images of dead bodies floating on the surface of the Mediterranean, or lying on its apathetic shores seems to confirm and perpetuate the stereotypical construction of the *harrag* as a (post-modern) 'anti-hero'—one who is bereft of traditional masculine qualities like courage, morality, and honour. De-authorised and robbed of (hi)story and individuality, *harraga* emerge as flat and flawed characters whose complex "matryoshka journeys" (Brigden & Mainwaring, 2016) have been reduced to schematic and fragmented frames, the combination of which makes up the State's violent 'unrepresentational' regime of unauthorised migration. Reduced to "bodies of water […] they are stripped of their human status and thus [become] utterly co-extensive with their marine environment" (Pugliese, 2006: 18). In fact, they become, in Pugliese's (2009) words, "mere phantoms that could neither represent themselves nor be represented" (676). Within this multimodal composition (Fig. 7), there seems to be a disjunction between the aural and the visual, i.e., the forward-moving narration and the static imagery of deceased migrants, creating tension at the intermodal level. While disrupting the coherence between the audio and the visual modes, this discrepancy serves nonetheless to empower the rhetor as the sole representation

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[147] Translated from Arabic.
[148] Translated from Arabic.

actor controlling the flow and the direction of the narrative, hence effectively communicating the 'silent' drama of the Mediterranean 'border spectacle' (De Genova, 2013), and creating a '*harga* scare' that haunts viewers with fear.

Fig 7. Two stills taken from a video broadcast on the Algerian news channel, *Echorouknews* on 14 January 2018, featuring *harraga*'s floating corpses. The title of the footage translates as "The sea repels *harraga*'s bodies: our sons take part in the sea's tragic spectacle. They are not on the other shores of the Mediterranean".

The recurrent trope of the migrant dead body is constantly activated and perpetuated to consolidate the public discourse around 'clandestinity' and 'illegality'. Migrant death at sea is articulated as the 'tragic' consequence of an 'irrational' decision taken by 'pathological' (non) beings, blinded by 'false' Eldorado imaginaries. Their 'polluting' potential seems to be reinforced by the image of corpses as 'human waste' (Bauman, 1998) eternally caught in the depths of the Mediterranean. Ultimately, as a 'tragic' and 'traumatic' closure to the mass-mediatised narratives of *harraga*'s border 'transgression' and 'self-inflicted' violence', the trope of the dead body serves as a valid visual documentation for the state's justification of migrant illegalisation. As we shall see in Part Three, these *harga* scare-themed media scripts (and, by extension, those disseminated by European mainstream outlets) are reversed by *harraga* whose live documentation of the *hrig* act conveys narratives of resilience, hope, and possibility. Similarly, the boundaries between life and death are blurred and experimented with as *harraga* creatively reconfigure death boats into life vessels, and lives deemed ungrievable in the eyes of the State's apparatus are transformed into poignant stories deserving of remembrance.

Throughout this chapter, I have demonstrated the extent to which *harraga* are symbolically im-mobilised, de-personalised, and semantically dis-placed in the hegemonic representational spaces of Morocco and Algeria's mainstream media through fragmented and

schematic news snapshots. By re-using the same im-mobility and dis-placement tropes deployed by the latter, I endeavoured to shed light on the reductive constructions of *harraga*'s multi-layered journeys. This hegemonic reductionism further builds on the labelling and illegality dis-placement dynamics evoked in the former chapter, hence contributing to drawing a more comprehensive picture of the Moroccan and Algerian mediascapes. Caught within a securitarian or humanitarian narrative, *harraga* are relegated to the margin and are depicted as migrants in 'crisis'. This discursive manipulation enables states to dis-place attention away from their own violent border practices, and, by extension, conceal their hospitality crisis (Brugère & Le Blanc, 2018) and violations of 'sub-Saharan' migrants' rights. Through the activation and dissemination of simplistic binary sets like 'legal/illegal', 'White/'Black'[149] Africa; 'hero/anti-hero', mainstream media across both countries seem to have 'cloned' the historical tropes of colonialism, enacting thereby myriad forms of symbolic violence (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Put differently, both the European (Eberl et al., 2018) and the Maghrebi mediascapes seem to be characterised by a dominance of immobility tropes, which culminate in the metonymic freezing of (North-)African *harraga*. Entangled in a net of derogatory labels— 'clandestine', 'illegal', and 'suicidal'—the *harrag* character as constructed in Moroccan and Algerian dominant narratives surrounding *harga*— is "fixed" in place (Hall, 1972) through a strategic deployment of discursive bordering (Van Kooy et al., 2021) and disturbing border imagery, which are constitutive parts of the nation's staged "illegality spectacle" (De Genova, 2002). Resultantly, these cultural representations reinforce social boundaries and perpetuate stigmatisation, locking migrants into a 'crisis' of the State's own making.

Nonetheless, these hegemonic 'gazes', as stated earlier, could be challenged by mobilising attention to migrants' first-hand accounts, which may offer alternative versions of the complex phenomenon of (North-)African *harga* to Europe. These 'Other' perspectives are addressed in the following part which revolves around 'sub-Saharan' *harraga*'s testimonials.

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[149] I elaborate further on the White/Black colour dynamic in the following part by extending it to the context of Black-Western co-authorship and present the rationale behind my use of upper case letters.

Part II—'Symbolic bordering', 'vocal dis-location', and the crisis of (re-)mediation in co-produced testimonial narratives around 'sub-Saharan' *harga* **to EU-rope**

Chapter Three— Co-authorship and the neo-colonial politics of rescuing the migrant's border story[150]

> "Can the Subaltern speak?"
> —Gayatri Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak*? (1988)

> "No! The Subaltern's voice is dissimulated. The Subaltern speaks, but she is heard when she speaks what the White ear wishes to hear".
> —Shahram Khosravi, *Doing Migration Studies with an Accent* (2024: 2349)

> "To have the power to save is to have the power of life or death".
> —Radice Henry, *Saving ourselves? On rescue and humanitarian action* (2018: 3)

As established in the previous part, the mainstream media narratives produced in Morocco and Algeria have often tended to construct 'sub-Saharan' *harraga* through the mobilisation of toxic terminology reducing their complex identities to static formations and their multi-layered journeys to freeze frames captured in different spaces of immobility/immobilisation. As such, their individual stories of struggle across intra-African and Mediterranean borders have been invisibilised and relegated to the margins of migration representation, hence the urgent need to enact a critical shift and dis-place the lens to 'Other' modes of storytelling wherein unauthorised 'sub-Saharan' migrants articulate a certain degree 'vocal author-ity'[151] while re-constructing their immobility experiences in spaces of protracted 'transit'. As outlined earlier, the migrants who are denied the right to mobility, due to the increasingly draconian EU policies and the North-African EU border regime, find themselves compelled to travel via unauthorised channels to cross into "Fortress Europe".[152] In this context, Morocco and Algeria (along with Libya and Tunisia), represent indispensable transit points, which turn out to be, more often than not, spaces of entrapment, or "forced immobility" (Inka Stock, 2019). Accordingly, this chapter approaches Morocco and Algeria as 'places of impossibility', as the unauthorised migrant's mobility is

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[150] An abridged version of this chapter was published as a research paper, Zitouni, K. (2024) 'Co-authorship and the Ventriloquial Communication of the "Deserving Refugee Archetype" in Kouamé and Lionel Duroy's *Revenu des Ténèbres* (2018).' *Al-Mukhatabat*, 51, pp. 25-43. Higher Institute of Languages of Moknine, Monastir, Tunisia, Communication and Identity, ISSN 1737-6432.

[151] I am particularly alluding to the degree of presence/power of unauthor-ised migrants' voices in the selected migration narratives.

[152] Casas-Cortes et al. (2015) problematise the use of the word 'Fortress' in relation to EU-rope by drawing attention to illegalised migrants' subversion of its borders.

suspended and their story censured. Since the beginning of the 21st century, a number of Western researchers, journalists, and anthropologists based either in Europe (France and Italy) and/or in the Maghreb have increasingly turned their attention to the plight of 'sub-Saharan' migrants in an attempt to 'give them voice' and advocate for their rights by re-writing, and consequently publishing, on the northern side of the Mediterranean, their border(ed) experiences in the form of collaboratively produced literary or testimonial accounts (Scarabicchi, 2018; Mazauric, 2012).

Given the conspicuous dearth of migrants' testimonials co-authored by 'sub-Saharan' migrants and Algerian and/or Moroccan ethnographers or journalists, I selected three migration narratives produced[153] by 'sub-Saharan' migrants *with* Western[154] authors, mainly French and Canadian, charting the former's different narrativisations of their immobility experiences in Morocco and Algeria. The corpus includes *Revenu des ténèbres* (2018)—co-authored by West African[155] migrant, Kouamé and French writer and journalist Lionel Duroy; *La Rage de Survivre* (2016) by Cameroonian unauthorised migrant Victor Eock in collaboration with French journalist Nicholas Balu; and *Celui qui échoue devient sorcier* (2019), co-produced by Cameroonian migrant Jackson Abena Banyomo and Canadian Morocco-based anthropologist, Catherine Therrien.[156]

The aim of this chapter (and by extension the whole part) is to engage with and problematise this form of collaboration by laying bare the vocal tensions and contradictions

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[153] I purposely use the verb *produce* rather than *write* in this particular context because—as I shall demonstrate in my analysis—the migrants are only the authors (rather than the writers) of the (narrated) experiences. Their Western collaborators transcribed and re-wrote their stories in their entirety.

[154] I use the adjective 'Western' to refer to 'Global North' writers, journalists, and anthropologists as the authors selected in this study are not all EU-ropean.

[155] For security reasons, Kouamé refrained from mentioning his country of origin in his account. The reader is only informed that he comes from a West African country.

[156] It is important to underscore the fact that in my textual corpus, Therrien is the only (White) woman author collaborating with a (formerly) unauthorised 'sub-Saharan' migrant man. Thus, the nature of the 'collaboration' is worth the scrutiny as it upsets the usual gender imbalance. I would also like to point out that to my knowledge, there are relatively few testimonial narratives produced by Western or Maghrebi authors in collaboration with illegalised 'sub-Saharan' female migrants in Morocco or Algeria. In fact, most of the testimonials are often used as supporting evidence in academic papers or NGO reports. See for example, Adam-Vézina. E., (2020) 'Parcours migratoires de femmes d'Afrique sub-saharienne : les épreuves de la violence,' *Revue européenne des migrations internationales* 36(1), pp.75-94 ; Silvana. R., (2008) 'Chaque Femme a son Histoire : Exploring the Lives and Voices of 'sub-Saharan' Migrant Women Living in Morocco,' *Independent Study Project (ISP) Collection*. Inka Stock (2019) is among the very few researchers who have extensively worked on 'Sub-Saharan' female migrants' forced immobility in Morocco. For more references on the use of the biographic method in the reconstruction of 'sub-Saharan' women migrants' experiences in Morocco and Algeria, see for example, Thorsen, D., (2017) 'Is Europe really the dream? Contingent paths among sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco,' *Africa*, *87*(2), pp.343-361 and Laacher, S., (2012) 'Les femmes migrantes dans l'enfer du voyage interdit,' *Les temps modernes*, (2), pp.183-201.

inherent in the neo- colonial power dynamics embedded in these narrative 'co- productions'.[157] Taking cues from Caterina Scarabicchi's critical reflections on the literary co-produced texts by established European authors[158] and 'sub-Saharan' migrants, I elaborate the argument that while attempting to re-articulate the silenced stories of 'sub-Saharan' *harraga* by "borrowing their gazes […]" (Scarabicchi, 2018: 62) and appropriating (to varying degrees) their (censured) stories of stasis and "stuckedness" (Schewel, 2019) through what I refer to in Chapter Four as 'ventriloquial dis-location', these authors end up symbolically bordering (Chouliaraki, 2017) them and thereby generating problematic forms of empathy. To this end, I examine the three aforementioned collaboratively produced testimonial accounts as they were published between 2015 and 2019, which corresponds to the time period in which mainstream media outlets on both sides of the Mediterranean fabricated, each in their own discriminatory fashion, false narratives around a 'migrant crisis' in an attempt to dis-place attention away from their own crisis of hospitality, leading to what I referred to earlier as a 'crisis of migrant representation'. Thus, this tripartite chapter marks a shift in perspective from the public to the more 'intimate' re-constructions of *harraga*'s border experiences by specifically examining the problematic re-elaborations of the migrant's voice, re-articulations of their identity, and re-staging of their illegalised migratory journey.

In light of Lilie Chouliaraki's (2017: 88) conception of "symbolic bordering", which she defines "as a set of regulative mechanisms that operate through [Western] norms of [journalistic] appropriateness and [news]worthiness […] that marginalise and displace migrants' [digital] testimonies" (78), I unveil the neo-colonial politics of 'rescuing' the migrant story and its subsequent (conditional) mobility across transnational spaces. As Chouliaraki (2017) points out, "symbolic bordering […] operates as a crucial form of sovereign power that defines the norms of humanity (who is human), recognition (who is included), and voice (who can speak)"[159] entailing thereby a process of selection and manipulation in the act of re-presenting the 'Other'. Although Chouliaraki exemplifies her argument by examining the migrant selfie as a form of digital (self) representation that is often re-used and re-mediated in Western mainstream media platforms, I extend the notion of symbolic bordering and apply it to my reading of the process of the Western co-authors 'rescuing' of the migrant story in an attempt

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[157] I emplace inverted commas around this term as I problematise and dismantle the meaning of 'co', i.e., the process of collaboration between Western authors and 'sub-Saharan' migrants throughout this chapter.
[158] Scarabicchi (2018) specifically focuses on the French and Italian artists' treatment of the theme of illegalised migration in their works (novelistic fiction, cinematography and art installations).
[159] Chouliaraki (2017: 92).

to ensure its survival, circulation, and hence its visibility across transnational borders. I argue however that this *ironic*[160] form of rescue is contingent upon a process of selection (whose story to save, how, and why?), as well as a set of conditions by which the migrant must abide.

Expanding the hybrid methodological approach deployed in the previous part, and attending to the paratext (Genette & Maclean, 1991) placed around the selected books, i.e., the peri- and the epi-textual aspects shaping their reception, I offer a comprehensive analysis of these problematic epistemic re-formulations and the impact they have on both the migrant and on the target audience. Additionally, I leverage concepts from both Postcolonial Studies (Spivak, 1988; Bhabha, 1994) and Decolonial Thinking (Quijano, 2000; Mignolo, 2011; Veronelli, 2015; Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'O, 2009) to facilitate an understanding of the intricacies inherent in these problematic co-articulations of 'sub-Saharan' *harraga*'s border experiences across transit hubs and spaces of 'non-arrival'.

A seminal argument that I advance in this chapter, is that owing to myriad forms of symbolic bordering, the migrant is reduced to a native informant (Spivak, 1988) whose story ought to be 'rescued' just like the precarious boats that transport them across the Mediterranean Sea(metery) to EU shores. However, as stated earlier, 'saving' the migrant story does not come without conditions. To conform to the standards of publication and to acquire a mobile status, the content and structure of the migrant story must be tailored to align with the expectations of a French-(speaking) audience both in the metropole and across Maghreb countries.[161] The issue of language is equally explored in depth, as well as its implications on the migrants' stories and identities.

Narrated in the first person, *Revenu des ténèbres (RDT)* retraces in minute detail the four-year perilous migration journey of a 14 year old boy, Kouamé, who was forced to flee his country of origin (which, for security reasons he refuses to mention) after his parents had been murdered and his sister raped by his father's political opponents on 12 December 2012. Crossing the hostile Sahara Desert and the deadly Mediterranean Sea with the assistance of cynical smugglers, Kouamé witnesses at a very young age the violence of borders, as well as postmodern forms of slavery in Morocco and Algeria, among other North-African countries, due to his illegalised status. He crosses the Mediterranean Sea from Tangiers to reach Spain's southern shores to finally arrive in Toulouse where his situation is regularised after a long battle against absurdist bureaucratic obstacles and suicide attempts, which pushed him to consider

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[160] My emphasis.
[161] The co-authored books are also available in e-book format and could be purchased online by Maghrebi readers.

writing his story to denounce the inhumanness of the (North-)African-EU border regime. Resettled at the age of 19 in France in 2016, Kouamé attempts to start a new life working as a turner-mill operator. Interestingly, there are very few paratextual details available and a quasi-absence of footnotes, which block access to its compositional process—with the exception of an acknowledgement section at the close of the narrative wherein his co-author, Lionel Duroy, is mentioned.

As its title insightfully suggests, Victor Eock and Nicholas Balu's co-produced migration narrative *La Rage de survivre* (*LRDS*), vividly depicts the former's resilience and will to survive, and surmount extreme hardships while being repetitively dis-placed across both visible and invisible borders in his country of origin, Cameroun, unwelcoming transit hubs in North Africa and in France, which turned out to be a place of non-arrival due to his protracted 'un-documented-ness'. Once on French soil, Victor is assisted by members of the Cameroonian diaspora and human rights activists thanks to whom he encountered Balu who collected his testimony through repetitive interviews, which he then transcribed. Unlike Kouamé's narrative, Victor's account features intermittently inserted footnotes for clarification purposes and a brief script of his interview with Balu closing the story in a rather open-ended fashion. The didactic character as well as the narrative and discursive 'montages' (as we shall see in Chapter Four) characterising Victor's narrative, along with the space allocated to his Moroccan and Algerian trans-border(ed) experience, make it worth examining through the prism of symbolic bordering.

Slightly different from the aforementioned co-authored migrant testimonials, *Celui qui échoue devient Sorcier (CQEDS)* is presented by its authors as the fruitful outcome of a highly productive intercultural encounter that took place in March 2017 in a migrant reception centre (founded by Father John, the then priest of the Church of Meknes) as part of a fieldwork activity organised by Catherine Therrien for her students. Captivated by Jackson's storytelling skills, and his "concern for ethnographic detail" (Therrien, 2021: 844), Therrien expressed her willingness to work with him should he decide to write his story, an invitation which he unhesitatingly welcomed. First orally recorded and then minutely transcribed "in its entirety",[162] Jackson's narrative carefully reconstructs the bits and pieces of his atypical migratory voyage starting from his village in Cameroon and ending in his final settlement in Morocco after the second regularisation campaign launched by King Muhammed VI in 2016 (implemented in 2017). Following a decolonial scholarship model wherein the voice of the formerly unauthorised

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[162] Ibid.

migrant is fleshed out to a large extent "in order to make the reading smoother without losing the richness of its orality",[163] this co-produced text is, I argue, another indispensable epistemological source that demands a highly rigourous textual deconstruction to lay bare instances of symbolic bordering. Undeniably, the narrative complexity, the detail-oriented spirit, and the predominance of Algeria and Morocco as 'transit setting/trap' make the three testimonials worth the scrutiny.

Having presented the synopses of the selected sources and outlined the objectives and the method used in this chapter, which comes mid-way between Moroccan and Algerian public narratives on *harga* and Maghrebi *harraga*'s private imaginary projections of cross-border journeys in appropriated digital spaces, I first examine the context of the selected co-produced narratives by zooming in on Algeria and Morocco as spaces of immobility and impossibility from the 'sub-Saharan' migrants' perspective.

3.1   Suspended mobilities, Censured stories: Morocco and Algeria as spaces of impossibility

(Non) movement and voice are interlinked concepts in the context of unauthorised migration representation. The migrant protagonists in the selected narratives have similar 'transit' experiences in Algeria and Morocco. As established in the last sub-section of Chapter One, 'transit' is a highly politicised and blurry concept, and a term that has been extensively used by public authorities to refer to 'sub-Saharan' *harraga*'s situation of temporary and illegalised stay on Algerian and Moroccan soil. Perceived as lawless and out of place, Kouamé, Victor, and Jackson risk being deported to their country of origin or, pushed back to the Algerian-Moroccan border. Constrained within the limits of NGO-initiated reception centres or ostracised in the marginal spaces of forests in makeshift camps, the migrant protagonists, live in fear and suspicion, and usually avoid speaking to local journalists and having their stories manipulated and mediatised.

In "Témoigner en migration, témoigner de sa migration" (2017), Frédéric Détue inserts fragments of an interview he conducted with Cameroonian migrant Fabien Didier Yene[164] after

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[163] Therrien (2021: 849).
[164] Didier Yene was considered by many 'Sub-Saharan' migrants in Morocco as an iconic figure of 'migrant struggle' as he was among the very few who made the bold decision to publish his migration story and openly denounce the human rights abuses to which he was subjected in transit spaces, more specifically in Morocco.

the latter had published his testimonial *Migrant au pied du mur* (2010)[165]wherein he relates his migratory experience and the obstacles he had faced when seeking to publish it in Morocco. Yene's answers offer important insights into the restrictions faced by illegalised migrants who sought to make visible their experiences of racism and oppression in Morocco. He explains that all the Moroccan publishers he had met in book fairs preferred to work with authors of Arabic expression[166] and the very few who were willing to publish books in French were not willing to publish a testimonial like his as the context at the time was extremely oppressive.[167] Yene asserts that "*au Maroc, tout le monde avait peur. Quand un migrant témoignait à la télévison, c'était toujours en tournant le dos à la caméra ; il ne voulait surtout pas qu'on puisse l'identifier*" [in Morocco, everyone was terrified. When a migrant gave an interview on TV, they always did it with their back to the camera to make sure they could not be identified]. Realising that, if he wished to publish his testimonial in Morocco, it would have been on the condition that the content be modified as he was confronted with the issue of censorship and the risk of having significant details amputated from his story[168], Yene sought European publication venues on the advice of one of the activists he had met in Morocco. Racism, religio, and the police apparatus were and still are considered taboo topics and therefore, for an unauthorised migrant to have his Moroccan transit experience narrative published, they were compelled to abide by the stiffening conditions imposed by the local publishing houses. Although in the selected testimonials little is made explicit about blocked publication routes in these transit spaces, it is reasonable to

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[165] The book was first published by L'Edition Séguiers in France in French, then it was translated to German (*Bis an die Grenzen :Chronik einer Migration)* and published during the same year.

[166] It is important to highlight this language shift as formerly, French would have been the language required for publication given that Morocco used to be a French colony. In recent years, Arabic—being the official language spoken in Morocco—has taken precedence. According to a report published by the online news agency '*360 Maroc*', 20 June 2023, there has been a conspicuous rise in the publication of literary works in Arabic (79% compared to 17.4% of books published in French). Notwithstanding Morocco's diverse and plural linguistic market (Dialectical or classical Arabic, Amazigh, Spanish, French, and recently English), an increasing number of publishers have prioritised the publication of works in Arabic in an attempt to challenge the hegemony of the French language (Bouazzaoui, 2017; Laachir, 2021) and further promote the use of Arabic as part of the government's politics of arabisation to consolidate a united Moroccan national identity. As regards the Arabic language condition set by a number of publishers in Morocco in response to 'sub-Saharan' migrants' demands to publish their testimonials, I personally read it as a strategy to silence the former and censure their stories. Owing to its distinct colonial history, Algeria's post-independence arabisation process (despite the commitment of successive post-colonial governments to revive indigenous forms of Arabic and cultural values) was slower than that of Morocco as the influence of French remained very high. As regards the status of the English language in the two aforementioned Maghreb countries, it is increasingly being recognised as the new lingua franca of private education and business (Laachir, 2021). However, the publication of literary works in English in Morocco and Algeria remains relatively low compared to works published in Arabic and French.

[167] Détue (2017: 4).

[168] Yene expressed his discontent regarding the final version of his story when it was first published by L'Edition Séguier (France). He also pointed to the fact that the book—owing to its high price (€ 25)— could not possibly be afforded by (would-be) migrants in 'sub-Saharan' countries whom he considered as his target audience.

assume that their situation of forced immobility, lack of financial means, and the limited opportunities available to work with sympathetic left-leaning Moroccan and/or Algerian journalists are some of the contextual arguments which account for this dearth of 'sub-Saharan' migrants' testimonials in the Moroccan and Algerian book markets. More importantly, the language 'border'—Arabic being favoured over other languages—the limited literacy levels of 'sub-Saharan' migrants who predominantly come from marginalised neighbourhoods or villages in their country of origin, as well as their prioritising of their survival in these spaces of "non-existence" (Coutin, 2005) could be construed as haunting barriers compelling potential storytellers to either suspend their writing/publication ambitions or to seek alternative publication channels as in the cases of Kouamé, Victor, and Jackson.

A simple google search reveals the scarcity or quasi absence of '*récits documentaires*' or '*témoignages de migrants*' in the aforementioned countries and an abundance of other 'spaces' of expression wherein migrants, usually in abbreviated modes, retell their experiences of human rights abuses to activists working for local NGOs like Rabat-based GADEM, AMDH[169], OMDH[170] [Moroccan Organisation of Human Rights], International humanitarian organisations like Caritas, or unofficial 'sub-Saharan' African associations such as 'the Collective of 'sub-Saharan' Communities' and 'the Council of 'sub-Saharan' Migrants in Morocco' among others, or in public digital spaces like 'Info Migrants', and private Facebook pages[171] bringing the different 'sub-Saharan' African diasporic communities in contact. It is also important, however, to acknowledge in this context that several Morocco-based researchers, sociologists, and anthropologists (Bachelet, 2016; Chena, 2015) specialised in the migration question, have produced seminal academic works based on comprehensive field work with unauthorised migrants in vulnerable situations. Nonetheless, these projects are often tailored to academic publication requirements and restricted to academic and elite circles, and hence limitedly visible to both national and transnational audiences.

Similarly, in Algeria, migrants face obstacles both at the physical and socio-political levels, and therefore find themeselves incapacitated and silenced. In the eyes of several Maghrebi critics,[172] censorship is more draconian in Algeria than in Morocco. For instance,

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[169] This association has branches in Oujda, Rabat, Nador, and Tangiers— cities wherein the concentration of 'sub-Saharan' migrant population is high.

[170] This organisation is based in Rabat, Oujda, and Nador.

[171] Namely, '*Conseil des migrants Subsahariens au Maroc*' ; '*Communauté Ivoirienne De Dakhla Maroc*' ; '*Plateforme des associations subsahariennes au Maroc*'; '*AEBM Oujda*' ; '*Migrants Sub-Sahariens en Algérie*'.

[172] For a comprehesive account on the issue of journalistic censorship in Morocco see, Naimi, M., (2016) 'Liberté de presse écrite au Maroc: l'évolution au regard de l'évaluation,' *L'Année du Maghreb*, (15), pp.45-60. For a

criticising domestic policies and denouncing human rights abuses are considered taboo topics. Throughout the 2000s, a number of local journalists were imprisoned or forced to exile, and a number of websites were banned (Hajjaji & Birch, 2019). To this day, even independent online media platforms are not granted a legal status for lack of promulgation of the organic law of 2016, which was destined to provide them with a legal framework. Independent Algerian journalists do not possess a Press card, and neither do they receive subsidies, while foreign funding is strictly prohibited.[173] Unsurprisingly, in this climate of censorship it is even more challenging for migrants to publish their stories of transit entrapment and the subsequent human rights abuses they have experienced.

As in Morocco, the sites wherein 'sub-Saharan' *harraga* share their witness accounts are limited and restricted to the spaces of local NGOs like LADDH[174] [League for the Defence of Human Rights] and international organisations such as Amnesty International Algeria, which usually collect the testimonies of migrants. In these contexts, migrants' stories are highly (re)mediated and reported in the form of selected speech fragments and inserted in abridged quotations within the body of an article denouncing human rights abuses and published on their websites.

Thus, finding both their movements and their words controlled and suspended in 'transit traps', migrants like Kouamé, Victor, and Jackson seized authorial collaboration opportunities offered to them by Western journalists and ethnographers (respectively), to re-appropriate their subjectivities through the publication of life stories (Canut, 2012). However, as Cecile Canut and Annalisa Maitilasso (2014) rightly observe, the objectives of the researchers, writers, and artists involved in these co-productions need to be questioned as well as the power dynamics entailed by such collaborations, the nature of the audience targeted and the impact (i.e., political, emotional, social, and economic) intended. Cognisant of the high demand for first-hand migration narratives and of the "intellectual capital" (Maitilasso, 2014) that such accounts represent to Western academics and Human rights activists, a growing number of both transit-stuck migrants as well as deportees have expressed their readability to "lend" the [former] their gazes (Scarabicchi, 2019) and dis-own their individual stories—to varying degrees— in order to earn symbolic value and at times financial gains (Maitilasso, 2014).

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detailed analysis of the censorship landscape in Algeria refer to Hamzaoui, H., (2019) 'De la liberté d'expression à la Radio algérienne: Aux origines de la révolte des journalistes radio durant le Hirak,' *NAQD*, (1), pp.127-143.
[173] Ibid.
[174] It is an NGO that assists in the defence of migrants' and refugees' rights.

Investigators usually tend to seek "the sympathy of potential interlocutors"[175] in order to establish 'a middle ground' by playing 'the politically committed author' card, and using their critical position *vis à vis* migration policies and/ or their fascination with African cultures as arguments to earn the trust of migrants.[176] As Maitilasso (2014) notes, this new production responds to a demand from NGOs committed to challenge coercive policies that silence migrants, aiming to illustrate and legitimise their actions through direct contact.

From the perspective of Western researchers, engaging with migrants who found themselves trapped in spaces of 'impossibility' and offering to work with them on the publication of their testimonial narratives, are viewed as opportunities for collecting invaluable empirical material around unauthorised migrations.[177] As Maitillasso (2014) points out, migrants' stories are insightful resources for ethnographic research and journalistic investigation, as well as valuable portals for understanding the migration experience in its complexity, hence the urgent need to 'rescue' the migrant story.

3.2 'Rescuing' the migrant's story: Western author as 'saviour,' migrant as (bordered) native informant

The act of 'rescuing' the migrant story by established Western academic authorities/authors could be read in terms of the binary opposition of Western saviour *versus* migrant as reconfigured/postcolonial (bordered) native informant. I concur that the act of collaboratively producing testimonials is primarily a rescue attempt, as the words of previously silenced migrants are 'saved' in the sense of being brought 'safely'[178] to the shores of transnational visibility, redeemed, recorded, and ultimately archived in the collective imaginary/memory of a formerly 'ignorant' Western/transnational audience. I thus metaphorically re-purpose the trope of the Western/EU boat rescue operation, central to humanitarian discourse, and apply it to the Western collaborators' retrieval of the migrant story to draw attention to the disturbing parallel between these two performances, and unveil the unequal power dynamics inherent in the process.

Specifically, I argue that the migrant story, much like the migrant makeshift boat stuck in the midst of the Mediterranean Sea(metery), is contingent upon Westerners' humanitarian

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[175] Maitilasso (2014: 13). My translation.
[176] Ibid.
[177] Ibid.
[178] I place the adverb 'safely' between inverted commas as I deconstruct the idea of rescue in my analysis.

interventions in order to be rescued and for its passengers to be saved. In a typical sea rescue operation, the migrant boat is first located, then migrants are transferred to the rescuer's vessel, and once on safe shores, they are transferred to (so-called) reception centres wherein their claims for asylum are voiced to be later validated or rejected—a decision determinative of their destiny. Similarly, in saving the migrant story, the prospective co-author first 'spots' a specific migrant profile (usually in the context of NGO activities), carefully listens to their 'storied' border experience, and once validated, it is transferred and 'relocated' in more standard and intelligible forms of French expression. Once the final version is validated by publishers—the decision-makers in this context—it is soundly and 'safely' placed on the shelves of metropolitan bookstores guaranteeing thereby its accessibility by a transnational readership. However, as Trinh T. Minh Ha (1989: 67) warns, "'them' is only admitted among 'us', the discussing subjects, when accompanied or introduced by an 'us' […] hence the dependency of 'them'".

Notwithstanding the markedly different ways in which the border stories of Kouamé, Victor, and Jackson were 'rescued', the process of saviour by their respective co-authors could be more thoroughly brought to light by bringing the trope of ventriloquy in dialogue with Chouliaraki's (2017) conception of symbolic bordering (as established earlier), which is a form of "regulative mechanism"(92) operated by Western (re)mediators through appropriation and re-incorporation of the represented object/subject into mobile spaces.[179] Put differently, this conditional rescue operation rests upon the willingness of the migrant to disown their story, or, as Scarabicchi puts it, "lend [their] gaze" to their Western co-author. In doing this, they surrender a certain degree of agency and vocal authority, leaving room for ventriloquial intrusions and manoeuvres while embracing the role of the postcolonial native informant and thereby adding credibility to the narrative as insider source of information (Nichols, 2022). This conditionality thus reduces them "to [their] prior position of indigenous Other".[180]

Interestingly, the migrant story, like the selfie captured by 'boat migrants' upon their euphoric arrival on the southern shores of Europe, is dis-placed, re-located, re-modelled, and re-configured according to Western norms of production (Chouliaraki, 2017), and/or following the editorial exigencies of 'Global North' publishing establishments. In "this dynamic of dispossession" (Hargreaves, 2006: 43), migrants are brought to the public attention only with the assistance of Western intermediaries—neo-liberal leftist intellectual sympathisers—who

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[179] Chouliaraki (2017: 92).
[180] Cronin (2002: n.p).

assign themselves the role of "do[ing] the representing for them" (Malkki, 1996, cited in Chouliaraki, 2017: 16).

Arguably, this ineptitude to tell one's own story, and this proclaimed surrender of sovereign self-representation, and subsequent 'call for rescue' are, for instance, conveyed in Kouamé's answer to a French journalist's question regarding the collaboration process in the context of an interview transcribed and posted on the online platform *La Dépêche.fr*:[181]

> Grâce au directeur de l'école de production de l'ICAM à Toulouse, où j'étais étudiant, j'ai été mis en relation avec les éditions XO […] J'ai rencontré Lionel Duroy, un écrivain réputé, grace à XO. Il est venu chez moi, à Toulouse. Pendant trois jours non-stop, je lui ai raconté mon histoire. Il a tout enregistré. Cela a été un moment éprouvant. Mais c'était nécessaire, car tout seul, je n'y arrivais pas. Écrire, ce n'est pas trop mon truc (rires)![182]

> [Thanks to the director of the ICAM training school of Toulouse, where I was a student, I was put in touch with XO editions, […] I met Lionel Duroy, a renowned writer, thanks to XO. He came to my house, in Toulouse. For three days in a row, I told him my story. He recorded everything […] It was necessary because alone, I would not have been able to do it. Writing isn't really my thing!]

Kouamé unreservedly expresses the gratitude he owes these intermediaries without whom he would not have been able to publish his story in France. The school director, XO publishers, and Duroy are represented as his [Western] 'saviours' through the reiteration of the word "grâce" [thanks to] and his emphasis that writing is not his forte. This implies that his co-author—an established and highly regarded French literary authority—wrote the story on his behalf by 'sliding into his skin'. Thus, by 'borrowing' Kouamé's voice, and lending him the space of the French text, Duroy hosted the unauthor-ised migrant in spaces which he could not possibly navigate owing to his limited educational level. Saved, the final version of Kouamé's story, as he himself concludes, "*est absolument fidèle à ce que j'ai vécu*"[183] [is absolutely faithful to what I have been through]. Ironically, while acknowledging the ventriloquial

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[181] To my knowledge, none of the selected testimonial narratives has been to this day translated into English, therefore, all the translations of the selected quotes and extracts are mine. Whenever this is not the case, it is clearly stated.
[182] 'Kouamé, migrant toulousain : « M.Macron, saurez-vous entendre la prière de mes frères de souffrance »' *La Dépeche*, 22 March 2018. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/2r5hvpcs [Accessed 27 April 2023].
[183] Ibid.

intervention of his co-author who wrote the entirety of his story, in a language different from his own, i.e., in standardised French, based on their conversations' transcripts, Kouamé hails the final version as an accurate and faithful representation of an experience so traumatic that he himself found trouble re-articulating.

My emphasis on emplacing Kouamé's narrative within a larger and more complex rescue politics entailing flagrant degrees of ventriloquy and forms of bordering is informed by epitextual 'events', namely the migrant's promotion of his book in Nancy upon its release, at Le Salon du Livre where he met French President Emmanuel Macron to whom he dedicated his book writing: "*Ce témoignage qui porte la voix de ceux qui n'en ont pas, je vous confie l'impérieuse nécéssité d'en faire l'écho*".[184] [I entrust you with this testimony, which carries the voices of voiceless people, and urge you to make them heard]. In this request, Kouamé confers upon the French president a symbolic responsibility, that of 'saving' the silen(ced) voices, prayers, and stories of "his "*frères de souffrance*"[185] [brothers in suffering]. This 'call for rescue' is also achieved by inadvertently essentialising 'sub-Saharan' unauthorised migrants as 'helpless Others', stuck at EU-rope's externalised borders in North Africa, or trapped in spaces of unliving as they await a potential regularisation. Kouamé's perhaps uncalculated word choice equally suggests that he is exclusively referring to the category of 'suffering' migrants, those who flee their origin country owing to political persecution and instability, or environmental disasters in a bid to obtain refugee status in an EU country. To answer Kouamé's request, and, by extension, respond to the inaudible invocations of 'vulnerable [African] refugees', Macron openly expressed his wish to 'speak for him' (and thereby 'save' his voice) in his speech at the UN General Assembly,[186] saying:

I have also heard Kouamé, and it is his voice that I wish to bring to you here. He crossed the Mediterranean and arrived safely [here] while so many others perished at sea. The refugee […] has truly become the symbol of our time. […] [N]o barrier can halt the march of despair unless we transform the paths of necessity into pathways of freedom. These migrations—whether political, climatic, or ethnic—each time embody routes shaped by necessity.

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[184] Ibid.
[185] Ibid.
[186] Adapted from French President Emmanuel Macron's full speech at the 72nd session of the United Nations General Assembly. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/mr24brcx [Accessed 29 June 2023]. Original translation revised and refined.

Macron's insertion and re-elaboration of Kouamé's story in his discourse, which comes in the form of a reductive synopsis wherein the migrant protagonist is vocally inactivated and entrapped in the passive mode, could be read as an act of 'symbolic bordering' staged within a well-crafted *mise en abîme*. First Kouamé's story, upon his consent, was re-produced by a Western author according to XO's editorial standards and emplaced in different cultural spaces across France and beyond as a mobile artefact, and once more re-placed in another context, re-mediated by Macron in his speech around EU-ropean (narrow-minded and outdated) conceptualisations of refugee-ness. Also, by using his symbolic and political authority and visibility to export and thus 'save' Kouamé's story, Macron enacts a symbolic performance reminiscient of what Chouliaraki calls the "solidarity selfie" (2017: 88) wherein the symbolic value of a given celebrity is transferred onto the migrant "endowing them with a potential for recognisability".[187] In this humanitarian politics of symbolic rescue, the migrant—"symbol of a bordered world"—along with their story, are calculatingly constructed as 'necessitating' Western assistance, inviting thereby both transnational spectators and readers to engage in what Chouliaraki calls "humanitarian witnessing" (92). This witness mode configures migrants [as well as their stories] as "a hybrid between truth of suffering others and the legitimacy of our [Western] public persona" (2017: 88). By making "claims that 'ventrilocate' migrants, i.e., by speaking their voice in glamourous self-representations" (91), and re-contextualising their stories, these (hegemonic) actors of migration representation enact an ironic rescue leading to a loss of signification of the migrants' uniqueness and individuality. In Chapter Four, I elaborate further on Kouamé's (so-called) 'authentic' 'refugee-ness' as a defining factor in transforming his story into a published narrative.

The 'rescue trope' could also be applied to Victor's narrative of 'border stuckedness'. As part of the promotion tour of the book, Victor and his co-author, Nicholas Balu, were invited as featured guests on 'Grand Angle' (TV5 Monde) to discuss the collaboration process, as well as the message behind *La Rage de Survivre*.[188] Balu explained that his encounter with Victor was mediated by his brother, Rémi Balu, who worked for a humanitarian association called "Afrique Santé". When listening to Victor's story, Rémi recommended that he put the trauma he had experienced down on paper. After having read Victor's 20 page stream of consciousness draft, Nicholas Balu thought that there was clearly potential to make use of it[189] and

[187] Ibid.
[188] « Entretien avec Victor Eock, Sans papiers et Nicolas Balu, journaliste.» (2016). *Youtube*.
Available at: https://t.ly/-24-i [Accessed 30 April 2023].
[189] Ibid.

subsequently turned it into a 134-page long publishable testimonial. One of the reasons which legitimised the need to 'rescue', and hence borrow the unauthorised migrant's voice and re-articulate it in formal French expression by closely attending to grammar and style, and emplacing it within the constraints of a narrative frame was, according to Balu, "[*sa*] *force de vie*[…], *la rage de vivre et de sortir de cette condition*".[190] [His vitality […] his will to live and overcome his (precarious) condition]. In the face of the media's dehumanising coverage of the 'migrant crisis', Balu emphasised the need to re-humanise migrants through the production of counter-narratives wherein their (previously) undocumented border experiences are well-fleshed out and stored[191]/storicised.

Victor's initial 20-page draft is presented by Balu as exploitable raw material prone to 'manufacturing'. Similarly, Victor is viewed as the very embodiment of insider source of information, a "subject of research" (Minh, 1989: 59), who, in this process of co-production, "becomes the handicapped who cannot [adequately] represent [him] self"[192], and, therefore, requires assistance for his story not to 'capsize'. Victor's story, like a sea-stuck migrant in distress, has been delivered to a place of 'safety', ensuring its survival. This metaphorical reading could be further complemented by Victor's attitude of gratitude expressed in his own words in the acknowledgment section at the close of the narrative, "*je remercie le Seigneur d'être tombé entre de bonnes mains* [...] *je suis comme priviligié. Je suis conscient d'avoir une chance que d'autres migrants n'ont pas*" (133) [I thank the lord for having falling into good hands; I feel privileged. I am keenly aware of the opportunity I have, one that so many other migrants do not]. Accordingly, collaboration is presented as a contract between a privileged outsider and a privileged insider; however, the nature of the privilege they come to represent is different. Indeed, the religious diction that Victor uses reflects his conception of his condition of exception, i.e., as one of the few unauthorised migrants whose story has been authorised to become visible thanks to his Western mediators. Ironically, the rescue operation of Victor's tale of border regime-induced oppression and violence entails a symbolic form of 'borderisation' (Cuttitta, 2014), as it is evident from the outset that victor was by no means assumed to be the proprietor of his story, but rather subject of interpretation by his investigator (Leese, 2022).

Another form of 'rescue' is embedded in Victor's narrative, which is that of 'saving' African would-be migrants by denouncing the Eldorado myth. Indeed, as early as the opening

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[190] Ibid.
[191] By 'stored' I mean archived.
[192] Minh (1989: 59).

lines of the story, Balu interrupts Victor's (re-elaborated) first-person narrative voice by shifting to his own perspective to reflect on his encounter with the latter before the collaboration project was launched: "[*ce témoignage*] *était* […] *un appel à ses compatriotes*, *naifs de croire que l'Europe est leur horizon paradisiaque*"[193] [this testimony was intended to be a wake-up call to his compatriots, urging them to realise that Europe is not their paradise on the horizon]. He then re-inserts victor's words to emphasise his intention to save potential migrants from crossing into EU-rope in unauthorised ways, "*ici* [*en France*], *il y a un traitement des migrants très injuste. C'est aussi pour cela que je veux écrire mon histoire*"[194] [the treatment of migrants here is extremely unjust. That is also why I want to write my story]. In this same introductory chapter, Balu acknowledges the re-modelling that victor's 'original' first-hand account underwent: "*Je devais recueillir sa parole, retranscrire sa pensée, ses opinions, obtenir des details, des éclaircissements*"[195] [I had to gather his words, transcribe his thoughts, his opinions, and obtain details, clarifications]. Moreover, he acknowledges the quasi impossibility of rescuing the entirety of his informant's story, adding, "[*p*]*arfois je voulais tout comprendre. Parfois il me fallait y renoncer*"[196] [at times I yearned to grasp it all; at times, surrender seemed inevitable]. At the heart of this narrative re-formation process lies "a tension, if not an impasse, between the [co-author's] desire for cross-cultural communication to remedy harms and the limitations of [his] interpretative standpoints" (Smith &Watson, 2017: 3). Nevertheless, Balu's articulation of his "moral positioning" (Chouliaraki, 2017: 87) is achieved "by virtue of appearing 'there', i.e., on the side of the migrant".[197] In this way, he presents himself as "possessing the emotional depth and virtuous character to stand by [the migrant] and commit to [his] cause".[198]

It should, however, be noted that in this context of Western appropriation and regulation of the Other's narrative, the testimonial subject is not entirely at the mercy of his interlocutor as he decided which episodes of his immobility experience to select and incorporate in the finalised account, "*une prière au fond d'un trou, un mot d'éspérence en plein milieu du désert*"[199] [a prayer from the depths of a pit; a word of hope in the midst of the desert] and 'validated' each paragraph that his co-author re-produced, creating effects of what Chouliaraki (2017: 88) calls "co-pre-senc[ing]". Therefore, it could be argued that, unlike Kouamé—whose

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[193] *LRDS*, p.9. My translation.
[194] Ibid.
[195] Ibid.
[196] Ibid, pp.9-10.
[197] Ibid.
[198] Ibid.
[199] *LRDS*, p.10.

voice was appropriated in its entirety by his re-mediators, reducing his story to a helpless 'body' of words in need of urgent rescue, Victor maintained a sense of agency, albeit limited, by participating in the very re-writing of his narrative and validating both its form and content.

Dissimilar to Kouamé and Victor's stories' modes of rescue, the saving process of Jackson's narrative of transit im-mobility in Morocco, was performed by his co-author, Catherine Therrien, using a rather subversive, decolonial ethnographic methodology that purported to seriously invest the conceptual potential of "thinking with alterity" (Mignolo, 2013b). Articulated in the form of "*un récit intégralement transcript*" (xiii) [a thoroughly/entirely transcribed narrative], structured in terms of a series of questions and answers—an ethnographic method enabling the interviewed migrant to maintain a large degree of control over his story—the final text is presented as an exemplary form of 'history from below'. Also, Therrien's substitution of (neo)colonial terminology with a decolonial lexical repertoire such as the use of the adjective '*illégalisé*'[illegalised] instead of '*irrégulier/illégal*' [irregular/illegal] for instance, and her careful insertions of footnotes in the main text to problematise racialised articulations of unauthorised migrants' portrayals in the media showcase her humanist rather than humanitarian approach. As a politically engaged researcher and activist, Therrien states in the introduction to Jackson's narrative, that she will continue to take part in the migrants' struggle for freedom of movement and for the acquisition of their human rights "*aux côtés de Jackson*" (xxii) [by Jackson's side]. Within this decolonial research paradigm, Therrien acknowledges that "*si j'utilise ma position de 'dominante' pour faire entendre les 'dominés,' je ne rétablis rien* […], *je participe même au maintien de ce cercle de pouvoir et d'inégalité contre lequel je me bats*" (xxii) [If I wield my 'dominant' position to amplify the voices of the oppressed, I am not restoring anything; rather, I am complicit in perpetuating this cycle of power and inequality against which I am fighting]. In fact, she explicitly points out that, when writing the book, she did not have the 'intention' to give voice to the voiceless,[200] but rather to articulate, together with Jackson, an intercultural conversation founded on the art of listening to one another, a subversive therapeutic process involving the researcher as subject and the researched as her equal—upsetting thereby the usual power asymmetry inherent in (neo) colonial ethnographic methodologies:

Si ce lien de confiance s'était créé et nous avait permis d'écrire ce livre ensemble, c'est tout simplement parce qu'un jour, sans calcul, je m'étais montrée vulnérable et que je m'étais tournée

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[200] *CQEDS.*, p. xxii.

vers Jackson pour lui demander conseil. C'est cette inversion des rapports trop souvent habituels entre celui qui pose des questions et qui écoute et celui qui raconte et qui attend qu'on porte sa voix qui avait tout changé (xxiv).

[If this bond of trust had formed and allowed us to write this book together, it is simply because one day, without calculation, I had shown vulnerability and turned to Jackson for advice. It was this reversal of the often habitual roles between the one who asks questions and listens, and the one who tells [their story] and waits for their voice to be heard, that changed everything.]

At face value, Therrien's careful word choices, her insistence on the absence of a power relation between herself as a White researcher and Jackson as a Black[201] unauthorised migrant, coupled with her emphasis on this reciprocal act of 'rescue' through their therapeutic and fruitful interactions, establish the narrative as a form of decolonial historiography *par excellence*. Moreover, Therrien's realistic affirmation that as a White female anthropologist, she cannot enact any radical migration policy changes (xxi) upsets neo-colonial forms of writing in the name of/ on behalf of voiceless migrants.

Notwithstanding the overtly expressed decolonial character of Therrien's anthropological project, there are nonetheless discursive slippages and instances of 'editorial ventriloquism' (explored in depth in Chapter Four), which clearly attest to the presence of faint traces of symbolic bordering. Although Therrien declines the use of neo-colonial terminology and denounces 'Global North/South' economic inequalities, there are reflective moments in the preface wherein, perhaps, inadvertently, she contradicts her position of power-free intellectual through her implied self-construction as the 'rescuer' of Jackson's story. Indeed, one of the tensions that one can spot upon a re-reading of the narrative's peritext, lies in Therrien's inclusion of a conversation she had with Jackson upon announcing to the latter that she had finally found a publisher for their book:

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[201] There have recently been heated debates regarding the use of upper case letters in the racial constructs 'White' and 'Black', and the implications of such typographic politics in journalistic articles, as well as in scholarly works across countries in the 'Global North and 'Global South' alike. For the purpose of this part, upper case 'W' and 'B' are used specifically to draw attention to the (ongoing) racial dynamics inherent in the collaboration between Western authors and unauthorised 'sub-Saharan' migrants in the production of the latter's migration narratives. My usage does by no means seek to consolidate the idea that Whiteness and Blackness entail distinct categories representing each a unified and coherent people, nor does it seek to affirm the idea that they are—each in their own fashion—reflective of a set of collective identity markers. For instance, I addressed the homogenising impact of terminological constructions such as 'sub-Saharan African' in Part One and highlighted that the countries situated South of the Sahara Desert are characterised by cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity, hence their heterogeneity.

> Quand j'ai dit à Jackson que j'avais trouvé un éditeur pour notre livre, il m'a spontanément dit: "*t'es qui toi? Un ange*?" [202] Cette phrase m'a profondément émue car tous ceux qui me connaissent intimement savent à quel point ma rencontre avec Jackson et toutes les aventures qui ont suivi m'ont profondément rendue heureuse (xiv).

> [When I told Jackson that I had found a publisher for our book, he spontaneously said to me, "who are you? An angel?" This sentence deeply moved me, as those who know me intimately understand just how much my encounter with Jackson and the adventures that followed genuinely made happy].

The religious overtone of the word 'angel' is reminiscient of the lexicon used by Kouamé and Victor when reflecting upon their collaborators' 'benevolent' act of saving their stories. Therrien's selective insertion of Jackson's words of gratitude and his appreciation of her meaningful contribution enables her to articulate a sense of "[White] feel good activism", which Chouliaraki (2016) defines as a form of White humanitarian politics whereby the Western (re)-mediator asserts a form of "ethical superiority", saving what/who needs to be rescued as part of a moral imperative. This "individualistic morality" as Chouliaraki (2016: 362) puts it, represents "a motivation for action".[203] Opening the book preface, Therrien rhetorically asks, "[*v*]*ous arrive-t-il de vous demander quel est votre rôle dans ce monde? De vous dire que vous n'êtes certainement pas là pour rien ? De vous interroger sur la façon dont vous pourriez contribuer à un monde différent?*" (xxi) [Does it ever occur to you to think about what your role might be in this world? To think that you are surely here for a reason? To reflect on how you might contribute to creating a different world?] Arguably, her posture is reminiscent of Chouliaraki's incisive observation that there has been an epistemic shift in the past few decades in the communication of solidarity marked by "the emergence of self-oriented morality where doing good to others is about how I feel [...] and must therefore be rewarded by minor gratifications of the self" (2016: 362). This is conveyed in Therrien's assertion "*ceux qui me connaissent intimement savent à quel point ma rencontre avec Jackson et les aventures qui ont suivi m'ont profondément rendue heureuse*" (xiv) [those who know me intimately understand just how much my encounter with Jackson and the adventures that followed genuinely made happy]. Additionally, Therrien emphasises that working on the book with Jackson was a risky adventure,

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[202] Italics mine.

[203] Action in this context of colloboration is understood as a form of literary activism embodied in the initiation and completion of the writing project and the subsequent dissemination of the migrant's story.

"*un projet* […] *fou*" (xiii) that required commitment and devotion on her part. Her 'benign' mission is expressed from the outset, "*ce livre a été d'abord écrit pour vous. Pour qu'à travers le récit* […] *de Jackson, les gens des quatres coins de la planète* […] *puissent comprendre le combat que vous menez courageusement au quotidien*" (xi) [this book was primarily written for you, so that through Jackson's story, people from all corners of the world can meaningfully engage with the battle you fight bravely every day]. It is fair to argue that this embedded politics of White saviourism—albeit subtle and wrapped in a discourse of alterity—produces effects of symbolic bordering as the mobility of the migrant's story is contingent upon a "usually Global-North intervention" (Hargreaves, 2006: 46) amplifying, thus, the paradox inherent in a presumably decolonial 'history from below' that ironically rests upon an intervention 'from above'. In this symbolic equation of story rescue, Therrien plays the role of the benevolent White intermediary whose mission is to save alternative and formerly bordered epistemologies (Mignolo, 2011c) by mobilising a decolonial lexical and conceptual repertoire. As I shall explore in depth in Chapter Four, ventriloquy, as a form of symbolic bordering in the context of Therrien and Jackson's collaboration, may not be patent upon a first reading, however, by scratching the surface of the text, one can lay bare the very "*mise en forme*" (xiii) [re-modelling process] of Jackson's re-constructed migrant selfhood. Symbolic bordering in this framework of story rescue, functions as an undergirding mechanism of regulation and "control of the migrant image" (Leese, 2022: 1), leading to the re-constitution of a migrant subjecthood that is tailored according to the "means at [the] disposal" (37) of the Western co-author and the exigencies of Western editorial bodies to secure the transnational mobility of the migrant's story.

Accordingly, the survival of the migrant's testimonial rests upon an external Western authority necessitating the dis-placement of indigenous epistemological formations from the memory and 'mouth' of the protagonist of the perilous migration journey into the hands and 'tongue'[204] of potential saviours whose writing/publishing culture entails, in this particular context, a set of im-mobilising policies, which modulate the passage of the migrant's story from an oral to a re-constructed written first-person account. Worth recalling here Henry Radice's (2018: 3) observation, which serves as one of the epigraphs for this chapter, that saving always

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[204] I metaphorically allude to the use of French as a global language in this context.

presupposes a power relation, for "to have the power to save, is to have the power of life or death".[205]

The 'authorised' entry of Kouamé, Victor, and Jackson into "virtual [mobile] spaces of [Western] publicity" (Chouliaraki, 2017: 91) was undoubtedly conditioned by their Western co-authors' rescue operations. However, it is important to add that despite their self-proclaimed advocacy for migrants' rights, Duroy, Balu, and Therrien are not exempt from their own unconscious biases. They are also, to some extent, constrained by editorial guidelines, as I shall demonstrate in the following section.

3.3 The neo-colonial dynamics of testimonial production and circulation: French as 'border-bridge'

In the context of migration representation, testimony, as a "medium" (Beausoleil, 2013: 2)[206], or category of narrative (re)production,[207] has increasingly become one of the predominant forms of voice employed—mainly in the 'Global North'—(Mazauric, 2013; Maitilasso, 2014; Canut, 2012) to bring to light previously obscured epistemologies in a bid "to rectify historical wrongs" (Felman, 1995:16, cited in Beausoleil, 2013: 2). As explained earlier, in Morocco and Algeria, unauthorised migrants' testimonies usually come in the form of fragments shared in NGOs' online hubs dedicated to exposing human rights abuses, or incorporated in journalistic articles and sociological research papers as evidentiary sources to lend credibility to researchers' findings. However, on the northern side of the Mediterranean, the situation differs, as unauthorised migrants, once on European shores, are encouraged by ethnographers and journalists to consider turning their traumatic experiences into written accounts that testify to the dehumanising nature of their cross-border journeys. Yet, as Cécile Canut and Catherine Mazauric (2014) remind us, these (re)collected stories have increasingly been commodified with migrants negotiating both the symbolic and capital value of their first-hand accounts. The

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[205] Feminist theorists, for instance, have previously warned against the dangers of solidarities across inequalities of power and experience, as these may be fraught with misunderstandings and could potentially engender further harm.

[206] The author has granted me permission to quote from their conference paper,"Testimony as Voice: Ethical Challenges and Aesthetic Alternatives" (2013), via email.

[207] Research on testimonial narratives has shown that the latter resist any attempt at classification as they encompass traces of different discourses; legal, confessional, political, historical, and at times, literary (Webb, 2019). For a comprehensive analysis of the testimonio as a hybrid genre, see Webb, L. (2019) 'Testimonio, the Assumption of Hybridity and the Issue of Genre,' *Studies in Testimony*. 2(1), pp. 3- 23.

burgeoning production of migrant stories in the 'North', as explained earlier, is the outcome of a Western intervention/re-mediation that involves different forms of dis-placement. First, the Western author assumes—to varying degrees—the position of the migrant protagonist in an attempt 'to melt into their skin' to give readers the impression that they are reading an autobiographical narrative. Second, the migrant is invited to retell their story using French as a medium of expression, enacting therefore a shift from his mother tongue to a foreign language while re-collecting his memories and reconstructing a fragmented past. In this sense, *speaking with* and *for* the migrant become two entangled representational practices. As Emily Beausoleil (2013: 2) notes, "testimony is fraught with its own risks [as] the particular *kind of* voice that [it] offers can lead to overexposure, misrepresentation, and the reinforcement of existing asymmetries". Indeed, the collaboratively produced testimonial could be read as a highly problematic space wherein two authorities negotiate voice, or rather "tussle over the control of meaning" (Leese, 2022: 170). In this framework, the unauthorised migrant represents the authority[208] of experience and the Western co-author embodies the authority of language and expression. In order to 'recuperate' those frozen/muted voices and turn them into (intelligible) "sounds" (Beausoleil, 2013: 4) to enable their transition to a target recipient, the co-authors need to transpose them onto their own 'vessel' the parameters of which they regulate. Thus, the migrant testimonial—in the specific context of collaborative production involving a Western co-writer—can be validated only if it fits neatly into the allocated space of the 'rescue vessel'.

To elaborate further, collaboration between Western authors and African migrants entails a complex process of "re-languaging" (Liddicoat, 2016) the latter's migratory experiences. In doing so, the French (-speaking) collaborators seek to create a [standard French][209] voice for an African (migratory) experience (Hogarth, 2016) by tailoring the original story to conform with the norms of the target [French-speaking] audience,[210] who represent the dominant linguistic and cultural group in this context. Thus, as a form of "domestication"[211]— i.e., turning the foreign into something familiar—re-languaging 'sub-Saharan' migrants' illegalised border stories is tightly connected to the metaphor of 'rescue', as well as to the trope of ventriloquism— producing an ironic effect, hence my use of the 'bridge/border' oxymoron.

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[208] in this context, I deliberately opt for the word 'authority' to avoid the use of the highly problematic notion of authenticity.
[209] I slightly alter Christopher Hogarth's quote by substituting "Italian" with "French". Although the latter is more widely spoken than Italian in many 'sub-Saharan' countries owing to France's colonial legacy, I am specifically referring to formal or standard renditions of the French language rather than Africanised articulations of the latter (with the notable exception of Therrien and Jackson's account.)
[210] Hogarth (2016).
[211] Ibid.

As such, my critical reflections on re-languaging as a practice involving the metaphorical rescue and ventriloquisation of the migrant's story establish a sense of thematic continuity between this chapter and the following one.

It has almost become a truism that any text produced in a global language is more mobile than others (i.e., those written in minor languages). In the context of the collaboratively produced migration narratives being examined, French functions as a "contact zone"[212], and the only linguistic alternative as none of the Western co-authors seems to master the migrant's indigenous language(s). The process of re-languaging the migrant's experience is indeed laden with ethical risks as the migrant is compelled to tell their story in a language that is not theirs, transposing their culturally and linguistically distinct experience from the site of their [troubled] memory and [wounded] imagination to an intelligible form of French—a hegemonic language— to ensure its mobility and visibility across transnational borders. This very process attests to the ongoing "coloniality of language" (Veronelli, 2015:108; Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong' O, 2009), whereby French, among other ex-colonial/ global languages, is (still) used as a means to (re)write 'Other' histories and epistemologies, which implies a form of linguistic hierarchy that devalues and excludes indigenous forms of expression. Furthermore, in this context of collaboration, the migrant is framed as "opposite racial communicator" (Veronelli, 2015: 108) and is considered "linguistically unequal" as his language(s) are perceived to be incapable of transmitting knowledge to a global audience.[213] As Mignolo (2011b) contends, language is where a people's identity is rooted, as it is not merely something individuals possess, but rather an integral of who they are. Therefore, the entextualisation of indigenous experiences using French as a means of expression entails an act of dis-location and hence of "dis-memberment" (Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong O', 2009) of the bodies that carry those histories and languages (Veronelli, 2015).

By assigning migrants' stories "the order of the [French]language" (Canut, 2021: 22), i.e., standard grammar, and stylised expression as in the cases of Kouamé and Victor's narratives, the Western collaborators 'border' the migrants' 'being' by restricting the articulation of their knowledge(s) within (neo)colonial linguistic boundaries and "through the normative tropes of the dominant culture". (Sabinda, 2019: 153). Inevitably, this form of (ongoing) linguistic violence (Ravishankar, 2020) results in the 'whitisation' (Fanon, 1952;

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[212] The concept of 'the contact zone' was first introduced by Mary Louise Pratt in a 1991 keynote address to the Modern Language Association entitled 'The Arts of the Contact Zone'. She used the term to refer "to social spaces [wherein] cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power" (2).
[213] Veronelli (2015: 108).

Canut, 2021), and hence the systematic erasure of the migrants' indigenous expression. This is usually achieved by adding a "slick [and] a polished feel" (Hargreaves, 2006: 46) to it:

> [L]a côte n'apparaissait pas. Parfois, on croyait la voir parce que le vent soulevait sur l'horizon une brume blanchâtre qui pouvait prendre la forme d'un village, mais un instant plus tard, toutes les maisons avaient disparu et nos yeux ne s'accrochaient plus à rien (*RDT*, Ch.32).[214]

> [The shoreline was nowhere to be seen. At times, we believed we had caught sight of it, as the wind lifted a faint whitish mist on the horizon fleetingly assuming the guise of a village. But a moment later, all the houses vanished, leaving our eyes clinging to the void.]

Examples of stylised articulations also abound in *LRDS* as Balu relies heavily on simile, personification, and parallelism in the re-languaging of Victor's migratory experience:

> À l'intérieur du camion, c'est comme une tempête de sable dans une machine à laver […]. Les portes sont fermées mais rien n'y fait, la poussière rentre avec insistance et surtout, avec une vitesse insoupçonnée (67).

> [Inside the truck, it was like a sandstorm in a washing machine […]. The doors are shut, but it makes no difference; the dust enters relentlessly, and above all, with an unsuspected speed].

Thus, Duroy and Balu enact a double form of dis-placement and symbolic bordering: first they dislocate the migrant's experience from its original container or body and emplace it within the normative frames of the French language, and second, they embellish it using stylistic devices to align with the expectations of a metropolitan audience. This double linguistic performance "creates a ridge where there is a patent difference that separates what [the migrant] says from what [they] would like to say" (Sartre, 1964: 24; cited in Ravinshkhar 2019: 6). In this process of dis-placement, "the nuances, complexities, and subtleties of emotion and affect, which are unique to [the indigenous subject] are [either] lost or, remain entrapped [in their body]".[215] As such, regardless of the migrants' degree of mastery of and comfortableness with the French language, "there will remain a gap between [their] inner selves and the self which this language allows [them] to outwardly express to both the world and [themselves]".[216]

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[214] In the e-book version I am referencing, there are only chapter numbers, with no page numbers provided.
[215] Ravinshkhar (2019: 6).
[216] Ibid.

Furthermore, as part of the "linguistic prescriptivism" (Canut, 2021: 25) that the act of rescuing the migrant's story entails, Therrien conducts her interviews with Jackson in French. However, her approach to the re-languaging process slightly differs from that of Duroy and Balu in that she preserves traces of Jackson's 'unconventional' uses of French. By retaining the informality of the migrant's answers and instances of Africanised French usage in the transcribed text, Therrien may have sought to foreground Jackson's appropriation and subversion of the French language to grant him a certain degree of 'authority' over his story. Thus, Therrien's insertion of Jackson's non-standard French in the body of the text serves to re-articulate his gesture of resistance and thereby express his and (by extension) her decolonial stance on normative linguistic practices, such as the ones found in Kouamé and Victor's 're-languaged' migration narratives. Notwithstanding Therrien's subversive methodology in relation to the re-languaging of Jackson's story, the outcome of her transcription is nonetheless predominantly articulated in terms of French fragments and not in the migrant's mother tongue except for occasional re-uses of Jackson's references to folklore, ancient proverbs—one of which is used as the title of the book—and ghetto terminology or, what he calls their "*langage code*" (115) [coded language].[217]

While using French as a means to challenge hegemonic representations and secure the circulation of unauthorised migrants' testimonial accounts in the global book market, Duroy, Balu and Therrien end up ironically dis-membering the migrant's indigenous languages—repositories of their memories and knowledge(s)—by entrapping them within the 'borders' of this linguistic regime. In this sense, re-languaging the migrants' experiences of im-mobility and dis-placement functions paradoxically as both a bridge and a border enabling on the one hand the transnational movement of the 'body' of the text (the book), while immobilising (and further marginalising) the heterogeneous indigenous forms of expression that the migrant's body carries (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong O, 2009), on the other. Thus, it is only through a 'dis-membered body' that ventriloquy is possible. In the following chapter, I re-vitalise and apply the ventriloquial trope in my examination of other forms of symbolic bordering inherent in these collaboratively produced texts and demonstrate that they culminate in a *crisis* of mediation (Felman & Dori, 1992) in the context of migration representation.

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[217] Examples include "*les chairmen*" (107) [those who set the ghetto rules], "*pam-bim*" (110) [hiding spots], and "*la demi-Schengen*" (80) [a (transit) ghetto].

Chapter Four—Co-authorship: Editorial ventriloquy and the 'borders' of empathy

"In order to understand and thus accept you [the Other], I have to measure your solidity with the idea scale providing me with grounds to make comparisons and, perhaps, judgement. I have to reduce."

Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of relation* (1997: 190).

In the previous chapter, I engaged with Chouliaraki's (2017) conception of "symbolic bordering" and used it as a lens through which to read the neo-colonial politics-informed im-mobility dynamics underpinning the selected co-authored testimonials by specifically analysing the rescue trope and its implications. This chapter builds on the previous one by digging deeper into the surface of the texts with a view to retrieving other forms of 'control' of both the migrant's story, as well as their image (Leese, 2022). Thus, by re-visiting and re-purposing the ventriloquial trope (Couser, 1998; Davis, 1998; Jacklin, 2005), i.e., the metaphorical performance of speaking through, or on behalf of oppressed 'Others', and investing its critical potential, I analyse the Western co-authors' manipulations of narrative structure and character development, as well as reflect on their potential impact on reader response. As such, empathy in its myriad forms is explored in light of my ventriloquism-focused reading of the selected testimonials. Ultimately, this chapter closes with an assessment of the limited effectiveness of the Western co-authors' counter-narrative approach.

In his article 'Spitting the dummy: Collaborative life writing and ventriloquism', Michael Jacklin (2005) observes that throughout the centuries of its production, collaborative writing "has been both *appealing and appalling*[218] in fairly equal measure and the metaphor of ventriloquism neatly captures the simultaneity of fascination and distaste readers experience in the consumption of the collaborative voice" (2). Within the same context, G.T Couser (1998) claims that collaborators can, in some instances, articulate a narrative voice that is predominantly the outcome of their ventriloquial manoeuvres rather than the product of the putative source. This view is equally supported by Vanessa Smith (1998) who argues that the editing process of collaboratively produced stories tends more towards "ventriloquisation" than transcription, drawing attention to the adjustments and amendments made [by scribes/mediators] to the original script or to the oral performance of the witness (Jacklin, 2005). Relatedly, Raphael Samuel (1972) warns us that any act of transcription or re-writing entails violence as the scribe/ interlocutor (in the context of an ethnographic or journalist investigation,

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[218] My emphasis.

for example) risks "mutilat[ing] the spoken word […] when it is taken down in writing and transferred to the printed page".[219] As this performance is always already contingent upon the scribe's subjective interpretation of an oral account, it inevitably has "important epistemological consequences [since they] always listen from some-where, no matter how open or willing [they] are to move from [their] positions".[220] This, in turn, influences the way readers engage with the [final] transcribed account. As transcription is inherently a form of intervention or intrusion—metaphorically understood as "mutilation" by Samuel—it thus inescapably involves a certain degree of ventriloquism, i.e., a form of vocal dis-location staged by the scribe whereby he speaks "without moving his lips" (Davis, 1998) through a figure—the re-constructed migrant character in the context of this study—and making them appear to articulate words, which are not necessarily theirs.

The phrase "editorial ventriloquism" (Smith, 1998) specifically refers to the facilitator's control (or degree thereof) over both the structure and the content of the protagonist's story, i.e., the very process of selection, extraction, insertion, and elision of specific details, which make a migrant's story worth telling (Chouliaraki, 2017), and therefore worth reading. In this sense, it can serve as a useful conceptual lens through which to examine the im-mobility of the un-authorised migrants' voices within the framework of migration narrative co-authorship by specifically examining its different manifestations in *RDT, LRDS,* and *CQEDS*.

If collaboration in the context of textual co-production involves ventriloquy, which is also the metaphor used by critics like Francois Cooren (2000: 1) and others to refer to the act of "throwing one's voice in such a way that a figure appears to be speaking in front of an audience", then obstacles would inevitably arise blocking readers' access to the original voice of the story's narrator/protagonist. This compels us to interrogate the extent to which the (re) mediation of the latter's story could create vocal conflations, culminating in representational distortions and subsequent misinterpretations. These complex and highly problematic ventriloquial dynamics, as this chapter aims to demonstrate, "reduce the possibilities for the articulation of situated knowledges"[221] that usually result from "the concrete encounter with Others".[222]

Kouamé, Victor, and Jackson's stories and identities are narratologically mounted and discursively regulated, respectively. Viewed from this perspective and applied to co-authored migration narratives, ventriloquy inevitably generates forms of symbolic bordering as

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[219] Samuel (1972: 2) cited in Tamboukou (2020: 152).
[220] Ibid., pp.148-149.
[221] Young (1999: 106), cited in Tamboukou (2020: 151).
[222] Ibid.

unauthorised migrants' voices are put through a set of regulative mechanisms, which determine *how* they appear to the target readership and the kind of reactiona that the latter may potentially manifest. Together, the ventriloquial trope and the concept of symbolic bordering serve as potent lenses through which I analyse the different narrative and discursive reconfigurations of the migrants' recollected experiences of im-mobility in the selected texts.

Borrowed from film terminology, 'montage' is used in this chapter not only to designate the different editing techniques used by Duroy, Balu, and Therrien, but also to refer to the degrees of authorial control asserted by the latter in the making of Kouamé, Victor, and Jackson's stories. In the context of my analysis, montage encompasses the piecing together of narrative and discursive fragments and their emplacement within a re-imagined sequence of events to create a composite whole. Also, mounting the narrative structure of the migrants' reconstructed border experiences within the boundaries of a textual frame implies a condensation of space, time, and information, all of which are governed by the Western co-authors' editorial choices. First, I explore Duroy, Balu, and Therrien's conversions of Kouamé, Victor, and Jackson's 'matryoshka' migratory journeys (respectively) into narrative form by specifically looking into the narrative strategies deployed by the former. Second, I identify instances of discursive ventriloquism (Jacklin, 2005) by particularly looking at terminological (re)insertions which, I argue, function as bordering markers through which the Western co-authors reconstruct the migrants' identities, replicating in the process the categorical fetishism (De Genova, 2013) characteristic of the North-African-EU [discursive] immobility regime. The chapter concludes with a critical reflection on the crisis of mediation that results from the Western co-authors' degrees of ventriloquial control of the migrants' stories and the latter's impact on the 'im-mobility' of empathy.

4.1   Ventriloquial 'montage': (B)Ordering the migrant narrative

Narrative flow is an essential component of storytelling and is often achieved by writers to foreground the evolution of a specific character across time and space. The way narrative sequences are organised in a given text either reinforce a sense of chronology and a linear movement in space or a sense of temporal and spatial fragmentation depending on how publishers view the protagonist's journey and the effects they aim to create. Unauthorised migrations, unlike so called 'ruly' forms of transnational movements are—as the critical scholarship in immobility studies has extensively demonstrated, multiplex and multi-staged and

are characterised by repetitions, circularity at times, indeterminacy, and open-endedness. While reconstructions of unauthorised migrants' transnational movements have often been reduced to freeze frames or dispersed moments of im-mobility in mainstream media outlets, as established in Part One, they are more elaborately articulated in the migration narratives under study. What this section specifically aims to examine is the degree of control enacted by the Western co-authors in their re-mapping of the migrants' "matryoshka journey"—a conception advanced by Noelle Bridgen and Cetta Mainwairing (2016: 3) that gestures to the "nested" experiences of moving, stopping, and waiting, which are integral to "a dialectic of mobility and immobility" (3) resulting in different forms of dis-placement.

Notwithstanding their different narrative structures, *RDT, LRDS,* and *CQEDS* reveal the complexities of illegalised cross-border movements by retracing the multiple unauthorised channels 'sub Saharan' migrants take to evade checkpoints, the risks they take by traversing the Sahara Desert and the Mediterranean Sea, as well as the progressions, regressions, and digressions they experience along the way. The narrative reconfigurations of the migrants' experiences of im-mobility take two forms: linear in the case of Kouamé's re-staged journey, and fragmented in the cases of Victor and Jackson. These editorial choices, I argue, inevitably lead to the foregrounding of specific migratory phases (Bradeloup, 2014) and the backgrounding or even the removal of others. In what follows, I engage with the different sequential compositions characterising the three aforementioned narratives by examining on the one hand, the narrativisation of migrants' experiences of im-mobility and analysing, on the other, the immobilising/bordering impact of the editors' montage of the latter.

Told in retrospect, *RDT* chronologically retraces Kouamé's exilic journey from his country of origin to France by reflecting on the multiple migratory stages that he went through while charting complex geographies. By emplacing Kouamé's disorderly and unplanned cross-border movements within a linear plotline that recalls the Aristotelian tripartite plot composition of beginning, middle, and end, Duroy sought to impose a sense of orderliness on the migrant's chaotic journey. Arguably, in doing this, he attempted to give a geometric form to an experience that defies any coherent and linear articulation as it is inherently subversive of (border) lines, so as to establish a following strategy for readers to make sense of the migrant's story. However, this ventriloquial intervention specifically answers the imperative of coherence and linearity (Tamboukou, 2020)—Western prerequisites for the recomposition of Other knowledges[223]—

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[223] Ibid.

which, in turn could be read as producing symbolic bordering effects on the narrative re-articulation of Kouamé's story.

Duroy divides Kouamé's narrative into 42 relatively short chapters, which *condense* the protagonist's four-year migratory journey across more than a dozen African and European cities. This narrative partition is informed by a geographic logic that divides the different spaces that Kouamé traversed including pre- and post-migratory environments and numerous transit hubs in between. As such, the first 9 chapters—which correspond to the opening of Kouamé's story—re-stage his years of "voluntary immobility" (Schewel, 2019: 332) and peaceful existence in his origin country in West Africa before tragedy hits. Chapters 10, 11, and 12 depict his escape and thus signal the beginning of his forced exile. The three-chapter escape sequence is marked by a speedy tempo as opposed to the much slower pace of the expository chapters, highlighting the hasty movements of the young escapee, as well as the uncontrollable flow of the trauma-induced fractured images that haunt him as he runs for his life. This pace-shift could be construed as an efficient strategy to create a sense of immediacy and foreground the unplanned character of Kouamé's migration, i.e., his forced movement from a condition of *voluntary immobility* to one of *involuntary mobility*.[224] This passage from one state of being to one of becoming is "punctuated by the frenzied time [he experienced] with urgency and sudden movement" (Bridgen & Mainwaring, 2016: 11).

The following 24 chapters re-map in vivid detail Kouamé's four-year segmented journey across both intra-African and intra-EU borders, retracing the different migratory corridors, unauthorised entry and exit points, and reflecting on moments of inertia and near death at Sea. His three day-long excruciating experience of desert crossing on board of an overloaded pick-up stretches across five chapters wherein Kouamé along with 21 other migrants is forced to assume a foetal position until they reach Dirkou, Niger where they are given a temporary 'right to move' so as to enable the blood to flow (again) through their weary veins before resuming the second phase of the desert trek. As Bridgen and Mainwaring (2016: 11) rightly observe, "the fragmented nature of [illegalised] journeys encourages a nested experience", i.e., a multi-layered series of "adventures and concealment strategies as migrants attempt to evade capture by the state or escape violent criminal predators".[225] In other words, by accepting temporary yet "extreme forms of immobility"[226] while being smuggled across borders, Kouamé "strategically

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[224] My emphasis.
[225] Bridgen & Mainwairing (2016: 11).
[226] Ibid.

forfeit[s] control over [his] own body in transit"[227] as a necessary strategy to eschew "other dangers, usually those associated with [his] visibility to the state".[228] After having crossed the deadly Sahara border, Kouamé is arrested and detained by the Libyan police at Gatrone and taken to a camp where detainees are subjected to torture. Despite his immobilisation and displacement in a detention facility, Kouamé manages to escape and pursues his journey across Algeria and Morocco where he endures other protracted forms of forced immobility (Khosravi, 2020; Stock, 2019). Indeed, Duroy's montage of the latter's experience of (non)movement enables readers "to peel back the layers" (Bridgen, Mainwaring, 2016: 12) of his unauthorised cross-border journey while also maintaining a sense of control over the temporal flow of his narrative. Interestingly, Duroy's editorial technique dramatises the tension between the passage of time and the migrants' sense of spatial stuckedness and temporal inertia as a result of Maghreb-EU bordering practices. Moreover, Duroy allocates a large portion of the narrative space to Kouamé's transit im-mobility. Following a linear pattern, Kouamé reflects on the moments of suspension and prolonged waiting in the limbo-like camps of Maghnia, Algeria before crossing into Morocco. The chapter titles are also very significant as they signal the migrant's slow and sporadic movements between internal (Deb-Deb, Ouargla, Maghnia in Algeria) and external borders (Maghnia-Oujda).

The reconfiguration of Kouamé's strandedness in the midst of the Mediterranean Sea on board of a dinghy is achieved by Duroy using a complex narrative *mise en abîme*. Kouamé remembers how in those moments of desperation he recalled the loss of his parents while also reflecting on what appeared to be a near death. Stretching across four chapters, the preparation for the Mediterranean crossing, the immobility at sea and the migrants' rescue are re-configured by Duroy following a chronological fashion that is intermittently interrupted by Kouamé's contemplative pauses through which his mind travels back and forth generating a series of nested sequences, a kind of matryoshka-like re-membering of past images, establishing thus tension as well as effects of dramatic realism, which are necessary ingredients for the construction of a sensationalist story.

The last 9 chapters retrace Kouamé's EU experience, his arrival in Spain after having been rescued by a Red Cross ship and his authorised entry in France, after having obtained a (temporary) passport. Throughout these chapters, Duroy re-maps Kouamé's linear movements from Madrid to Bordeaux and Toulouse while also re-casting the protagonist's unstable mobility

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[227] Bridgen & Mainwairing (2016: 12).
[228] Ibid.

status. Indeed, the shifting dynamics of Kouamé's im-mobility across the aforementioned EU spaces are conveyed by first foregrounding his movement from an unauthorised rescuee to a legalised migrant, and second, by describing his return to "clandestinity" after he had turned 18 on French soil. Duroy further emphasises Kouamé's im-mobility shifts by reconstructing the long waiting process prior to his regularisation and ends with his eventual resettlement in France. In so doing, Duroy represents the spectrum of im-mobility (Smets, 2019) characteristic of complex forms of unauthorised migration. However, this ventriloquial rendition has a double and paradoxical effect. While attempting to counterbalance the (North-)African and EU mainstream media's reductionist and oversimplistic (dis)articulations of 'sub-Saharan' migrants' moments of immobility, Duroy ends up highlighting "the irrational risks migrants [like Kouamé] take [while traversing] seas and deserts" (Bridgen & Mainwairing, 2016: 1), which consequently downplays the detrimental impact of the North-African-EU border policies on the latter.[229]

The narrative closes with Kouamé's (ventriloquised) articulation of a sense of "radical futurity" (Tamboukou, 2020: 156), which culminates in the dis-placement of temporal and spatial boundaries by merging the pseudo-present of narration, the past of remembrance, and the migrant's vision of a distant future marked by the rhetorical questions, " *Et après? Et plus tard?* [...] *Je vais vous dire comment je me vois dans dix ans*." [And what comes next? And later? Let me tell you how I envision myself in ten years...] (Ch.42). Duroy's choice of concluding the narrative with Kouamé's self-projection onto the future, reinforces a sense of logical connection between the different phases of his migratory journey and the outcomes of his experiences of im/mobility across Southern and Northern Mediterranean borders on his self-perception. Accordingly, Duroy's montage of Kouamé's story mimics the process of his evolution from an unexperienced unaccompanied minor who suddenly finds himself on the road to exile, to an experienced unauthorised traveller navigating hostile borders, to eventually become a resettled migrant with a clear vision of his future self. Notwithstanding the counter-narrative potential of Duroy's re-habilitation of Kouamé's story, the ventriloquial intrusions and narratorial regulations that he enacts draw attention to the power dynamics inherent in the very process of re-mediation.

Unlike *RDT*, *LRDS* and *CQEDS* feature traces of the interviews that Balu and Therrien conducted with Victor and Jackson, respectively. By having chosen to preserve aspects of the

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[229] Ibid.

migrant's (vocal) presence in the final account, Balu and Therrien attempted—to varying degrees— to experiment with their transcription methods and, thereby took major risks in terms of narrative form. Both accounts are neither fully ventriloquised renditions of the migrant's voice nor are they autonomous and individualised self-reconstructions of the migrants' complex journeys. In fact, Balu and Therrien's subversive editorial choices seem to have been informed by the decolonial concept of "thinking with exteriority" (Quijano, 2000; Mignolo, 2011b) as they both relied on a strategic wavering between two narrative positions; the migrant's and theirs. Although the use of double-voicedness in the narrativisation of Victor and Jackson's rearticulated migration experiences may be hailed by critics as a form of democratic engagement that enables the formation of alternative epistemologies, this editorial strategy is nonetheless controlled by both Balu and Therrien, each in their own fashion, hence producing effects of symbolic bordering. Also, this intermittent shift in narrative perspective, as well as the authors' abandoning of the linear method seem to have played a significant role in the way in which the stories are structured and emplotted, and in how the im-mobility continuum characteristic of the migrants' cross-border journey is put in place.

What *LRDS* and *CQEDS* have in common is that they both reflect the disrupted flow of the protagonists' migration, as well as the fragmented structure of the process of re-membering traumatic past experiences. Arguably, by having chosen to mount the structure of Victor and Jackson's stories by stitching disintegrated images of their border experiences into a non-linear narrative form, Balu and Therrien, respectively, sought to foreground the impossibility of ordering the migrant's dis-orderly and dis-continuous migratory journey on the one hand, and to give a sense of the destructive impact that bordering practices have on the migrants' psyche, on the other.

Indeed, unlike *RDT, LRDS* and *CQEDS* are challenging to follow and resist summarisation. The narrative content lying between the opening and closing of the stories is a fragmented re-staging of the migrant protagonists' illegalised movement across African and European borders. Victor and Jackson's narratives are re-constructed following a [ventriloquial] arrangement that is either informed by a spatial or a temporal re-configuration of their im-mobility experiences.

Composed of 21 chapters, *LRDS* retraces victor's cross-border movements from Cameroun to France by organising them spatially. In each chapter, Balu restages the protagonist's im-mobility experiences by making him reflect upon the different barriers—linguistic, financial, affective, and physical—he encountered *en route* to Europe. The map with

which Balu opens the story serves to visualise the migrant's stop-overs and his itinerary changes, as well as to foreshadow the spatial approach he adopts in the narrative re-construction of the migrant's multi-staged illegalised journey.

The fragmentary rendition of Victor's story is signalled from the outset. The first chapter entitled "*Survivre*", unconventionally opens with a narrative fragment extracted from the 16th chapter—"[*j*]*e suis immobile. Je vais mourir cette nuit, demain peut-être*" (6) [I am motionless. I might die tonight, perhaps tomorrow]—which corresponds to the climax of victor's experience of immobility at the Algerian-Moroccan border, which is a turning point in his migration journey as he thought that the adventure would end at that juncture, "*c'est desormais le silence. Et la fin de l'aventure pour moi*"[230] [silence has fallen. My adventure comes to a close]. By having opted to open the narrative in *medias res*, i.e., in the midst of Victor's situation of border stuckedness, Balu may have attempted to de-regulate the tempo of the story by creating tension, suspense, and friction as early as the opening lines, as a way of captivating readers' interest and enhancing their engagement with the story world, "*depuis combien d'heures m'a-t-on jeté au fond de cet énorme trou?* […] *Ce ravin qu'il ont creusé entre Maroc et Algérie, qui fait office de frontière entre les deux pays*"[231] [for how long have I been thrown into the depths of this enormous pit? This ravin they have dug between Morocco and Algeria, which serves as a frontier between the two countries]. This calculated insertion of a suspense structure in the incipit of the narrative creates a sense of dramatic immediacy, reinforcing the illusion that the migrant is the narrator as well as the (sole) author of his story. As such, Balu camouflages his ventriloquial manoeuvres and displaces readers' attention away from the regulations he imposed on the form of the migrant's narrative. Thus, by opening Victor's story *in medias res*, Balu invites readers to imagine the missing events that have led to this particular dramatic sequence and in doing so, compels them to instantly interrogate the racialised violence induced by intra-African bordering practices and, by extension, the African-EU immobility regime. The double-voicedness characterising *LRDS* is also signalled in the first chapter through Balu's use of metalepsis (Genette, 1982), which is a narrative technique whereby writers self-consciously gesture to a movement from one narrative level to another. In this way, he not only further complexifies the internal structure of the opening chapter but also draws attention to the composite nature of Victor's account.

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[230] *LRDS*, p.6.
[231] Ibid.

Embedded within an edified series of edited stream of consciousness strings, the intra-chapters reconfigure patches of Victor's wounded memory and compact his three-year long journey across 'sub-Saharan' (Mali, Niger, and Nigeria), Maghrebi (Morocco, Algeria), and European countries (Spain and France). Arguably, one of Balu's most salient instances of editorial ventriloquism is ironically his very choice of preserving the "opacity" (Glissant, 1997) characteristic of Victor's disorderly re-articulation of his im-mobility experience. The first-person narration (a composite voice blending Victor's and Balu's) moves back and forth, more often than not randomly, i.e., without following a regular pattern. Through analeptic and proleptic gestures (Genette, 1982), Balu dis-places the focus from the narrative present to a distant past wherein Victor recalls the reasons, which pushed him to leave Cameroun in 2012, setting thereby the backdrop for the story to unfold. Through instances of flash- forward, Balu also creates a dynamic effect that mirrors the sense of aspiration and purpose (Carling, 2002) that migrants like Victor experience despite the challenges they face on their way to EU-rope. Additionally, by disrupting the narrative flow through non-linear storytelling, Balu (re)frames Victor's migratory condition by focusing on its unpredictability and uncertainty (Andersson, 2014). Indeed, unauthorised migrants "are deprived [not only of the right to free circulation but also] of the right to structure their own time or even to participate in the structured temporality of the Modern work regime" (Jacobsen et al., 2020: 91). As such, *LRDS* re-articulates Victor's moments of prolonged immobility when he was "*scanné*" (30) [screened] by the Malian police, transported by "*clando*" (22) or pick up for days through alternative corridors, or when waiting in insalubrious make-shift camps in EU-rope's external borderlands to be smuggled out to the next migration hub. In contrast to the media's focus on the detrimental impact that the presence of 'clandestine' 'African' migrant 'masses' has on the local communities' well-being, *LRDS* exposes the precarious lives that they lead and the absence of relief or support schemes in both Morocco and Algeria.

Moments of waiting are also meticulously re-staged through Balu's re-configurations of narrative time (Genette, 1982). For instance, he stretches Victor's protracted condition of liminality while waiting for the opportune moment to climb the Melilla fences across two chapters. The latter are laden with high tension and suspense, as well as irregular shifts from accelerated to decelerated action, creating a contrast between the migrant's sense of spatial entrapment (Schewel, 2019) and his temporal displacement (Khosravi, 2020) from present to past and future, and back again, as his mind wanders freely despite his physical immobilisation. Moreover, the relationship that Balu establishes between narrative structure, narrative

space/time and Victor's im-mobility is articulated through his montage of the latter's condition of belatedness or delay (Khosravi, 2020). The fragmented re-arrangement of the different phases of Victor's migration also reflects his forced postponement of his arrival at his desired destination, hence the dis-membering effect of "the temporal architecture of waiting" (Sharma, 2014; cited in Jacobsen et al., 2020: 9) that is produced by border regimes. Ultimately, the open-endedness of Victor's narrative may also serve as a potent narrative strategy by which Balu dramatises the migrant's uncertain status as an 'undocumented' migrant in France. As I shall demonstrate in the section on discursive ventriloquism, Balu's regulations of the structure of Victor's story are informed by the didactic message that he sought to communicate regarding the dangers of unauthorised migration in an attempt to deter potential migrants from undertaking the Mediterranean crossing.

Like *LRDS*, *CQEDS* is a narrative recomposition of transcribed fragments of Jackson and Therrien's multiple conversations around the former's illegalised migration. However, Therrien's editorial interventions are different from both Duroy and Balu's as she chose to transcribe most of the questions that she had asked Jackson and used them as a narrative strategy and a guiding thread to establish a sense of coherence when the latter is lost or absent in Jackson's often lengthy and disjointed responses. While Victor's non-linear narrative rendition is spatially oriented, Jackson's transcribed story is based on a more complex spatio-temporal pattern as Therrien compartmentalised his answers according to distinct time periods stretching from the spring of 2017 to that of 2018, which correspond to the duration of her fieldwork and data collection. As such, the narrative is divided into four time frames (spring 2017, autumn 2017, winter 2018, and spring 2018), each of which functions as a section title. Within each section are nested Jackson's answers, which are themselves divided thematically by selecting and re-using the latter's own phrases as sub-section titles. Although Jackson's narrative is reconfigured as a series of flashback sequences following a seemingly chronological pattern, they are intermittently interrupted by Therrien in an attempt to limit the focus of the conversation or to invite Jackson to elaborate further on specific details leading to temporal diversions, silences and pauses. The final outcome is thus characterised by visual misbalance and formal irregularity, which reflect Therrien's self-conscious limited editorial intrusion, i.e., by refraining from the assertion of full control over Jackson's narrative.

Sections One and Two, which run across the spring and autumn 2017, are comparatively longer and more comprehensive in content than sections Three and Four, and are broken into multiple sub-divisions. Arguably, through this narrative repartition, Therrien sought

to reflect the difference in the ways Jackson experienced the "temporal bordering" (Tazzioli, 2018:1; Khosravi, 2018) produced by migration control during the first phases of his unauthorised cross-border journey, which are remapped in vivid detail in the first two sections. For instance, they feature Jackson's long reflections on the sense of immobilism and entrapment he endured in his country of origin Cameroun, the long preparation stages for his migration journey, the different arrests he underwent in Nigeria, Algeria, and Morocco due to his undocumented status, as well as the limbo-like days he spent in the forest of Gourougou to attempt to cross the Moroccan-Spanish border. The narrative rhythm characterising these first two sections seems to recast the temporal deceleration (Genette, 1982) experienced by Jackson during his three-year-long (failed) attempts to reach EU-rope via unauthorised routes. Accordingly, Therrien's uneven narrative repartition mirrors the structure of Jackson's unpunctuated (non)-movements through illegalised channels and the troubled temporality he experienced in transit settings.

Unlike the first two plot sections, the third and the fourth mark a shift in Therrien's re-construction of narrative time and space as she focuses on Jackson's post-resettlement in Morocco and his (authorised) trip to Paris within the framework of a training project organised by Caritas, Morocco (with whom he had signed a work contract). The positive effect of Jackson's status regularisation and his Schengen visa acquisition on his 'sense of time' is reflected in Therrien's choice of temporarily withdrawing from the narrative, leaving Jackson to take (full) control of the narration by inserting fragments from his Paris journal in the third section. The effect of this editorial decision is to accelerate the tempo of the narrative, which itself goes hand in hand with Jackson's regained "autonomous temporality" (Tazzioli, 2018: 2) resulting from his resettlement in Morocco. As stated earlier, the last two sections are relatively short compared to the first two, and are characterised by a fast-paced narrative rhythm that echoes the (now) speedy and hectic movements of Jackson across permeable borders facilitated by his newly acquired right to transnational mobility. Although Therrien's editorial interventions are minimal compared to Duroy and Balu's, they are nonetheless highly impactful and significant as they thematise Jackson's narrative around the myth of transit by allocating most of the narrative space to his atypical Moroccan experience of transit turned 'home' and, in so doing, narrows down its focus to achieve the intended effect. This is further fleshed out in my analysis of discursive ventriloquism.

In this way, Duroy, Balu, and Therrien's editorial ventriloquism at the level of narrative form— despite its varying degrees and manifestations—serves to outline the boundaries of the

migrants' im-mobility narratives, control their flow, and delimit their thematic parameters. Through editorial manipulations, the Western co- authors re-arrange, and thus impose a sense of structure—however fragmented it is—on the migrants' re-constructed experiences of disrupted im-mobility. Resultantly, these manoeuvres produce effects of fixity and emplotment, while paradoxically attempting to challenge the immobilising (dis)articulations of 'sub-Saharan' migrants' Mediterranean journeys in mainstream Maghrebi and EU media discourse.

In what follows I examine another aspect of editorial ventriloquism, which is manifested at the discursive level and is as highly problematic as the editorial interventions enacted at the level of narrative form.

4.2   Discursive ventrilocation: Infiltration of migrant identity and the neo-colonial reproduction of categorical fetishism

Drawing on Steven Connor's (2000) contention that ventriloquism inevitably "reduces others to the condition of objects by […] annihilating their voices" (297), Michael Jacklin (2005: 6) asserts that "collaboration is inherently appropriative […] [and] voice in collaborative texts is at best fabricated, at worst stolen". In this section, I look into instances of discursive ventriloquism whereby Duroy, Balu, and Therrien 'infiltrate'—to differing degrees—the identities of the migrant protagonists by "putting words into their mouths",[232] culminating in the (re)production of migrant archetypes, namely 'the deserving refugee', 'the failed economic migrant', and 'the successfully resettled transmigrant', respectively. I argue that these discursive (re)formations serve to symbolically border migrants and make their identities intelligible to a privileged readership (Maghrebi and European alike). Notwithstanding the Western authors' desire to 'save' the migrants' stories by offering alternative and subversive gazes, they nonetheless end up blurring the complexity of their individual identities by re-investing and re-coding hegemonic migration-specific categorisations. As Édouard Glissant (1990: 189) observes, "[...] Western processes of understanding [the Other] always involve a reductionism of complexities and multiplicities within the boundaries of conceptual norms".[233] He further elaborates his argument asserting that "Westerners [tend to] deploy units of measurement in order to accept the Other […], which provide [them] with grounds to make comparison and

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[232] Jacklin (2005: 6).
[233] Cited in Tamboukou (2020: 158-159).

perhaps judgement".[234] Thus, in order to re-articulate unparaphrasable border experiences, Duroy, Balu, and Therrien had to tap into discursive resources like commonly used and easily identifiable migration terminology, one with which a transnational audience is familiar. This subsequently produced a "discordance between the discursive timber of the [migrant] […] and that of the editorial participants" (Jacklin, 2005:2).

The metaphor of 'infiltration' as applied to Kouamé, Victor, and Jackson's reconstructed identities, refers to their condition of being penetrated, i.e., ventriloquised and manipulated by their respective co-authors. In this section, I deconstruct the very process of identity (re)formation of the aforementioned migrants across paratextual spaces so as to expose the underlying mechanisms of the different forms and degrees of discursive ventriloquism characterising the content of the migration narratives under scrutiny. I also examine the impact of the Western co-author's 'control' of the migrant's story and voice along with the migrant archetypes that emerge as a result of their ventriloquial intrusions.

4.2.1 "*Je suis arrivé avec le ventre vide, aujourd'hui je parle la bouche pleine*"[235]: *Kouamé as the replica of 'the deserving refugee archetype'*

Although the promotion of refugee success stories has often functioned as an effective strategy to counterbalance the dehumanising narratives, which have long permeated media representations of unauthorised migrants on both sides of the Mediterranean, reconsidering the underlying process of the reconstruction of the refugee's portrayal can potentially reveal forms of symbolic bordering, culminating in the creation of flattened identities. As documented by the scholarly literature, the neo-colonial logic of refugee deservingness has for the past decades become a leitmotif in both public and personal accounts on refugee-ness (Xu, 2020; Clark et al., 2023) especially in EU-rope. Demonstrating one's 'deservingness', or more simply—displaying the quality of being worthy of praise and support in the context of asylum hearings—has been established as a prerequisite for the asylum seeker's acquisition of the refugee status. Thus, to be deserving of the refugee title, the asylum seeker must fit neatly into a set of legal and social parameters set by the receiving nation which ultimately frame refugee-hood in terms of a constricted version of subjecthood (Clark et al., 2023). Through the ventriloquial

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[234] Glissant (1990: 189).
[235] [I arrived with an empty stomach, today I speak with a full mouth].

(dis)articulation of Kouamé's story emerges, I argue, the "deserving refugee archetype",[236] which the migrant further consolidates during the promotion tour of his book via different (social) media channels. Duroy's careful reconstruction of Kouamé's journey is contingent, it seems, upon four major markers of refugee deservingness, which contribute to the articulation of an engaging refugee story[237] with the potential of appeasing domestic attitudes towards this specific 'category' of asylum seekers. These tropes could be summed up as follows: the 'unplanful-ness' of the migrant's escape due to unforeseen circumstances, limited agency (or lack thereof), subjection to human rights abuses, vulnerability in transit countries, and a display of indebtedness towards, and productivity in the host nation (Clark et al., 2023). The first eight chapters of *RDT* sketch the portrait of the narrator's family as well as the privileged life he used to lead in an unnamed country in West Africa until two unforeseen tragic events—the murder of his parents and the rape of his sister—compel him to run away:

> Mon père gagnait bien sa vie, on habitait une belle maison […] dans le quartier chic de la capitale. Quand je revois la maison… ce n'est pas donné à tout le monde d'habiter une villa, par là-bas. Jusqu'à la fin de notre vie, on ne risquait rien (Ch.3).

> [My father earned a good living; we lived in a beautiful house in the upscale neighbourhood of the capital. Looking in retrospect... I think to myself... Not everyone gets to live in a villa over there. The future ahead of us seemed to hold no uncertainties].

From the backstory, the reader learns that Kouamé's father gradually became involved in politics and was openly critical of the corruption of the then president's opponents and thus started to represent a threat to the existing political party. In a chapter entitled "*comment dire ce qui ne peut pas être nommé?*" [how can I voice what cannot be named?] Duroy ventriloquially verbalises Kouamé's traumatic memory and in doing so, provides the backdrop for the articulation of the first marker of refugee deservingness, or what Sal Clark et al., (2023: 149) call "the good refugee archetype", which is related to the unplanned and abrupt character of Kouamé's migration. Framed as an undesired consequence of uncontrollable circumstances, the reasons behind the latter's escape echo the terms of the 1951 Refugee convention, which [narrowly] define refugees as helpless victims "buffeted by external events" (Mc Dowell, 2013:

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[236] Clark et al., (2023).
[237] Ibid.

68; cited in Clark et al., 2023: 151) that consequently im-mobilise and forcibly displace them. Kouamé recalls:

> Ils étaient tous les deux allongés au sol et leurs corps étaient secoués de soubresauts. Je ne pouvais pas les regarder mais je ne pouvais pas non plus regarder ailleurs. […] Je me suis mis à trembler, peut-être même à pleurer, je n'ai pas bougé, […] mon esprit ne pouvait pas l'accepter. On aurait dit que mon cerveau s'était brusquement figé, que toutes mes pensées s'étaient arrêtées pour ne pas avoir à mettre de mots sur ce que voyaient mes yeux (Ch.8).

> [They were both lying on the ground, their bodies convulsing. I could not bear to look at them, yet I could not turn away either. I began to tremble, I maybe even cried. I did not move […] my mind was in a state of utter shock, unable to process what was happening. It was as if my brain had suddenly frozen, as if all my thoughts had halted to evade putting words to what my eyes beheld].

Shocked by the immobilising horror of his parents' death and the violence inflicted upon his sister, Kouamé is neither able to move nor act, and is tortured and threatened before he manages to escape. Supported by a nun who offers him money to leave the country, Kouamé finds himself, alone, at the age of 14, on the road to an unknown exile. Another marker of refugee deservingness communicated in the latter's ventriloquised account is the degree of violence and exploitation, as well as a persistent feeling of insecurity in transit settings, like Oujda, Morocco, wherein he initially intended to settle, "*J'étais beaucoup trop occupé à survivre dans un pays où chaque jour je peux être tué, pour songer à ce que j'ai perdu*" (Ch.23) [I was too busy trying to survive in a country where I could be murdered anytime to actually think about what I had lost]. Seduced by the false narratives of work and stability told by some of his road companions, Kouamé—yet ignorant of the different forms of racialised violence awaiting him—takes the decision (prio to his arrival) of ending his migratory journey in Tripoli if he secures employment there. However, the hostile environment, the racial attacks by the local inhabitants, and, more importantly, the insecurity he endured as an illegalised worker, force him to leave the country in search of a safer place:

> Quand le chantier est fini, [le propriétaire du chantier] te dit de partir de là et qu'il ne veut plus te voir traîner dans le quartier. Qu'est-ce que tu peux faire contre lui ? […] Tu n'as pas de papiers, et en plus tu es noir. Il a un pistolet accroché à sa ceinture […] il pourrait te tuer (Ch.23).

[Once the job is done [the site owner] orders you to leave and warns against lingering in the neighbourhood. What can you do against him? […]You have no papers, and on top of that, you are black. He has a gun strapped to his belt […] he could shoot you].

As the narrative progresses, Kouamé crosses into Morocco and Algeria, where he is subjected to the violence of unscrupulous smugglers who collaborated with policemen whom he calls "*policiers-passeurs*" (Ch. 20) [policemen-smugglers] and to different forms of dehumanisation, entrapped with other migrants in what he describes as a "*trou*" (Ch. 28) [hole], a makeshift camp in a forested area surrounded by mountains in Maghnia. As an unaccompanied minor who pretended to be older than his age to be able to be taken seriously by smugglers and the migrants he met on the road, Kouamé was compelled to find ways to surmount the border regime in order to pursue his trip to a country where he would potentially feel safe. Determined to liberate himself from his traumatic past and a tyrannical present, Kouamé decides against all odds "*d'aller de l'avant*" [keep going], which is also the title of the chapter separating his Libyan and his Algerian and Moroccan "troubled transit" (Antje Missbach, 2015) experience. Gradually, the spectre of the so-called deserving refugee archetype starts to find shape. Kouamé's resilience and perseverance, despite the immobilising precarity of his situation, contribute to his construction as a migrant who is worthy of sympathy and support. In different French reviews, his *impromptu* migratory odyssey is depicted as "*un exil forcé*"[238] [a forced exile], a discursive construction highlighting his lack of choice owing to the tragic incidents he had to endure as a young boy. Thus far, Kouamé's narrative constitutes a compelling refugee story that subverts popular constructions of asylum seekers' portraits and invites renewed and updated forms of engagement. Duroy's incorporation of the ideals undergirding refugeehood in his ventriloquial reconstruction of the migrant could be identified near the closing of the narrative wherein the latter reflects on his success at ICAM School and his smooth assimilation into French society before experiencing different forms of immobility after having turned 18. Kouamé recalls the enthusiasm and the energy he displayed to 'prove' his deservingness to be resettled and recognised as a citizen:

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[238] « Kouamé, la longue marche d'un migrant 'revenu des ténèbres'. » (2018). *La Dêpeche.fr,* 26 December. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/wm4b8rz [Accessed 11 February 2023].

[J]'ai décidé […] de me donner à fond, et c'est ce que j'ai fait—pas un retard, pas une absence […] jusqu'à la date du 30 juin 2016 où la préfecture m'a écrit qu'elle ne voulait plus de moi sur le territoire Français et que j'allais être reconduit dans mon pays d'origine, si je ne quittais pas la France de mon plein gré (Ch.40).

[I resolved to give it my all, and that was exactly what I did—no late arrivals, not a single absence […] until 30 June 2016, when the prefecture notified me that failure to leave French soil voluntarily would result in my deportation to my country of origin].

In addition to the migrant's demonstration of cultural and linguistic adaptability to the receiving nation, Kouamé's narrative also reveals a crucial ventriloquial aspect underlying the construction of the 'deserving refugee archetype': the display of a sense of indebtedness towards the (prospective) host nation. Indeed, as Clark et al. (2023: 152) rightly observe, there is "a strong neoliberal element" in the 'ideal refugee' trope which sets heightened expectations upon the would-be refugee including being "hyper productive […] and hyper patriotic to overcome any question of their 'value' to the nation that has taken them in".[239] Conspicuously, Kouamé seems to have internalised the different social markers of this narrow archetypal neo-colonial construct, as illustrated by his publicised performance of gratitude to the French people when hosted by Michel Drucker 1 April 2018:

Je profite de votre chaîne pour remercier le peuple français qui m'ont [sic] accueilli. […] Aujourd'hui je travaille et en 2019 je vais payer mes impôts. […] Payer mes impôts en France, ce n'est pas seulement un devoir pour moi, c'est une fierté.[240]

[I would like to take this opportunity, through your channel, […] to thank the French people who welcomed me in their country […] I currently have a job, and in 2019, I will pay my taxes. […] To me, paying my taxes in France is not only a duty, but also a source of pride].

Moreover, indebtedness for "the gift of resettlement" (Clark et al., 2023: 157) is a leitmotif in the interviews that Kouamé gave to different French media channels. For instance, during a talk

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[239] Ibid.,p.60.
[240] « Kouamé, Vivement Dimanche. » (2018). *YouTube,* 1 April. Available at: https://youtu.be/BBiBnCwrGcE?si=GYcAt2WH1bI3aoh- [Accessed 27 March 2023].

with a journalist from *Le Nouvel Obs*, Kouamé proudly states that he dedicates his book to the French people, for, upon his arrival, he was provided with food, shelter, and training to become turner-miller. As he puts it:

> Mon livre est un cadeau aux Français. Je leur offre mon histoire. *Je suis arrivé le ventre vide, aujourd'hui je parle la bouche pleine.*[241] Ici, j'ai eu une bonne éducation. [...] J'ai appris le métier de tourneur-fraiseur, je vais payer mes impôts bientôt et j'en suis fier. C'est un peu comme rendre tout ce qu'on m'a donné ici.[242]

> [My book is a gift to the French people. I offer them my story. I arrived on an empty stomach, now I speak with a full mouth.[243] Here, I have received a good education […] I have been trained to work as a turner-miller and I will soon proudly pay my taxes. It is like giving back everything that has been given to me here].

Kouamé's self-infantalisation, as well as his insistence upon expressing his gratitude to France, his 'adoptive mother,' attests to his desire to "present [himself] in accordance with the 'good refugee ideal' to gain sympathy for his plight" (Clark et al., 2023: 156). However, Kouamé's confirmation of his ventriloquised account in epitextual venues has different negative implications. First, the migrant's emphasis on the unplanned aspect of his migratory journey and his subjection to human rights abuses culminates in the re-enforcement of a certain degree of victimhood and passivity, replicating thereby the dehumanising humanitarian tropes characteristic of dominant discourses around unauthorised migrations on both sides of the Mediterranean. Second, the consolidation of the logic of refugee deservingness entails a parallel reductionist construction of an 'underserving' refugee archetype, which further amplifies divisive categories. Third, the migrant's self-minimisation to an "extractive value"[244] that could be gained from his labour contribution in the host country entraps him within a neoliberal equation that [falsely] defines his human-ness. Such ventriloquial (re)articulations symbolically

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[241] My emphasis.

[242] « Kouamé, rescapé des camps de migrants : J'ai fui sans me retourner, j'ai fui la mort ». (2018). *Nouvel Obs.* 31 March. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/vns92y58 [Accessed 30 June 2023].

[243] In choosing the phrase 'full mouth' to translate '*la bouche pleine*', I aim to capture both the literal and figurative meanings of the original expression. Literally, it conveys the contrast between the migrant's former state of hunger upon arrival in France and his current state of being 'well-fed'. Figuratively, it underscores his newfound confidence, reflecting the sense of empowerment he has gained after being granted status regularisation.

[244] Ibid., p.161.

border the unauthorised migrant by limiting his vocal author-ity and fixing the parameters of his newly acquired identity.

Together, the aforementioned characteristics of the 'deserving refugee archetype' constitute a 'prescriptive' account on refugee-ness to be consumed and internalised by prospective asylum seekers who do not meet these 'normative' requirements (Clark et al., 2023), and, resultantly, may be potentially discouraged from pursuing their unauthorised journey to EU-rope. Indeed, what makes Kouamé a cogent replica of the deserving refugee is his self-conscious entry into "a long-term condition of subordination and dependency"[245] as a recipient of a neo-liberal form of humanitarian care.

While *RDT* communicates through ventriloquial manoeuvres the deserving refugee trope, *LRDS* elaborates a slightly different migrant portrait and experience in an attempt to convey a 'deterrence narrative', i.e., a warning to prospective migrants to rethink the risks entailed by unauthorised border crossing.

4.2.2 *"Je suis en Europe mais toujours clandestin"[246] : Victor as protagonist of France's deterrence narrative*

Instances of discursive ventriloquism abound in *LRDS*. These discursive manipulations, I argue, enable Balu to gradually construct victor's identity according to the intended message that he sought to communicate to two major audiences: a metropolitan, French audience, yearning for exoticism and sensationalism, and a French-speaking (North-)African readership to raise young people's awareness of the perils of unauthorised migration. Recollecting memories of his encounter with a Chadian migrant on his way to Bamako, Mali, as part of his *planned*[247] journey to Europe, Victor comments on their common migratory profile as "*migrants économiques*" [economic migrants] despite their different national, ethnic, and religious backgrounds:

Lui aussi [Ibrahim] est migrant économique. [...] Lui aussi veut nourrir sa famille, lui aussi veut être un peu moins pauvre.[…] Ibrahim le musulman et Victor le chrétien traversent l'Afrique à la recherche d'une vie meilleure (36).

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[245] Clark et al. (2023: 151).
[246] [I am in Europe, but still undocumented].
[247] My emphasis.

[He too [Ibrahim] is an economic migrant. […] He too wished to provide for his family […] He too wants to be a little less poor. […] Ibrahim the Muslim and Victor the Christian journey across Africa in pursuit of a better life].

Another instance of discursive ventriloquy is Balu's insertion of the word 'clandestin' and its recurrent use throughout the narrative. Ironically, while attempting to counterbalance the negative representations of unauthorised migrants in the media narratives on both sides of the Mediterranean, Balu deploys derogatory terminology and divisive migrant categories in his reconstruction of Victor's portrait. Phrases like '*migrant économique*' and '*sans papiers*' are frequently used in the text and subsequently impact reader-response. Reading a story wherein the migrant protagonist/narrator calls himself a 'clandestine' or 'an economic migrant' invites us to interpret the latter's self-conception as unfit and unplaceable in the host country. This instance of unconscious self-inflicted symbolic violence could be read as a result of the migrant's constant exposition to the use of toxic terminology in a context of heated debates around what EU-rope called 'a migrant crisis'. Arguably, Balu's adoption and re-inscription of this falsely technical migration lexicon is detrimental to the image of Victor and lays the ground for the ventriloquised re-articulation of his border narrative whose ultimate function is to potentially deter prospective migrants from crossing into EU-rope.

In a chapter titled by Balu "*je vis dans l'angoisse*" [I live in anguish], the (first-person ventriloquised) narrator reflects on his first night in Marseille, 15 january 2015, sleeping on a broken bench in one of the corners of La Gare Saint Charles because "*tous les hébergements d'urgence étaient complets*" (103) [all emergency shelters were filled to capacity], drawing attention to the over crowdedness of the latter and the extra burden that his 'body' represents. Further on, he laments the humiliation he experienced owing to his "*condition de clandestin sans-papiers*" (104) [clandestine, undocumented status]:

Il fait très froid, j'ai très froid. Je m'assois engourdi, sur le banc et vérifie que toutes mes affaires sont bien dans le sac…. Je ne sais absolument pas où je suis (103).

[It is bitterly cold; I am shivering. I sit down, feeling numb, on the bench, and check that all my belongings are safely in my bag. […] I have absolutely no clue where I am].

Melancholy and uncertainty are conveyed in Victor's incomplete reminiscence, possibly an effect intended by his co-author to provoke readers' emotions of sympathy and fear. Balu's somewhat careful selection of words (possibly uttered by Victor in one of the interviews), testifies to the direction that the narrative is about to take: "*assis*", "*engourdi*", "*sdf*", "*hébergements d'urgence*" [seated, numb, homeless, emergency accommodations], and sets the stage for the story's thematic development. Waiting for long hours to be eventually sheltered by local humanitarian agencies is one of the consequences of unauthorised entry into France. To be able to survive, Victor relies on the mercy and (temporary) generosity of La Fondation Saint Jean de Dieu, a catholic association assisting the needy for a limited time period. Additionally, Victor's post-migration immobility is conveyed in his reflections on the obstacles he encountered upon his arrival, including the inability to use public transport for fear of being arrested and his incapacity to navigate newly integrated urban geographies. In this same chapter, the ventriloquised narrator debunks the European Eldorado myth:

La France, l'Europe, ne sont pas l'eldorado que je croyais, que mes compatriotes arrivés sur le continent me vendaient, dans les médias, ou sur internet. Non seulement ils ne m'avaient pas parlé de tous les dangers du voyage mais en plus, ils m'avaient caché le sort réservé aux migrants. Sans papiers, je ne peux rien (104).

[France, Europe, are not the Eldorado I once believed they were, that my fellow countrymen who reached Europe […] sold to me […] on social media. Not only did they fail to mention the dangers of the journey, but they also obscured from me the plight awaiting migrants. Undocumented, I am powerless].

Victor's condition of protracted undocumented-ness circumvents his movements and thereby blocks his access to basic needs and services. In fact, through ventriloquy, Balu foregrounds victor's entrapment and instability, "*je suis logé un peu à droite et à gauche*" (104-105) [I am staying a bit here and there]. He also soon learns that a residence permit can only be granted after a five-year 'legal' stay and work on French territory, a requirement he cannot possibly fulfil owing to his illegalised entry into France— "*c'est un cercle vicieux*" (106) [it is a vicious circle], he laments. In this ventriloquised (self) construction, victor is presented as stuck in an irremediable condition of 'clandestinity'. Conspicuously, the lexical register mobilised in the co-articulation of Victor's (migrant) 'self-portrait' underscores the irrationality behind

undertaking the perilous Mediterranean journey, which inevitably culminates in different forms of urban immobility in spaces of transit and host countries alike:

> On peut se faire embarquer à la sortie. Je reste la journée chez moi […] je ne veux pas passer mes journées avec les gens de la rue et en même temps les Camerounais ici, ont un travail, une famille. Je sens bien la barrière entre eux et moi. Voilà ma vie (107).

> [I can be arrested on the street. I stay at home during the day. Here, my fellow Cameroonians have a job, a family. I can really feel the barrier between them and me. Such is my life].

The moralistic and didactic message emerging from these instances of ventriloquial discursivity is further confirmed by Victor in different epitextual occasions (perhaps upon Balu's request to add a market value to the book): "*je ne suis pas venu ici pour dormir dans les rues* […] *l'Europe n'est pas ce que vous croyez*"[248] [I have not come here to wander in the streets… Europe is different from what you think it is]. In another chapter titled "*si l'on me demandait mon avis*" [If I were to give my opinion], Victor asserts: "[c]*eux qui m'écrivent via Facebook* […] *et qui me demandent par où je suis passé* […] *à ceux-là, je dis qu'il ne faut pas venir*" (108) [to those people who write to me via Facebook, and ask me about what I have been through, to those people I say do not come here]. In this way, Victor's ventriloquised account generates a deterrence narrative that catalogues not only the different forms of immobility that unauthorised migrants experience on a daily basis in post-migration settings but also captures the dehumanising character of illegalised migration:

> Je vis dans l'angoisse. L'angoisse de me faire contrôler à tout moment. Parce qu'un jour je suis devenu le numéro 26 d'un convoi qui traversait le désert et qu'aujourd'hui je suis un sans-papiers, un anonyme, un sans-droits. Cette perte d'identité est intolérable pour un homme (109).

> [I live in anguish. The anguish of being subject to police checks at any moment. Because one day I became the number 26 in a convoy crossing the desert, and today I am undocumented, anonymous and rightless. This loss of identity is intolerable for a man].

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[248] « Entretien avec Victor Eock, Sans-papiers et Nicolas Balu, Journaliste. » (2016). *YouTube.* Available at: https://youtu.be/VP66lotMFNw?si=KF1DQrdNneB-S418 [Accessed 26 June 2023].

Moreover, the logic of (un)deservingness explored earlier is also embedded in Victor's narrative through the emphasis upon unauthorised migrants' impossibility to work and pay taxes owing to their disabled accessibility to ('legal') labour markets. As such, the unproductive, non-White migrant body is seen as unwelcome and burdensome, as well as a potential threat to the state and, therefore, undeserving of regularisation and citizenship (Haw, 2021). It is fair to argue that Victor's failure to fit into the Western parameters of citizenship deservingness serves to further consolidate the deterrence narrative. As opposed to Kouamé's "accidental migration" (Kirmayer, 2013), Victor's migratory project is framed as a *planned*[249] decision, which implies that he is "agentic, strategic, and future-oriented"[250] and therefore, unlike so-called 'authentic' refugees, he is perceived as opportunistic, manipulative, and suspicious. Put differently, immobilised by the system that defines his illegalisation and his un-refugeeness, Victor, unlike Kouamé, is unable to potentially become a "giver", i.e., a contributor to the economic development of the host country. Constructed as an 'economic' migrant, Victor comes to represent an additional 'burden' on the nation rather than a potential asset through a ventriloquial deficit discourse of unproductivity and passivity.[251]

Balu's insistence on labelling Victor '*un migrant économique*' and limiting his identity to his precarious condition by specifically referring to the context of the 'migrant crisis' in Europe is openly articulated in the final chapter of the narrative, which comes in the form of a transcribed interview he conducted with Victor:

> Il s'est passé beaucoup de choses dans l'actualité concernant les migrants, les réfugiés, le terrorisme […]. Comment le vis-tu? Être un migrant économique, c'est risqué et les perspectives sont plutôt sombres (113).

> [There has been a lot going on around the recent events involving migrants, refugees, terrorism. […] How do you feel about it? Being an economic migrant comes with risks and the outlook is rather bleak].

Although a growing number of scholars have dropped the use of derogatory migrant terminology (Andersson, 2014; Coutin, 2005; Tazzioli et al., 2018), Balu insists on maintaining a distinction between 'refugees' and 'economic migrants,' i.e., between those who are qualified

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[249]My emphasis.
[250] Haw (2021: vii–viii).
[251] Ibid.

to be welcomed and those whose illegalised mode of arrival disqualifies them from the privilege of hospitality. Interestingly, all the questions that Balu addresses to Victor are oriented towards prompting him to consider the possibility of returning to his origin country, and, by extension, dissuading potential migrants from undertaking the crossing:

> Tu n'as pas travaillé pendant ces dix derniers mois ? Aujourd'hui, tu te poses la question de rentrer au pays ou pas? tu dois tenir cinq ans, comment tu vas faire? (111-113)

> [You have not worked for the past ten months, have you? […] Have you considered the possibility of returning to your home country? […] How will you make it through the next five years?]

The inconclusiveness of Victor's narrative signalled by the ironic title of the final chapter "*Ceci n'est pas un dernier chapitre*" [this is not a final chapter] functions as a proleptic gesture that emphasises the frightening uncertainty and indeterminacy of Victor's life in France. In a rather pessimistic tone, Balu thus uses Victor's illegalised stay and 'clandestine' existence as deterrent arguments, urging would-be migrants to reconsider their plans for unauthorised migration by reflecting on the harsh realities it entails.

4.2.3 *"Mieux vaut que tu restes au Maroc"*[252]*: Jackson's tale of transit turned home*

Notwithstanding Therrien's transcription of Jackson's answers as he articulated them, i.e., by maintaining traces of orality as explained earlier, the questions she used to steer the thematic course of his account, along with the interruptions she makes to redirect his story, inform my reading of Jackson's identity as the embodiment of another archetype: that of the successfully resettled migrant in one of Europe's southern 'partner' countries. Indeed, in her book review article entitled 'The King's offer: a helping hand to try my luck' (2021), Therrien emphasises that the originality of Jackson's story lies in its debunking of the European dream in a context of heated debates around the "migration crisis [by] showing that other venues are possible"[253] (844). She also writes that one of the major objectives behind the publication of Jackson's testimonial was to "deconstruct transit as a monolithic concept"[254] and narrate the process of Jackson's regularisation in Morocco. Arguably, Therrien's insistence on foregrounding the

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[252] [It is better that you stay in Morocco].
[253] All the citations taken from the review article were translated from French to English by Therrien.
[254] Therrien (2021: 844).

possibility of unauthorised migrants' resettlement in Morocco is a strategy to deter migrants from pursuing their perilous journey across the Mediterranean Sea. Her accurate selection and re-use of one of the book passages wherein Jackson reflects on the different stages of his long-awaited status regularisation, its re-framing within the larger context of a 'migration crisis'—a phrase she paradoxically uses despite the decolonial and subversive spirit of her research—attest to the 'symbolic borders' that she traces to foreground resettlement as a more viable alternative:

> J: Since I have been with the church and started working with Caritas, there is *not a single migrant in Europe*, not one who has told me, 'come over here!'
> T: Why?
> J: Because they know… Before telling me to come, they should be at least better off than me. They left; […] and saw that *it was not what it was made out to be* (845).[255]

Although Therrien does not 'speak on behalf of' Jackson, nor does she fully appropriate his words, she nonetheless advances the argument related to the irrationality of crossing into EU-rope through a calculated selection of his utterances, making her voice appear from 'somewhere else'. Here, the co-author *speaks through* the migrant by specifically selecting the arguments that he uses to showcase the rationality of the decision to remain in Morocco, which itself could be argued to function as a deterrence strategy to dissuade would-be migrants 'stuck' at EU-rope's externalised borders from pursuing their migratory project. Although the space that Therrien's voice occupies is very limited compared to Jackson's as her questions are [deliberately] brief and concise, their limited worded-ness is problematic. For instance, with the use of the one-word question—"why?"—the co-author performs a double discursive manipulation: first, she signals a pseudo distance—through a limited 'discursive presence'—and a [somewhat spurious] lack of control of the migrant's story. Second, she indirectly sets [high] expectations on her addressee, through the vagueness of the question. The word 'why' denotes a question the implied answer of which is an account of the reasons and causes for which something is done or achieved, hence Jackson's comprehensive response regarding the risks of crossing in unauthorised ways to EU-rope. Drawing on the testimonies of some of his friends who reached France via unauthorised routes, Jackson refers to the different forms of embodied immobility that they have been experiencing as opposed to the false Eldorado

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[255] My emphasis.

narratives disseminated on social media: "migrants sleep on the street, but when they buy a pair of shoes, they put a picture on Facebook, in front of the Eiffel Tower" (845).

Within the same context, Jackson emphasises his 'privileged' position as a migrant who has been granted a 'place' and the right to mobility after having obtained his residence permit in Morocco. In doing so, he cherishes the alternative of turning transit temporariness into permanent stay:

> Soon I will go to Paris because Caritas is organising an immersion mission for me. […] When I am back, this is when many will say to each other: "it means that France is not what we thought!" When I go back to Morocco and I am not lying to you, *it will really discourage many migrants* (846). [256]

In a footnote, Therrien elucidates how Jackson obtained a first visa to France to take part in an eleven-day work mission organised by Caritas, in Paris in March 2018. She equally adds that he returned there on numerous other occasions during the same year. In adding these details, she communicates the idea that once resettled and smoothly integrated into Moroccan society through hard work and humanitarian activism in international NGOs like Caritas, migrants may potentially acquire the right to [temporary] free circulation, as Jackson's testimonial illustrates. Therrien also foregrounds the dichotomy that emerges from the 'transit' experience. One the one hand, she seems to suggest that even if there are migrants who do succeed in defying the North-African immobility regime by subverting deadly borders to cross into EU-rope, they nonetheless ultimately fail to overcome socio-economic and legal barriers in Europe. At the same time, there are migrants who fail to make it to the northern side of the Mediterranean, as is the case with Jackson, yet eventually succeed in turning a 'transit hub' into a new 'home'. As Jackson puts it, "they will not believe that I left [Morocco to go to France]… and that I came back! They may realise that I am happy where I am" (846).

While offering an alternative epistemic [re]formation of 'sub Saharan' migrants' 'transit' experience by drawing attention to the unstable semantics of the latter, Therrien and Jackson end up articulating another archetypal construction related to migrants' subjecthood. Jackson does not simply attempt to deter 'naïve' would-be migrants from crossing to EU-rope, but he also motivates them to secure the necessary documents to apply for status regularisation in 'transit' countries despite the time-consuming process. Jackson's narrative shares similarities

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[256] My emphasis.

with those of Kouamé and Victor in that it participates in the reification of a cluster of tropes that EU-rope seeks to communicate to undesired ('Global South') would-be migrants. Jackson's successful resettlement story could be used, as Therrien puts it, "to give hope"[257] to the migrants who falsely believe that the only way to improve their livelihoods is by migrating to Europe.

To illustrate this point, Therrien re-uses a quote taken from Jackson's answer to her question regarding his status regularisation as a title to the chapter wherein he reflects on and remaps the long-lasting, multi-staged yet 'legal' itinerary he took to obtain his residence card in Morocco[258]. The title "*Il faut un contrat de travail pour obtenir la carte de séjour et pour qu'on te signe un contrat de travail, il faut être en règle*!" [you need a work contract to obtain a residence permit, and to secure a work contract, you must be in good standing!], acts as an invitation to unauthorised migrants in Morocco to shift their focus away from the EU-ropean alternative and explore the possibility of status regularisation.

Furthermore, similar to Kouamé's narrative, Jackson's reconstructed account intertwines the logics of deservingness and indebtedness, emphasising his qualities as a potential good citizen helping fellow migrants through collective fund raising and organising awareness campaigns related to the dangers and the fruitlessness of illegalised cross-border attempts. In so doing, Jackson presents himself as a 'model migrant' deserving of the 'gift of resettlement' in Morocco. In a chapter forthrightly titled "*Je suis tellement reconnaissant*!" [I am so grateful!], Therrien re-directs the thematic stream of the migrant's narrative through a careful re-incorporation of his own words, to complete the archetypal picture of the successful migrant who turned one of EU-rope's external borders into a new home by foregrounding the tremendous humanitarian work performed by Catholic NGOs like Caritas:

[J]e suis allé le voir [le père Jean] et je lui ai dit: "Voila, il fallait que je vous remercie pour tout ce que vous avez fait pour moi […] Aujourd'hui, j'ai mon contrat de travail, j'ai ma maison , j'ai ma carte." […] C'est grâce a lui tout ça! […] Peut-être que j'aurais pu m'en sortir ailleurs, mais avec lui, j'ai évolué (*CQEDS* : 170).

[I went to see [Father Jean] and said: "I want to thank you for everything you have done for me […]. Today, I have my work contract, my own home, my identity card." […] It was all thanks to him! […] Perhaps, I would have succeeded elsewhere, but with him, I have truly matured].

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[257] Therrien (2021: 846).

[258] Therrien adds an explanatory footnote in which she refers to the first and second regularisation campaigns launched by the King of Morocco.

Interestingly, through this ventriloquial re-routing of Jackson's voice, Therrien also belabours his transition from a condition of un-authority and powerlessness, owing to the different barriers he faced before his eventual regularisation, to one of maturity, responsibility, and self-fulfilment—thereby reversing the very meaning of 'transit' and replacing it with 'rite of passage,' adjustment, and conversion. Orchestrated as an assemblage of positive values and qualities, Jackson's image serves to articulate an unauthorised migrant's success story, one that contributes to a broader narrative EU-rope sought to promote as a way of alleviating the 'migrant crisis' at its doors.

Although Therrien might not have intended to 'instrumentalise' Jackson's resettlement narrative, one of the outcomes of her questions, the thematic redirection of her addressee's story, as well as her quote selections and emphatic strategies, is a restricted articulation of Jackson's identity. Indeed, these "regulative mechanisms" (Chouliaraki, 2017: 78), culminate in a vocal obstruction—albeit partial—which contradicts her claim that her anthropological approach consisted "*à ne pas entraver la voix*" (*CQEDS*: xxv), ultimately narrowing the avenues through which we can engage with the migrant's story.

Notwithstanding these slight discursive interventions, Therrien's decolonial ethnographic approach and her recognition of her ineptitude to 'speak for' a distant 'Other' and her limited role as mediator enable the mobilisation of alternative forms of empathy. In what follows, I examine the different forms of empathetic engagement that the three migration narratives cultivate while reflecting on what I refer to as a crisis of (re-)mediation in the larger context of unauthorised migration representation.

4.3   Crisis of (re-)mediation and the im-mobility of empathy

Despite their different styles, the three narratives under scrutiny not only testify to the impossibility of faithfully rendering unauthorised migrants' experiences of im-mobility and dis-placement and adequately challenging toxic representations, but also attest to the complexity of the process of re-elaborating their individualised stories. The alternative yet filtered gazes that *RDT*, *LRDS*, and *CQEDS* present contribute to the consolidation of archetypal migrant figures, which in turn feed into symptomatic representations of distant 'Others' (Bhabha, 1994). Thus, regardless of the degrees of their ventriloquial intervention, the co-authors have, each in their own way, impacted and fetishised the migrants' identities.

In a context of competitive global marketisation of migrant wor(l)ds (Maitilasso, 2014), it is quite predictable that those involved in the co-authorship of migrants' stories would be motivated by accounts deemed worth telling or mediating, as discussed in the previous chapter. Suffering caused by contemporary (North-)African-EU bordering practices is a prerequisite for the selection of whose voice to re-articulate. As such, Western mediation of human suffering not only risks the discursive reproduction of injustice, symbolic inequalities, and representational hierarchies (Chouliaraki, 2017), but also the perpetuation of epistemic violence (Spivak, 1988). As the re-constructions of migrants' narratives are contingent upon a selection process and an awareness of the demands of the global book market, the ventriloquist's re-articulation of the migrant's portrait tends to privilege the expectations of the reader over those of the migrant. Even though Kouamé, Victor, and Jackson 'validated' the final outcome of the co-authored account, it is reasonable to assert that this 'validation' is informed by their constrained knowledge of the inherent power dynamics implied in these representational processses, as well as their desire to append a market value to their stories (Maitilasso, 2014). This, in turn, regulates the ways readers across national and socio-political differences, engage with their narratives.

As the globalised yet bordered world of the 21st Century suffers from an "empathy erosion" (Cohen, 2012), there is an urgent need to develop "affective solutions" (Pedwell, 2016) in order to overcome fear and hate, as well as a wide range of social ills. However, developing short-term forms of empathy, i.e., by expressing "the affective ability of putting oneself in the Other's shoes"[259] Pedwell warns us, may not lead to the mobilisation of justice and action. In this last section, I particularly unpack the different forms of empathic engagement fostered by the three migration narratives under examination. As ventriloquy, by definition, is a form of intrusion, and hence control of the migrant's voice [regardless of its degrees], it follows that the target reader-response is pre-determined. Put differently, when composing for instance Kouamé's story, Duroy may have considered the sensationalist impact that an unaccompanied minor's forcible displacement could have on readers. Indeed, by piecing together all the normative markers of the 'ideal refugee', and fully appropriating Kouamé's story, Duroy succeeded in highlighting the migrants' deservingness and fittingness into pre-established, hegemonic, and divisive categories. Despite the immobilising precariousness of his situation, Kouamé is delicately portrayed as patient and persevering, overcoming all odds to finally be

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[259] Ibid., p.2.

rewarded by his newly adoptive Mother (land). Framed as a migrant who is both in need and worthy of Western assistance, Kouamé succeeds *in moving* transnational audiences. It is fair to argue that despite its attempt to rehumanise unauthorised migrants (as a counterreaction to the dehumanising accounts disseminated by mainstream media), *RDT* fails to mobilise decolonial forms of empathy (Pedwell, 2016), justice, and political action (Chouliaraki, 2017). Instead, Kouamé's victimising rhetoric reinforces reductionist readings of both individual and group identity, morphing it into a set of regulatory categories (Spivak, 1999), which may potentially generate neo-colonial (rather than decolonial) forms of empathic engagements. Rather than cultivating a profound sense of shared responsibility and interconnectedness, the fleeting sentimental identification elicited by Kouamé's story lasts barely beyond its telling (Beausoleil, 2013). Hence, in this context of problematic re-mediation of the migrant's narrative, Kouamé, as a symbolic replication of the deserving refugee archetype, contributes to the perpetuation of the "naturalised authority" (Clark et al., 2023) of this prescribed category and thereby undermines the possibility of a political solidarity-driven empathy that could potentially challenge the hegemonic structures responsible for causing injustice.

Balu's re-elaboration of Victor's voice achieves a similar impact specifically when he foregrounds his "*rage de survivre*", i.e., his heroic or rather mythic resilience in the face of borders. As such, his ventrilocated narrative may as a consequence, "feed the privileged reader's hunger for intimacy and vicarious adventure" (Schaffer& Smith, 2004: 21), fostering what Dominick LaCapra (2014) calls "emotional imperialism". Balu's reconstruction of Victor's portrait is even more ambiguous than Duroy's re-creation of Kouamé's image. In fact, while attempting to re-humanise Victor, Balu achieves an adverse effect. The former is depicted as possessing heroic qualities, yet simultaneously described using derogatory migrant terminology. As a 'clandestine economic migrant'—a neo-colonial categorical fetish—he undergoes a double form of symbolic violence as he is subjected to the dominant [discursive] "regulatory gaze" (Beausoleil: 21). Not only is his voice appropriated by his co-author but also his identity is bordered by EU migration divisive discourse. As such, "by folding the Other into [their] own terms" (Beausoleil, 2013: 11), the mediator familiarises the migrant's voice in a way that repeats "what the white ear wishes to hear" (Khosravi, 2024: 2349), impeding thereby any form of meaningful engagement with their bordered condition. Additionally, Victor's 'clandestinity' may be regarded with suspicion and disapproval by French audiences as his migration is suggestively framed as predatory and opportunistic, which may induce readers to overlook any opportunity for critical reflection on his vulnerability (Chouliaraki, 2017).

Unlike Duroy and Balu, Therrien, despite subtle discursive intrusions, is mindful not to fully appropriate Jackson's story and therefore succeeds in preserving "[the] crucial distance between Self and Other that is essential to encountering difference as difference" (Beausoleil, 2013: 5) by also foregrounding the significance of her ability "to listen well" (Tamboukou, 2020). Although she does to some extent 'border' Jackson within the parameters of a transit migrant's success story, she nevertheless leaves a generative space wherein readers can affectively engage and empathise with him, through an appreciation of his specificity, his alterity, and an acknowledgement of their inability to 'slip into his skin'. In so doing, she maintains "a distinction between one's perception and the Other's experience",[260] inviting readers to rethink the injustices to which unauthorised migrants, like Jackson, are subjected along their migratory journeys while reminding (privileged) readers of "*la dramatique inégalité entre le Nord et le Sud*" (*CQEDS*: xi) [the dramatic inequalities between North and South]. By employing a language of moral "obligation and responsibility" (Pedwell, 2016: 10), she urges a Northern audience (specifically) to "develop more empathetic attitudes towards those who are less privileged than themselves".[261] Thus, in lieu of fostering neo-colonial pity-inducing sympathy or suspicion towards migrants, the consequence of which is the undermining of their agency (as exemplified by the cases of Kouamé and Victor, respectively), Therrien ultimately succeeds in inviting readers to reflect on possible ways of de-colonising their affective and concrete engagement with migrants like Jackson and contemplate possibilities for action and social change. Yet the kind of 'alternative' response that readers may develop in this context entails a category-based relation of "sufferer" and "empathiser" (Pedwell, 2016) and is therefore more aligned with "guarded" rather than "decolonial empathy". This cautious form of engagement means acknowledging the migrant's struggles while remaining emotionally detached and resistant to the possibility of fully appropriating his story.

Regardless of the variety of empathies that the three (re-)mediated narratives seek to mobilise across transnational borders, they nonetheless, reinforce—whether wittingly or not—the categories of Western (or privileged[262] Maghrebi) empathiser and a less privileged 'sub-Saharan'/ Black/ Other/sufferer (Pedwell, 2016). In the three illustrated cases, the migrant remains the *object* of empathy and thus once again *fixed* in place (Pedwell, 2016: 14), hence the crisis of (re-)mediation. Unlike their Moroccan and Algerian counterparts, whom, as we shall

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[260] La Capra (2001: 41), cited in Beausoleil (2013: 19).
[261] Pedwell (2016: 10).
[262] I am particularly alluding to middle-class Western and Maghrebi audiences.

see in the final part of this thesis, deploy digital spaces as "habitats of singularities" (Guattari and Negri 1985), enabling them to generate an alternative gaze to counterbalance hegemonic representations, unauthorised 'sub-Saharan' migrants seem to have found very limited platforms (at least in 'transit' and post-migration spaces) wherein they could (freely) and performatively write back against the (North-)African-EU-immobility regime. Owing to the language barrier— i.e., their inability to re-articulate their stories in the language of the 'transit' countries as well as their limited capacity to write in standardised French,—'sub-Saharan' *harraga* may not be as effective as their Moroccan and Algerian counterparts in unsettling the dehumanising media portrayals and challenging their embedded forms of symbolic im-mobility. The following part then explores and examines the 'web' of (potential) counter-narratives produced around the phenomenon of *harga* through a specific focus on both Algerian and Moroccan *harga* dreamers and practitioners' digital discourses of resistance.

However, before analysing these latter forms of *harga* representations, it essential to first reiterate the rationale underlying the transition from mediated first-hand accounts of 'sub-Saharan' migrants to the unmediated digital narratives of Algerian and Moroccan *harraga*. This shift reflects a deliberate methodological and thematic progression in the thesis, aimed primarily at broadening and deepening the engagement with *harga* stories. Anchored in an analysis of migration narratives emerging from and circulating around Algeria and Morocco, this study moves through distinct yet interconnected stages. While Chapters Three and Four of Part Two were designed to respond to the media-constructed image of 'sub-Saharan' unauthorised migrants as 'clandestines', explored in Chapter One of Part One, the remaining chapters, i.e., Five and Six of Part Three, aim to challenge the dominant media narratives surrounding Algerian and Moroccan *harraga*, as discussed in chapter two of Part one. Moreover, this transition is informed by the overarching commitment of the thesis to examining the plurality of migration experiences and their representations while maintaining Algeria and Morocco as its central geographical foci and concomitantly highlighting their triple role as emigration, transit, and immigration countries. In other words, by engaging with 'sub-Saharans' who experienced migration *through* or *to*[263] these countries, and Algerian and Moroccan *harraga* who experienced migration *from*[264] them, the study operates within a framework that foregrounds the different ways in which the *harga* journey is (counter-)narrated by its

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[263] My emphasis.
[264] My emphasis.

agents/actors, each of whom has a distinct socio-cultural, political, and 'migratory' relationship to these spaces.

Crucially, the decision not to incorporate the unmediated digital narratives of 'sub-Saharan' migrants in the study corpus is rooted in the significant methodological challenges posed by the (sub-Saharan) region's linguistic and cultural plurality—a factor that would, in itself, necessitate an independent inquiry. Consequently, this dimension goes beyond the ambit of this thesis. Additionally, this decision, as outlined in the thesis introduction, was informed by the deliberately adopted patchwork structure, which reflects my decolonial commitment to "pluriversality" (Mignolo, 2011b), interweaving diverse spaces of narrative production and analytical perspectives to facilitate a nuanced examination of contemporary migration representations and their contestations within a specific geographical and thematic framework.

To recapitulate, the transition from Part One's fully mediated news media accounts of unauthorised migration—produced in Modern Standard Arabic and French—through Part Two's partially filtered 'sub-Saharan' migrants' testimonials—(co-)authored in French by Western writers—and finally to Part Three's unmediated digital narratives by Algerian and Moroccan *harraga*—expressed in a translingual mix of Classical Arabic, Darija, French, and colloquial code-switching—constitutes a graduated mediation scale in form, language, and perspective. This analytical trajectory traces not only evolving degrees of representational control, but also shifts in linguistic register, with significant implications for 'authority', 'authenticity', and audience. While the monolithic portrayals discussed in Part One frame 'sub-Saharan' migrants as 'illegals', the testimonials examined in Part Two disrupt this framing, despite remaining constrained by the problematic positionality of the French-speaking Western mediators and the target audience. In Part Three, as we shall see, the online-shared stories of Algerian and Moroccan *harraga* further reclaim narrative agency, though they too are shaped by the inherent instability of digital memory.

Taken together, this layered framework—grounded in variations of mediation, language, and narrative format—offers a complex and multiscalar lens through which to engage with Algeria and Morocco not as static sites of departure and arrival, but as dynamic pre-, post-, and transit migratory spaces. It underscores thus the heterogeneity of (illegalised) migration representations in the 21$^{\text{st}}$ century, while mapping how different groups of migrants (those most affected by contemporary border regimes) contest, negotiate, and reconfigure their im-mobility experiences across 'co-existing' discursive terrains.

Part III—Embodied im-mobilities, desired displacements, and the crisis of representation in (would-be) *harraga*'s digital (counter-)narratives

Chapter Five—Weaving Webs of Resistance: *Harraga***'s Digital Worlds as Decolonial Spaces**

> "El harga wala elhogra!"[265]
>
> —Abasse NDione, À l'Assaut des vagues de l'Atlantique (2008*)*

This chapter initiates the thematic discussion around Algerian and Moroccan *harraga*'s digital forms of resistance against dominant and dehumanising discourses on the *harga* phenomenon as staged in media scripts across both shores of the Mediterranean. While building on the previous chapters and extending the analysis of the plural nuances of im-mobility and the myriad manifestations of dis-placements they generate, it seeks to offer alternative ways of engaging with *harraga's* stories by journeying through the hallways of their online networks. By melding concepts from digital humanities and theoretical insights from Decolonial Thinking, this chapter brings to the forefront previously marginalised epistemologies, arguing that online platforms like Facebook and YouTube provide enlightening portals through which to examine the interplay between *harraga*'s symbolic and material im-mobilities. Divided into two sections, it first offers a critical reflection on the decolonial texture of both the digitally mediated corpus of the study as well as the methodologies I deploy to unpack it. As the two chapters in this final part are thematically interconnected, the following section not only sets the tone for the examination of *harga* dreamers' digital representations of *in situ* journeys, but also paves the way for the analysis of *harraga*'s online documentation of their subversive migration practices.

5.1   *'De-linking' from dominant migration epistemologies and methodologies*

As the mobile phone and its constantly updated applications are increasingly replacing the book in its material form, and social media are becoming the fastest means of producing and obtaining

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[265] This idiomatic expression—often translated in French as "*la harga plûtot que votre mépris*" (Bensaada, 2022)—is part of the distinct linguistic repertoire of (would-be) *harraga*, encapsulating, in a rather idiosyncratic way, their worldview. To my knowledge, it does not have a direct equivalent in English, and as such, may be translated as "I would rather escape (by burning borders) than rot in the margins". *Hogra* (also transliterated as *'ħogra'*) captures a condition wherein (would-be) *harraga* perceive themselves as neglected, oppressed, humiliated, and emasculated due to their precarious socio-economic and political status as they are denied "the right to have rights" (Arendt, 1951), and as a result, remain stuck in an unyielding cycle of poverty and hopelessness, hence their 'burning' desire to opt for radical solutions. It is also relevant to point out that the modern usage of the term '*hogra*' traces its origins to the colonial period, when French colonialists enacted reforms that confiscated Algerian land and transferred ownership to French settlers (*pieds-noirs*), forcing Algerians to work as labourers on their own former properties, leaving them feeling utterly dispossessed and degraded (i.e., '*maħgour*'). I further elaborate on this notion in the remainder of this chapter.

information, digitally mediated (hyper-) short migrant stories are turning into accessible and indispensable epistemic sources (Ponzanesi, 2019; Darcy, 2008). Notwithstanding the semantic nuances that distinguish 'story' from 'narrative', in the context of this research, I use them interchangeably as the former is an integral part of the latter. While a story refers to the sequence of events or plot, a narrative encompasses the broader framework, including the way the story is structured, told, and interpreted; thus, they are often inseparable in the analysis of how meaning is conveyed. As we shall see, (would-be) *harraga* share their personal stories on Facebook, sometimes via a short post, and in so doing, contribute to the fabrication of cultural meanings and individual identities. In other words, it is through the sharing of their individual experiences on digital platforms that (counter-)narratives surrounding *harga* gradually emerge. As such, *harraga*'s digital narratives are here presented as alternative discursive spaces offering un-edited gazes articulated from the very site of the border(ed), and a potentially solid counter-discourse against hegemonic epistemic formations around unauthorised migration to EU-rope.

Embedded in a larger thematic part on (would-be) *harraga*'s unmediated[266] first-hand testimonies produced from the very site of the margin—be it in the subjects' source environments, at sea or in the peripheries of the post-migration space—this section opens the discussion by underscoring the necessity of investing in decolonial methodologies, which do justice to previously muted epistemologies. In so doing, it aims to set the stage for my discussion of *harga* dreamers' *in situ* journeys and the ways in which they are conveyed in their cyberspaces.

As stated in the introduction of this thesis, my positionality as a Tunisian researcher working astride two academic institutions in Tunis and in London, and mastering three languages—Arabic (native), French (second language) and English (third language)—is central in analysing and translating *harraga*'s discursive acts as well as their lingual cross-border movements from dialectical Moroccan and Algerian, to Modern Standard Arabic, to personalised renditions of French.[267] Further, one major trope running across most of the digital narratives selected for this study and serving as a pertinent cultural framework illuminating

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[266] It is important to acknowledge that this qualifier is quite problematic in this research context. As a Tunisian researcher who understands the different variations of Algerian and Moroccan dialects, I engage with *harraga*'s digital narratives as unmediated gazes by virtue of my direct access to the possible meanings generated by their words. However, by writing about their narratives and translating them to a non-Arabic and a non- French speaking readership, I become a mediator of *harraga*'s stories. Also, throughout this part, I frequently use the phrase 'digitally mediated' to refer to online platforms as the media through which *harraga*'s stories are fleshed out.

[267] It is important to add that (would-be*) harraga* also tend to tap into a large repository of loanwords like '*mi amore*' and '*bacio*' in Italian and '*costa*' in Spanish among many others in some of their digital representations. Here, I particularly focus on the ones articulated in Arabic (Modern Standard and dialectical) and French.

harraga's individualised configurations of their identities and cross-border journeys are the ubiquitous allusions to the Qur'anic verses and the 'Hadith' (collections of Prophet Muhammed's sayings and teachings regarded by Muslims as important sources of guidance). Religion, as the following analysis shall demonstrate, functions as a potent decolonial force, a language of its own, a source of empowering 'energy' that (would-be) *harraga* embrace, and often times, instrumentalise to unsettle official discourses around *harga* as pathology and moral sterility, as established in Part One. The counter-narrative potential of *harraga*'s (embedded) religious discourse illuminates a reading of Islam as an identity marker and a statement of cultural resistance against the islamophobic landscape of 21st century Europe, which was further intensified with the advent of the 'migrant crisis' (Zunes, 2017; Eberl et al, 2018). The tensions that arise from *harraga*'s digitally mediated oxymoronic imaginaries of the 'Euro-Eldorado' breed new cultural readings of the complex phenomenon of *harga*. Thus, my positionality as a subject living in a predominantly Muslim society facilitates my reading of the religious 'texture' of (would-be[268]) *harraga*'s discursive acts.

In order to offer a comprehensive analysis of (would-be) *harraga*'s hypershort narratives, I incorporate Decolonial Thinking (Quijano 2000, Mignolo, 2011, Khosravi, 2024) within Digital Migration Studies (Leurs & Smets, 2018; Ponzanesi, 2019; Diminescu 2008) and build on the Autonomy of Migration (henceforth referred to as AOM) theoretical perspectives (Mezzadra, 2011; Mazzara, 2019; Papadopoulos et al., 2008; Squire, 2022; Tazzioli, 2015) by slightly dis-pacing the focus from "a politics of mobility" (Scheel, 2013) to a 'politics of im-mobility' to encompass the complex dynamics of *harraga*'s stasis and movement, experienced at the material and symbolic levels. Additionally, I read the latter's digital platforms as appropriated 'decolonial spaces' wherein they convey their individualised visions of the 'European Eldorado' and thereby agentively 'de-link' from dominant epistemologies of illegalised migrations, exchange information about smuggling networks and counter-routes, as well as post their collective experiences of the Mediterranean crossing in a 'live' fashion, while reconnecting with a painful past or fantasising about a near future. Accordingly, *harga* is construed as a "social movement" (Papadopoulos, et al., 2008; Squire, 2022), as well as "a

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[268] I refer to the people who have not yet crossed into Europe but express their intention or desire to do so via unauthorised routes as 'would-be' *harraga* or '*harga* dreamers'. The latter fit well particularly in my multimodal critical narrative analysis of their representations of imaginary displacements as forms of virtual resistance to their condition of state-induced immobility. Also, to preclude ambiguity, I use the word 'rhetor', i.e., "the producer of the sign" (Kress, 2010; Huc-Hepher, 2016: 26) as an all-encompassing term to refer to *harga* Facebook pages admins, and whoever posts a text, photo, song or video to be viewed by followers. Put differently, the 'rhetor' is both the creator and 'sharer' of digital content.

political act subverting classical forms of state territoriality" (Monsutti, 2018: 448, cited in Squire, 2022: 1049), culminating in the disruption of "spatialised dynamics of [neo-colonial] power and violence" (Squire, 2022: 1049). As such, *harraga*—as actors of the cross-border passage and active meaning constructors (Papadopoulos et al., 2008)—defy border fences and share subversive content on Facebook walls (respectively) to articulate their multivalent forms of resistance as well as their "struggle over statist, racist and capitalist forms of international politics" (Squire, 2022: 1049). As I shall demonstrate in chapter six, by surfing the net and the Sea (often times simultaneously), *harraga* enact disruptions at the level of both discursive and physical borders. Similarly, by leveraging conceptual resources from the AOM approach, I seek to make 'visible' what Martina Tazzioli (2019: 16) calls "heterogeneous migrant multiplicities [...] which come together in similar places" (cited in Squire, 2022: 1050), i.e., on the dinghy, or in digital realms in the specific context of the present study.

     Harraga's projection of their feeling of immobilism and their desire to 'deterritorialise' and dis-connect from (Appadurai, 1996) their source society in digital spaces has become common practice in the past two decades (Souiah et al., 2018; Mastrangelo, 2018). As established earlier, *harraga*'s navigation of the World Wide Web has been facilitated by a digital literacy acquired through an access to ICTs made easier as a result of the unprecedented proliferation of mobile phones (despite enduring digital disparities) (Leurs & Smets, 2018) and the growing 'trendiness' and indispensability of having one—hence the conceptualisation of the figure of the "hyper-connected migrant" (Ponzanesi, 2019). Interestingly, while phones have enabled *harraga* to surf online worlds and make use of social media, the latter have facilitated, in their turn, our navigation of the *harga* phenomenon in its complexity.

     As 'decolonial spaces', these digital platforms, I argue, enable *harraga* to disrupt the ongoing "coloniality of language" (Veronelli, 2015; Mignolo, 2011) and the biased and dehumanising character of hegemonic narratives generated on both sides of the Mediterranean as demonstrated through my analysis of "symbolic immobility'' (Smets, 2019) and "symbolic bordering'' (Chouliaraki, 2017) in Parts One and Two, respectively. In this chapter (and in the following one), I thus hope to dis-locate (language) borders, as it were, by facilitating non-Arabic speakers/readers' access to the symbolic (and material) worlds of *harraga* as articulated on the digital stage to invite them to engage *otherwise* with their narratives by questioning some of their internalised (mis-)conceptions about unauthorised migration from Algeria and Morocco to the EU. Extending my interpretation of the digital realm as a cluster of decolonial sites is my engagement with the ways in which *harraga's* virtual mourning rituals function as forms of

resistance against and subversion of the necropolitics of the border regime. I demonstrate that these digital spaces function at times as virtual loci wherein family members and friends mourn the loss of their *harraga* sons and daughters through video and audio edits, online (re)posting and sharing, and in doing so, 'immobilise' or rather 'immortalise' their stories in a digitally mediated collective memory, or in the form of cyber traces to compensate—at least momentarily—for the agonising un-traceability of their bodies (Mazzara, 2020). In this sense, the 'digital im-mobilisation' (i.e., posting, sharing and circulation) of *harraga*'s photographs (in their pre-mortem state) is presented as a counter hegemonic practice, decolonial in essence— since framed within a discourse of contestation and protest against incompetent and 'immobile' state actors (Hadfi, 2013). Moreover, I contend that the deliberate circulation of (deceased) *harraga*'s photographs enables a collective articulation of a 'necroethics', i.e., an ethics of dead migrants' digital representation that invites online viewers to engage in "critical mourning"[269] through a set of posthumous commemoration rituals. Thus, what links this two-section chapter to the following one is the conceptual entanglements of the digital and the decolonial.

Building on bell hooks' contention that "spaces [be they real or imaginary] can tell stories and unfold histories", (1989: 23) I read *harraga*'s public Facebook pages and YouTube channels as sites of decolonial resistance. Put differently, I interpret them as "potential openings" (Khosravi, 2020: 206), which enable the articulation of different variants of "wakeful navigation",[270] i.e., "state[s] of consciousness"[271] whereby migrants engage in productive (rather than passive) "waiting"—a form of chronopolitics that allows them to project themselves onto "the not-yet"[272] and transcend different forms of "temporal bordering".[273] I examine this dimension in my reflections on *harga* dreamers' 'trips *in situ*' or im-mobile voyages as conveyed in their cyber spaces.

Through these digital portals previously unauthorised *harraga* claim historical authority and thereby, create a digital archive (Hoskins, 2017) of their own usually through the use of a translingual mode (Huc-Hepher, 2021; Rouabah, 2022) and a multimodal code (Adami & Kress, 2014; Huc-Hepher, 2015; Kress & van Leeuwan, 2001; Jewitt, 2013). In terms of methodology, multimodal analysis provides conceptual and methodological toolkits for the

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[269] Chambers, I. "War on the Water". Catalogue of Sink Without Trace: An Exhibition on Migrant Death at Sea, p. 40, cited in Mazzara, F. (2020) 'The Role of Art in Subverting the "Ungrievability" of migrant lives,' *Parse*, pp.1-12. Available at: The Role of Art in Subverting the "Ungrievability" of Migrant Lives – PARSE [Accessed 29 June 2022].
[270] Khosravi (2020: 206).
[271] Khosravi (2020: 205).
[272] Khosravi (2020: 206).
[273] Khosravi (2020: 204).

collection and analysis of textual, audio, visual, embodied and spatial aspects of interaction.[274] Within the framework of this research, I understand translingual practices as agentive forms of 'code-switching'. These performances not only attest to the multilingual background of the administrators of the selected *harga* Facebook pages and YouTube channels, but also reflect a collective decolonial digital praxis that essentially consists in appropriating and distorting the ex-colonisers' language (France and Spain in the context of this study), and re-articulating a distinct *harga*-centred cyberlanguage or 'netspeak' (Wahid & Farooq, 2022), thus 'un-linking' from the 'normative' linguistic codes used by hegemonic actors in both Europe and the Maghreb.

Following the methodological approach used to examine Moroccan and Algerian mainstream mediascapes, I combine multimodal and Critical Narrative Analysis in a fruitful partnership, for the purpose of accounting for the variety of communicative structures deployed by *harraga* (audio, video, text, caption) on the one hand, and foregrounding their terminological choices, discursive subversions, and the narratives that subsequently emerge from such practices, on the other. A multimodal reading entails a distinction between representation and communication, the former being "sign-maker-centred" while the latter being "sign-recipient-focused".[275] As this chapter (and by extension the whole part) engages with *harraga*'s Facebook and YouTube-shared first-hand accounts of im-mobility as potential counter-narratives, it inevitably encompasses the examination of digital audience's interactions and empathetic responses. In this way, the plurality of modes deployed and displayed online to re-present and communicate the different nuances of *harraga*'s im-mobility and dis-placement draw attention to the generic hybridity (Huc-Hepher, 2016) of these forms of digitally mediated artefacts.

Given the abundance of *harraga*'s Facebook posts and YouTube videos and the limited scope of this research, I offer a qualitative rather than a quantitative analysis of the selected corpus by dividing the primary sources in terms of im-mobility and displacement tropes. Further, for ethical considerations, I have deliberately opted for the use of public rather than private *harga* pages and YouTube channels as clarified earlier. As this part purports to explore the extent to which *harraga*'s digital accounts could be read as counter-narratives to hegemonic migration discourse, the time period covered in this chapter and the following one, spans from 2015 to 2019, roughly starting from the onset of the 'migrant crisis' in Europe and ending a year

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[274] MODE (2012). Glossary of multimodal terms. Available at: https://multimodalityglossary.wordpress.com/ [Accessed 02 October 2022].
[275] Huc-Hepher (2016).

before the outbreak of COVID-19. As set out in Part One, this period was marked not only by a perceived increase in *harga* via the Western Mediterranean route, but also by a concomitant (social) media spotlight on the phenomenon. Further, through this particular temporal delimitation, I specifically seek to foreground the parallel production of (counter-) discourses in the digital sphere in response to the media coverage of unauthorised migration not only in Europe but also, and more importantly, in the *harraga*'s pre-migration settings, namely Algeria and Morocco in the context of this research.

Similar to blogs, *Harraga*'s Facebook pages and YouTube Channels connect the private to the public (Huc-Hepher, 2016), and therefore, function as both online spaces of representation and communication characterised by what Serge Tisseron (2011) calls "*extimité*" (cited in Huc-Hepher, 2016: 7), or a public intimacy. In this regard, he notes that there has been a growing tendency on the part of internet users to adopt fictive identities either through anonymity or pseudonymity as the infinite space of the World Wide Web is primarily one wherein they explore multiple identities (86). Interestingly, the majority of *harga* Facebook pages and YouTube channels can be accessed by simply typing the words '*harga*'/ '*harraga*' in their transliterated form or in their Arabic script into the Google search engine, and adding "Facebook/YouTube" for more accurate results. The creators of these accounts tend to conceal their identities under the generic label '*harraga*' by usually adding the year of account creation, (e.g., *harraga* 2015, *Haraga* 2018) or complementing it with a geographical referent such as 'Oujda/ Annaba', or acronyms such as 'DZ' (alluding to the dialectical pronunciation of Algeria as '*Dzaier*') to specify the identity of their pre-departure environments and enlarge their online community. Facebook pages and YouTube channel names often include phrases such as '*harraga* Melilla' to refer to transit or post-migratory spaces.

In other cases, *harga* pages' admins would use collective identity markers such as 'Algerian' ('*Jaza'irioun*' in classical Arabic, the dialectical version being '*dziria*') and adjoin for instance, transliterated words such as '*ghorba*', which translates as 'strangerhood'/ 'exile' or the feeling of homesickness and alienation experienced in post-migratory settings. Arguably, such naming can be understood as a way of both building a digital diasporic space—or, a "diasberspace" (Huc-Hepher, 2016: 10) of encounters, solidarity, and storytelling—and in doing so, co-constructing a sense of "exilic agency" (Gjesdal, 2021). Other Facebook pages names are more creative as they deploy metaphoric tournures like "*el-harba tnadi*", which translates as 'the flight (a euphemistic expression substituting *harga*) is calling', articulating thereby a sense of urgency and the necessity for immediate action/departure from their source society.

Before moving to the analysis of the selected corpus for this study, it is important to underscore that it is counter-intuitive to attempt to systematise and frame *harraga*'s digital stories and the tropes they generate into "neat synops[es]" (Daigle & Ramirez, 2018: 1) as they essentially resist definitional boundaries by virtue of their endless heterogeneity. My endeavour is thus to "elucidate the connective fabric of [their] various decolonial struggles", as Michelle Daigle and Margaret Marietta Ramirez (2018: 2) eloquently put it, and foreground their "constellations of co-resistance [to] and liberation [from]"[276] dominant discursive patterns through translingual idiosyncrasies, dissensual online art and digital 'grievability' of *harraga*'s lives as ways of producing and preserving (to a certain extent) a counter-history from below.

As digital spectators, we are thus invited to take part in a spectacular mutation of discourse and a collective formation of an "oppositional gaze" (hooks, 1989: 23). In this sense, "spaces can be interrupted, appropriated and transformed",[277] not only through literary practice as hooks puts it, but also through Folkloric and popular music like Rap and Rai, caricatural illustrations or photo-shopped imagery as I shall demonstrate in the body of this last part.

Carrying out qualitative digital anthropological research (Huc-Hepher, 2015, 2016; Souiah et al., 2018) that accounts for the 'pluriversal' (Mignolo, 2011b) modal articulations of *harraga*'s imaginaries and practices as they appear on social media does not come without limitations. While a qualitative reading foregrounds recurrent *harraga*'s tropes on their Facebook walls and in their YouTube videos throughout a strictly defined period of time "without destroying complexity and context" (Atieno, 2009: 16), the findings generated by this approach cannot be "extended to wider populations with the same degree of certainty that quantitative analyses can" (Ochieng, 2009: 17). Away from a statistics-based analysis and a numerical synthesis of *harraga*'s terminological uses, this part rather offers a theme-oriented examination by dividing the online corpus in light of three major phases of their experiences of im-mobility and displacement and by classifying them into conceptual pairs: *material immobility vs virtual mobility*; *cross-border movement vs digital captures*; *death vs online immortalisation*. Indeed, the hyphen that connects the prefix '*im*' and the word 'mobility', and the one linking the prefix '*dis*' and the term 'placement' are used to foreground the fluid boundary between a condition and its opposite as *harraga*'s existential quest lies essentially in turning borders into bridges. It should also be noted that im-mobility in the context of illegalised migrations impregnates other meanings like, for example, *harraga*'s inability to access basic

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[276] Daigle & Ramirez (2018: 2).
[277] hooks (1989: 23).

services in post-migratory spaces owing to their unauthorised status or their incapacity to return to their pre-migratory environments. That said, for the purposes of this analytical part, I solely focus on the most prominent tropes characterising *harraga*'s digitally mediated narratives, namely their sense of immobilism and (ironically) 'out of placedness' in a place they often call 'home' or 'nation' (*watan*, as opposed to 'country' or State/ *daoula*'[278]), their heterogeneous representations of their Mediterranean journeys, as well as their family and friends' online mourning practices (as opposed to the state's indifference) which, I argue, ultimately serve to offer alternative histories that challenge reductive hegemonic migration discourses.

In what follows, I engage with would-be *harraga*'s migratory imaginaries of Europe, as symbolically constructed in their online realms; hence, my use of the oxymoronic phrase "trips *in situ*" (Deleuze, 1995).

5.2 'Trips in situ': Navigating harga dreamers' online representations of imaginary displacements

"La Flamme nous force à imaginer".[279]

—Bachelard, *La Flamme d'une chandelle*, (1961: 11).

While neat boundaries have been traced in early anthropological research between mobility and its antonym immobility privileging scholarly attention to the former condition, recent studies on unauthorised migration have not only attempted to lift semantic borders between the two phenomena (Khan, 2016; Salazar, 2020), but also slightly displaced the focus to examine migrants' experiences of inertia and 'stuckedness' (Hannam et al., 2006; Jacobsen et al., 2020; Schewel, 2018; Smets, 2019; Stock, 2019;) as inevitable phases before, during and after their cross-border journeys. Further, while the existing literature has shed light on *harraga*'s immobility and immobilisation as experienced at the material and psychological levels (Bachelet, 2016; Bensaad, 2009; Chena, 2015), very few studies have thus far, to my knowledge, engaged with their symbolic, i.e., virtual individualised articulations of the latter conditions (Mastrangelo, 2018; Souiah et al., 2018). As its title suggests, this section revolves around the ways in which Algerian and Moroccan '*harga* dreamers' transcend their condition of *mal-être*

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[278] In *harraga*'s social media posts, '*watan*' carries affective connotations of belongingness whereas '*daoula*' (meaning both State and government) refers metonymically to state actors and is usually used pejoratively to denounce the latter's immobilising border politics.

[279] Translated by Joni Caldwell as "a flame compels us to imagine" in Bachelard, G. (FC). (1988). *The Flame of a Candle*. Trans. by Joni Caldwell. Dallas: Dallas Institute Publications.

and marginalisation, or as they put it in their dialects, '*hogra*' by reaching out to the digital 'solution', as a momentary therapy. *Hogra* (which is the morpheme base of the colloquial verb '*yaḥgar*') and *Harga* (being that of '*yaḥrag*') are commonly used in both Moroccan and Algerian dialects. *Hogra*, is a colloquial term meaning the degrading or humiliation of a less privileged 'Other' by hegemonic actors leading to their socio-political alienation (Chena, 2015). In the audio-visual fragments posted on Facebook, *hogra* becomes a motivator for *hajja* (which translates as leaving one's country of birth irrevocably). As Hakim Abderrezak (2016: 13) keenly observes "a linguistic lens […] reveals phonetic and/or transliteration proximity between the Arabic words *hrig* or *harga, harragas,*[280] *hogra and hijra*". While the motto "*elharga wala elhogra*" creates a form of paronomasia due to the phonetic similarity between *harga* and *hogra*, the effect is nevertheless not intended to be humourous. Instead, it serves as a statement of resistance highlighting the symbolic interplay between marginalisation and forms of contestation.

Indeed, like their Tunisian counterparts (Mastrangelo, 2018), Algerian and Moroccan (would-be) *harraga* tend to mobilise arguments related to social, economic and political injustice in their digitally mediated discourses to express their desire to 'burn' their roots and plant new seeds elsewhere, a place they call '*Euroba*".[281] Through imaginary displacements, they construct 'Other' worlds where they can possibly regain a sense of lost manhood and dignity by constructing themselves as both the producers and the protagonists of these motionless journeys. These symbolic (re)articulations of a (presently) (in)accessible Euro[282]-Eldorado function, I argue, as cultural projections of a Maghrebi masculine resistance against an emasculating immobilism often referred to in common parlance as '*3ajz*' across the Maghreb.

In what follows, I present a contextual analysis of would-be *harraga*'s involuntary immobility (Carling, 2002), which I use interchangeably with the more medical term 'immotility' to refer to their significant reduction of motion (evoking in them a sensation of profound incapacitation) and the tensions that ensue between the desire to move beyond borders and their inability/disability to do so as projected in their online realms.

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[280] *Harraga*, which is the plural form of *harrag*, is often spelt *harragas* in the academic literature.
[281] See Fig.21.
[282] *Harraga*'s references to the Euro as a powerful currency abound in their digital representations hence my idiosyncratic use of 'Euro-Eldorado'.

5.2.1 'Involuntary immotility': Between desire and dis-ability to migrate

'Immotility', or Maghrebi would-be *harraga*'s incapacity to move across European borders owing to the (North-)African-EU immobility regime imposed by the Schengen visa system, is a condition conveyed in Algerian and Moroccan online platforms through a creative usage of multimodal designs. My choice of the term 'immotility' in this particular context, is informed by an inter-related reading of would-be *harraga*'s socio-economic inertia experienced in their pre-migratory environments and a (subsequent) socio-sexual paralysis induced by the former condition manifested in their incapacity to fulfil socially (and religiously) prescribed masculine roles. *Harga* dreamers' Facebook posts take on different digitally mediated shapes which often emerge as remastered audio-visual snapshots or satirical cartoons expressive of a collective sense of immobilism caused by the failure of their governments to attend to their basic needs as citizens. Thus, deprived of their fundamental right to life, liberty, economic opportunities and social mobility, and utterly disoriented, young Facebook users project an often (seemingly) simplified understanding of their socio-economic precarity through the digital creation of caricatures in a bid to denounce their government's inaction. In doing so, they legitimise the urgency to leave their country of origin by whatever means, as exemplified below:

Fig 8. Caricature: Immotility/ Dead-end feeling / *harga* is the only way out (Screenshot)[283]

The caricatural illustration above, posted 24 January 2017 via the Facebook page '*Al-hijra ila Euroba*' [migration to Europe], could be read as an aesthetic counter-representation to Algerian

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[283] All the visual sources used as illustrations throughout Part Three are screenshots of public Facebook pages or stills taken from both YouTube and Facebook-shared videos. To avoid redundancy, I give them titles encapsulating the general theme that they articulate as I offer details related to the source name, date of post, and translation in my analysis.

media's scapegoating constructions of *harraga* as being "uneasy in their skin" and pathologically desirous of Europe (Fig. 8). As established in Part One, one of the Algerian government's strategies to displace the focus away from its inability to implement reforms and offer relief to the disenchanted youth is achieved through discursive scapegoating. Thus, as a counter-discursive move, the cartoonist[284] centres the spotlight on the *harrag* figure and displays the ways in which he experiences marginalisation in his pre-migratory environment, foregrounding thus, a perspective 'from below', or from the very site of the margin. The cartoon features a young male character perhaps in his 30s or 40s standing back-bended as though carrying a heavy burden on his shoulders, and disillusioned in the midst of a dark room surrounded by four doors, three of which are locked and one open to a sunny sky view. Upon each of the three locked doors on his right side are engraved the words '*al-3amal*' [employment], '*a-sakan*' [housing] and '*a-zawej*' [marriage]. He is carrying a thick folder upon which is inscribed the word '*talabet*' [demands/claims] and is gazing in utter despair at the only open gate before him with the word '*al-harga*' painted on its backside, which symbolises the only exit route from what appears to be a black hole that is about to swallow him. From outside the door, we are invited to see what the man can see: a light blue sky and a few flying birds symbolising hope through flight. The view, however, remains hazy as no prospects are clear, and the act of passing through the gate seems to suggest risk-taking into the unknown. As such, the escape door functions as both an opening to an uncertain elsewhere as well as a threshold between an immobilising here/now due to disabled access to upward mobility and an arguably hopeful there/then as the sole option available through *harga*. Interestingly, the latter is not expressed as "a wish" or an "aspiration" to migrate (Carling, 2002), but rather as a necessity in the absence of the possibility to migrate via 'legal' channels.

Economic deprivation and poverty, which are symbolically configured through the claustrophobic atmosphere brought out by the sombre colours and the sense of blockage conveyed by the hanging padlocks[285] in the drawing, are here attributed the same weight as for instance, political unrest and environmental disasters as legitimate reasons to escape and seek refuge in a 'safe' haven beyond their national borders. In this sense, the would-be *harrag*

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[284] In the Facebook post, there is no mention of the name of the caricaturist. It remains thus unclear whether the Facebook page admin is its author or whether he retrieved it from the web.

[285] It is important to add in this context that the padlock metaphor is a leitmotif in other art forms namely Algerian-French Soul, Rap and Rai music. A pertinent example is France-based Algerian singer Soolking' s song "sans visa sans papiers"—a popular *harga* 'anthem'— which evokes *harga* dreamers' feeling of being "cadenacé" (padlocked).
Video available at: https://youtu.be/YsMObMEAE_Q?si=Ttz6kDXNj33VlRDJ [Accessed 30 September 2023].

character is framed as a potential refugee compelled to flee a violent form of life-endangering immobilism inflicted upon him/his body by an exploitative yet impotent government. The form of immobility projected in this cultural expression[286] is understood as the direct outcome of "structural constraints on the capability to migrate" (Schewel, 2019: 331). As Simon Mastrangelo (2018) observes,

> Many prospective exiles find themselves trapped in a daily life of immobility, stuck in a specific location: their neighbourhood. Excluded from certain social and spatial spheres, they feel confined and marginalised within the society where they live.[287]

The caricature under scrutiny is not only fiercely critical of the political *status quo* but is also deeply interconnected with would-be *harraga*'s socio-cultural realities as it allows for a systematic rethinking of the codes of masculinity grounded in the national, social, cultural, and religious tapestry of their identities. Indeed, in Algerian (and Maghrebi in a more general sense) young men's popular imaginary, employment, property ownership, and marriage are three markers of success and self-fulfilment as they enable them to move upward in the social class system and thereby assert their masculinity in a still male-governed environment, for Maghrebi societies are inherently patriarchal and religiously grounded. According to some (purist and androcentric) readings of the Qur'an and, more specifically, *Sourat An-nissa*' (verse 34) "*a-rrijalou qawamouna 3ani an-nissa*" [men are the protectors and maintainers of women]. Put differently, men must take on the role of the '*qawamoun*' [breadwinners] in the couple, and are therefore assigned a leadership status. As such, this conception of gender roles "fosters a vision that obliges men, in order to realise their full potential, to be the [sole] providers and authority of the household".[288]

According to widely accepted and authoritative Qur'anic '*Tafsir*' [exegesis], a '*qawwam*' (derived from the verb '*qama*', which literally translates as perform/enact) is a person responsible for managing and overseeing the affairs of either an individual or an organisation,

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[286] Following Souiah et al., (2018), I do not differientiate between 'high' and 'low' art but rather read the selected online multimodal assemblages as being integral constituents of (would-be) *harraga*'s 'cultural productions'. Also informed by Antonio Gramsci's critique of cultural hegemony as producing and reinforcing the binary distinction 'elite' versus 'popular Art', I read *harraga*'s digital constructions as sites wherein these representational power dynamics are addressed albeit not always in conspicuous ways.

[287] My translation of the original French quote (n.p, parag.3).

[288] Khelif, Z. (2023). "Islam and Masculinity in the Arab-Muslim World". *Institut du genre en géopolitique*. 21 April. Para.5. Available at Islam and Masculinity in the Arab-Muslim World - Institut du Genre en Géopolitique [Accessed 22 January 2024].

ensuring their protection and well-being while addressing their needs (Goerke & Pink, 2014) . Notwithstanding the proliferation of more contemporary and (more specifically) feminist interpretations of the Qur'anic text,[289] these masculinist understandings of gender roles have somewhat remained consistent throughout the history of Islam and their manifestations are encoded and embedded in Maghrebi cultural representations. Indeed, they seem to have been internalised by Maghrebi youth as their masculinity/virility is perceived to be contingent upon their capacity to fulfil this divinely assigned role of care and protection. Thus, their ineptitude to fit into these fixed gender frames despite their desire to do so, has yielded a "crisis of masculinity" (Neveu, 2012)[290] symbolised in the caricature under examination by the heavy locks hanging from the three door knobs and the desire to escape society's emasculating/dehumanising gaze by stepping into the unknown. This argument clearly resonates with Eric Neveu's (2012) astute observation that in the postmodern world "masculinity is depicted in terms of an acute crisis without gender social relations escaping male domination."[291] From this perspective, immotility as a socio-economic paralysis inevitably devitalises would-be *harraga*'s 'masculinity'.

Further, the imagery of the locked doors neatly captures the 'dead end' feeling experienced by young Algerian men whose access to the job market has been impeded by political corruption and misgovernance, as the post sharer puts it in a caption written in Modern Standard Arabic, which translates as, "[it is ironic] that young men are hungry in the land of plenty… to hell with a country endowed with oil and natural gas [which/who] forbids [her] sons from feeding off its resources, freezing them out and shutting all doors in their face except that of *harga*". These words are not to be misinterpreted as alluding to the Algerian government's (deliberate) deactivation of border surveillance to give room to *harraga* to embark on their journeys to European shores as a way of unloading the surplus burden represented by unemployed youth. Instead, the caricature sharer is here condemning the government for compelling young men to resort to illegalised migratory routes as they have been bordered by their precarious socio-economic status that deters them from applying for the Schengen visa in the first place.

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[289] One of the Prophet's wives, Khadija, who was older than him, had been married twice before, was the sole provider for the household, and, therefore, played an active (as opposed to passive) and pivotal role in their marriage (Parsa, 2016).
[290] My translation of the original citation in French (p.111).
[291] Neveu (2012: 111). My translation.

More importantly, a decolonial critique is articulated in this context, one rendered possible by the somewhat 'free speech' culture generated by social media platforms and protected by the fictitiousness of the admins' identities. The latter can be read in light of Papadopoulos et al.'s (2008) conceptualisation of "politics of (im) perceptibility" whereby the online content creator takes on an often unrecognisable socio-digital identity in an attempt to escape from institutionalised gazes. The reference to Algeria's rich repository of natural resources and the paradoxical parallel allusion to the Algerian people's misery compose the backbone of this digitally mediated counter-discursive take down on France's colonial legacies and the persistent French-Algerian neo-colonial entanglements. As Hamza Hamouchene and Alfons Perez (2013) observe, neo-colonial relations between France and Algeria have been gradually established through so-called economic cooperation programmes in the years following Algerian Independence (1962), and have recently become even more visible through "the plundering of resources to the benefit of a corrupt elite and the predatory multinationals" (6) facilitated by deficient authoritarian regimes.

Interestingly, while exploring the multimedia content of Moroccan *harraga*'s public Facebook pages, I came across a similar narrative that deploys the padlock motif as a seminal generator of meaning and a key to navigating these digital content makers' conceptualisations of pre-migratory involuntary immotility. However, unlike their Algerian counterparts, Moroccan *harga*-themed Facebook pages admins do not seem to make use of cartoons and grotesque representations as aesthetic vehicles to denounce their government's failure to mobilise radical solutions to reduce poverty for instance, especially in rural (*rif*) areas, but rather, they tend to remaster photographs or screenshots of national news sequences or create hypershort narrative videos wherein they project their sense of *malaise* and entrapment. As such, Moroccan *harga* fantasisers evoke the necessity to migrate to Europe by expressing in their digital accounts their sense of dis-belonging to a motherland that has betrayed her offspring by refusing to nurture them and allow them to grow and prosper upon its soil, hence their immotility. Caught in a limbo space between the desire to migrate and their disabled access to legalised migratory channels, Moroccan would-be *harraga*, like their Algerian counterparts, appropriate digital spaces not only to create networks of empathy, but also, and more importantly, to legitimise their (prospective) unauthorised cross-border act publicly. By network of empathy, I am specifically referring to young Moroccan (male) digital platform users' tendency to seek the attention of successful transnational *harraga* who might potentially offer them guidance and assistance should they reach European shores safely. In so doing, they

establish a digital bond and "craft [virtual] connections" (M'charek, 2020) with *harraga* diasporas as the starting point of their *harga* journey. In this sense, would-be *harraga*'s digital contact set up could be read in terms of what Carling (2002) calls "the aspiration/ability" model whereby the prospective migrant assesses the likelihood of concretising his migratory project if assisted by *harraga* who have settled abroad. Notwithstanding the fictive identity of these online content creators and empathy seekers, the comment section becomes a locus of vibrant digital interactions through which (prospective) *harraga* discuss and organise future *harga* trips, which confirms Carling's (2002) observation that "the immigration interface is influenced by factors in the home country or its diaspora, such as the existence of people smuggling networks and opportunities for bogus marriages" (28). In this context, it is also worth adding that the deliberate posting of narrative videos revolving around the desire and the disability to migrate in *harraga*-specific online platforms reveals the content creators' "desire for extimity which manifests primarily towards chosen individuals" (Tisseron, 2011: 86)[292] [i.e., prospective or former *harraga* who managed to regularise their status in Europe]. As such, the bond born out of these virtual interactions is the very outcome of "the most complete form of empathy",[293] which Tisseron dubs "empathie extimisante,"[294] enabled by the digitally mediated affective connectivity that Facebook makes possible.

By illustration, in a 35-second music video posted 29 June 2019 (Fig.9),[295] which received over a thousand likes from viewers, the singer/narrator, using the first person singular, tells the story of a young waiter who is trying to make a decent living in his home country, Morocco, but is facing denigration and humiliation by his boss and clients on a daily basis. Against a black and white backdrop, a text in bold emerges concomitantly with a sequence of images and a muted dispute scene taking place between the protagonist and his employer, creating a sense of audio-visual-textual unity and facilitating thereby the recipients' quick and smooth access to meaning. The narrative starts with the protagonist sitting idly, smoking, and gazing at the sea view from the top of a mountain. In this meditative sequence, he recalls the

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[292] My translation of the original citation in French.
[293] (Tisseron, 2011: 86). My translation of the original quote.
[294] (Tisseron, 2011: 86). My translation of the original quote.
[295] Available at: https://www.Facebook.com/share/v/ZWHEpN14CBkCW2CA/?mibextid=D5vuiz [Accessed 30 January 2022]. All *harga*-related audiovisual material from YouTube and Facebook pages used in this final part was initially collected between 2021 and 2022, during the early stages of the PhD project. Although the access dates correspond to this period, a follow-up check was conducted in 2024 (through the final phases of thesis writing) to verify the content's continued availability.

misery he has been enduring as a low-skilled worker in one of the city's restaurants and the lack of alternative opportunities in the very restricted job market, hence his desire to reach the other shores of the Mediterranean with the goal of entering Europe. As the musical narrative unfolds, we see him in a flashback sequence wearing a smile as he jots down the orders of customers when suddenly his boss erupts in anger, and berates him, leaving him feeling publicly humiliated. Flash-forward to the moment of storytelling, the protagonist fantasises over the possibility of braving the seas in a bid to find his 'luck' [*ħadhi*] as he puts it, on the other 'edges' [*tarf*] of the Earth.

Hypershort and symbolic, this story is meant to stand as an archetypal representation of the struggles of marginalised young men in Morocco whose voices are often stifled and unheard. Brief in duration and didactic in tone, this audio-visual narrative construction communicates a moral lesson to online viewers via the mobilisation of words pertaining to the lexical field of movement and inertia in conjunction with a multifarious set of emojis as meaningful signs punctuating each line of the narrative. Thus, via the use of this multimodal semiotic ensemble, the narrator communicates a moral lesson that betrays expectations, as he claims that hard work *never* pays off in a country that fails to recognise and reward the efforts and sacrifices made by its sons, "*kol manji nerfed rassi yetghalqou el-biben*" [each time I try to rise and make a stand, doors instantly shut before me]. Nevertheless, the *harga* option is presented as the last alternative since the protagonist initially sought to overcome the socio-economic borders erected by modern day capitalism by choosing not to give in and accepting to work in appalling conditions for low pay in lieu of sitting idly and relying on his family's meagre income for survival.

As mood indicators, the emojis inserted at the end of each narrative fragment as part of the rhetor's customised montage, are also very effective in this context as they help garner instant attention, generate more likes and shares, and invite the *harraga* Facebook (online) community to emotionally connect and engage with the video creator/sharer. For instance, one commentator tagged other *harraga* and called on them to send and share the video, implying that thousands of other involuntarily immobile youngsters would instantaneously identify with its protagonist's feeling of being 'closed off'. The image of the shut door here echoes the series of padlocks in the caricature examined earlier, and thereby, functions as an intertextual link modally connecting the two immotility narratives despite their different time-space frames. The storyteller states in a melancholic tone, "I try to act like everything is fine, I stand up but fall

again [...] in this country, I am burdened, I am cursed".[296] To corroborate the immotility narrative, the visual motif of the padlock is foregrounded and is strategically placed at the centre of the frame between the verb 'close' (*yanghaliqou*) and the noun 'doors' (*biben*) whereas the image of the locked door plays the role of the full-stop at the end of the song line, further reinforcing the protagonist's sense of incarceration and the absence of perspectives within the confines of the m(O)ther nation.

Fig 9. Still taken from a *harga* music video: Immotility/ padlock and shut door motifs

Even though the protagonist voices his intention to pursue his dream of a better life beyond the Mediterranean border, he nonetheless states that its materialisation rests entirely on luck rather than on more realistic means. As Carling (2002: 32) succinctly puts it, "ironically, the lack of a regular job with a decent salary is both [the involuntarily immobile's] reason for wishing to emigrate and the main reason for not being able to do so".

Often well-educated despite their precarious condition (Pestre, 2015), many prospective *harraga* present themselves in the digital interface as "wilful [yet (im) perceptible] subjects" (Ahmed, 2014) instrumentalising online platforms as venues for political contestation. Through both linguistic compactness (a two-line post) and temporal condensation (a 35 second-video), the rhetor succeeds in succinctly yet efficiently communicating a collective sense of restlessness experienced by his peers in the face of political and socio-economic 'borders'.

Prospective *harraga* who mostly belong to the lower and middle substrata of Moroccan and Algerian societies are subjected to a necropolitical regime that slowly kills hope and impedes any possibility for self-improvement. Their condition of 'disposability' (M'charek, 2020) is ironically reminiscent of that of 'sub-Saharan' illegalised migrants whom are both

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[296] My translation.

treated and represented as "waste" (Bauman,1998) by Algerian and Moroccan policy and discourse makers as illustrated in Part One. Accordingly, the boundary that separates who is a citizen and who is not is blurred which flagrantly contradicts the legal/illegal argument they tend to instrumentalise as a legitimisation of their border(ing) practices.

Circling back to the Algerian digital context, while navigating *harga*-related online platforms, I came across two monochrome photographic pieces put together by the admin of '*elhijra w ness elghorba DZ*' [migration and al-*ghorba* people DZ] Facebook page, posted 23 June 2019, to invite viewers to critically reflect on two different cityscapes—Dubai and Algiers' urban configurations—at a specific point in time—1950 (Fig. 10). As a form of visual testimony, colonial photography (being the only means through which contemporary Algerians can have visual access to the colonial past) was only accessed by a restricted group of Algerian collectors in the post-colonial period; however with the advent of the World Wide Web and social media, it has become available to a larger audience as a result of its digitalisation and distribution by internet users.[297] Initially intended to be consumed by colonial settlers, colonial iconography featured indigenous subjects and urban sights. Being the major "urban and administrative centre of the colonising activity" (Houati, 2016, np.),[298] Algiers was characterised by "a powerful visual character"[299] for, being "the colonial city par excellence",[300] it was intended to reflect the colonial influence of France and its '*grandeur*'.

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[297] Algerian anthropologist Awel Houati's research focuses on Algerian collectors of colonial photography and the different meanings with which they imbue them through their re-appropriation and reproduction. She argues that in contemporary times many of them have started sharing their photographic collections on line by creating Facebook pages like '*Algiers à une certaine époque*' [Algiers at a specific time period] to invite digital audiences in and outside Algeria to connect and engage with the past through visual imagery. Although I do not engage with anthropologists' take on colonial photography, Houati's analytical insights are instrumental in fostering a deeper appreciation of *harraga*'s re-purposing of colonial photography archives. Her article entitled "Collectionner 'les images du passé' à Alger" is available at: Collectionner les « images du passé » à Alger – par Awel Haouati – FOTOTA – Perspectives africaines en photographie [Accessed 01 August 2022].

[298] My translation.

[299] Ibid.

[300] Ibid.

Fig 10. Colonial photography re-purposed: Alger 1950 versus Dubai 1950

Before commenting on the thematic relevance of this photographic montage (and the text accompanying it) to our understanding of the different nuances of immobility experienced by modern-day *harga* dreamers, it is important to add that the contexts wherein colonial photography has been viewed and the meanings appended to it since Algerian independence have changed, generating thereby new readings and different engagements on the part of postcolonial audiences. In this sense, the re-circulation and the re-production of colonial photographs by Facebook users could be interpreted as subversive practices of (visual history) re-appropriation. As opposed to the 'sub-Saharan' migrant authors whose testimonies and (by extension) their histories have been (to varying degrees) ventrilocated by their Western co-authors, as demonstrated in Part Two, Algerian (prospective) *harraga* and online post sharers challenge the colonial regime of historical representation and communication through their agentive digital practices, meaning (re-)making and thematic re-purposing.

The post is primarily a call to the digital diasporic and 'home' communities to reflect critically on Algerian colonial and post-independence urbanism and economic history, as well as an invitation to engage in an analogy between the latter and those of other Arab nations, namely the UAE in this context. The choice of juxtaposing Algiers and Dubai's mid-20th century urban architectural make-up is, I believe, informed by the fact that both belong to resource-rich Arab Muslim States, which were formerly subjected to forms of European 'interference'[301] (and

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[301] I use the word 'interference' in this context because Algeria, as opposed to the UAE (which was not a 'colony' in the traditional sense, but was under British 'protectorate' from 1892 to 1971), bore the weight of a long and dark history under French colonial rule from 1830 to 1962. However, from my understanding of the rhetor's post, it is the historical encounter with Europeans and its consequences that is particularly underscored.

violence albeit to varying extents) yet have not evolved in the same way after having acquired independence from France and Britain, respectively. In fact, what is implied by the illustration is that Algiers was expected to develop even faster than Dubai given that the latter lacked the 'modern' infrastructure and dynamism that characterised the former during the 1950s. Accordingly, Algeria—which is the largest[302] and one of the wealthiest[303] countries in the African continent nowadays—and the UAE—which is one of the top ten richest nations in the world—have slightly diverging historical, yet common physical (in the sense of being resource-abundant) and cultural aspects but have followed different post-independence trajectories. Although as LaFramboise et al., (1998: 63) keenly observe, "for about twenty-five years following its independence in 1962, Algeria made significant progress toward developing its human and physical infrastructure, as well as a vigorous and diversified hydrocarbon sector, and reduced income and gender inequalities", it has nevertheless failed to sustain a regular developmental pace especially after the oil crises of 1986 and 1988. Decision-makers were compelled to introduce liberal reforms which tightened restrictions in other areas and generated shortages of both locally produced and imported goods and services.[304] Clearly, the historical background is elided in the Facebook post under scrutiny because what seems to matter most for the rhetor is his 'burning' present situation as an Algerian citizen exposed to a seemingly never-ending political immobilism with the then president Adbelaziz Boutaflika's announcement of his candidacy for a fifth term despite his declining health and waning popularity. Although no direct reference is made to the Hirak Movement as a political contestation of the latter's declaration, the date of the post (June 2019) could be considered as a solid contextual device framing my reading. At this juncture, one may pause and ask, what connection is there between a colonial archive-extracted photograph of the city of Algiers, a cliché featuring 1950 Dubai under British rule, the Hirak movement, and the Facebook post author's condition of involuntary immotility? Through his photographic collage—achieved here by bringing two different photos within the same present space-time—the content creator connects the colonial past with the neo-colonial present to articulate his anti-colonial and anti-authoritarian regime critique. This spirit of contestation also draws attention to the continuity between the material (the urban protests) and the symbolic (the online invitation to challenge the immobilising conjuncture) mediated by a digital(ised) trace throwing back to a distant past,

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[302] Algeria covers an area of 2,381,741 square kilometres, making it the world's tenth largest nation by area, and the largest country in Africa, more than 200 times as large as the continent's smallest country, The Gambia.
[303] Algeria ranks 9th among the richest countries in Africa by GDP as of 2023 (Capmad, 2023).
[304] LaFramboise et al., (1998: 63).

as if to ask rhetorically, what has (really) changed since the end of colonial domination? Have we not been frozen in time? Upon initial inspection, the photographs may not be instantly viewed as cohesive with the feeling of '*harga*', which, in this particular context, refers to the 'searing' pain experienced by the digital content sharer in the face of a haunting and sickening economic and political inertia despite popular calls for reform. In fact, the link between past and present is only inferred through the melancholic line "*al-baladou al-waḥid aladhi madhihi afdhalou min ḥadhirihi*"—written in Modern Standard Arabic—[the only country whose past is better than its present] sitting below the photographic illustration, which features an industrialised Algiers under French colonial rule with tall buildings and carved portals—marks of (so-called) civilisation and urban progress. The somewhat regretful tone underlying the rhetor's words is signalled by the two sad emojis demarcating the end of the sentence.

However, it is important to add that interpreting his message as conveying a sense of nostalgia to the colonial past would be a misreading for it would entail a self-inflicted symbolic violence that starkly contradicts the spirit of digital defiance and resistance that (prospective) *harraga* attempt to articulate as a counter-response to their condition of state-induced immobilism and neo-colonial economic bordering evoked earlier. Instead, it yields two possible interpretations. The first could be that the seemingly 'ordered' past projected in the monochromatic image showing the vibrancy and the dynamism of French Algiers' city life is presented in sinisterly ironic terms as if suggesting that the colonial past was more 'endurable' than that of the postcolonial/neo-colonial present. Indeed, in Maghrebi culture, one way of amplifying the gravity of a lamentable situation involves invoking a more extreme scenario, suggesting that the latter is comparatively easier to cope with than the former. Another possible reading could be that Algerian iconography collectors and sharers, often tend to ascribe new meanings to "the objects and images of a vanished French Algeria" (Houati, 2016, np.)[305] by deploying a mythological or phantasmagorical approach that completely detaches these remaining artefacts from their brutal colonial context.[306] Thus, digital content producers like the admin of the '*harga and al- ghorba people DZ*' Facebook page as well as online recipients, have the power to unload and reload these appropriated colonial clichés with meaning (thanks to the affordances of social media) and in doing so, mobilise new (counter-)narratives around them. It is also reasonable to argue that for the purposes of enacting a digitally mediated critique of the *status quo* and articulating his incapacity to evolve as a burdened and immotilised Algerian

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[305] My translation.
[306] Houati (2016: np).

citizen, the Facebook post author might have also sought to evoke a bygone past in nostalgic terms by deliberately removing the colonial backdrop from the staged photographs only leaving the date "1950" as a vague historical clue.

Whether intended to be a digital generator of nostalgic feelings towards a distant past isolated from the barbarity of French colonialism, or an invitation to reflect upon the biting irony that the colonial past (inferred by the bold black caption 'the year 1950') is more endurable than the oppressive neo-colonial present, the shared image of French Algiers is an extra-linguistic means through which internet users can abash their inept and immotilising government. A paratextual discourse is equally implied here: from colonial times to the present of the (digital) enunciation (i.e., the sharing of the post under scrutiny), much seems to have remained *fixed* in place. From the oppressive politics of French colonialism to the contemporary neo-colonial bordering practices, both the Algerian government and a large portion of the Algerian people have found themselves trapped in an 'immobility orbit'— a condition that the latter seek to overcome, creating an intractable tension between their desire and their incapacity to migrate.

Further, what makes the rhetor even more disillusioned and perhaps even envious, is the fact that Dubai, which used to be a small port on the edge of the desert in the 1950s, has undergone massive changes as it 'benefited' from Western interventions,[307] which contributed (to a certain extent) in transforming it into one of the most 'modern-looking' Arab-Muslim cities in the world and a global metropolis. Put simply, had Algerians known how to harness some of the savoir-faire of the French and exclusively relied on their own resources (human and natural capital), Algeria might have evolved into a 'developed' (rather than remaining a 'developing') country. Notwithstanding the predominance of image over text, one possible narrative generated by this multimodal composition when analysed in light of the Facebook page thematic structure (*harga* and *ghorba*) and the Hirak context, revolves around the prevalent belief in Algerian society—especially among young people— that, should they be granted power and autonomy, they could emerge as active architects of history and initiators of radical change. Thus, feeling entrapped (and crippled) in an un-moving and alienating historical present despite social protest movements, the rhetor appropriates colonial clichés, dis-places their initial meaning and function and re-writes history from his bordered perspective. In so doing, he claims authority as the reproducer of those images and creates a space of contestation wherein social media users can push the conversation *forward* in spite of the government's attempts at silencing people's

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[307] I am particularly referring to the significant contribution of British engineers and architects, like John R. Harris and Tom Wright among many others, in 'modernising' Dubai.

dissensus discourse as manifested in the then ongoing street protests. As a digitalised photo-story, the Facebook post dislocates temporal and spatial borders and effaces boundaries between diasporic and 'home' communities by inviting them to set alternative historical imaginaries into motion in the fluid space of the internet.

Although non-exhaustive, the multimodal ensembles analysed in this sub-section offer insightful glimpses into some of *harga* dreamers' individuated re-conceptualisations of borders and subversive re-configurations of *harga*. The latter is polysemic and encompasses different affective states, namely the feeling of being '*maħgour*', i.e., oppressed, silenced and marginalised, as well as the condition of being 'turned into ashes'—or 'burnt up' by necropolitical regimes which slowly 'kill' them by blocking the routes of self-betterment, impeding their access to basic needs and services, depriving them of the right to lead a decent life, and hence turning them into "*des sans-destin*".[308]

Through multimodal semiotic orchestration and a mixture of Classical and Dialectical Arabic expression, online content creators append new meanings to their experiences of immotility, engage in decolonial critique, and legitimise their desire to flee utter poverty and political oppression. As a counter-discursive space that grants these content sharers a certain degree of safety through the option of false profile creation, Facebook becomes a stage wherein the first act of their subversive *harga* performance takes place. Indeed, as M'charek (2020) and Abderrezak (2016) contend, *harga* begins with the feeling of dis-belonging to and out-of-placedness in the *harga* dreamers' 'motherland', which (paradoxically) nourishes their desire to "cut the umbilical cord" (Hadfi, 2015: 12).[309] *Harga* then, converts into an idea that progressively matures into a well-planned project, ultimately culminating in radical action. Although the multimodal constructions examined above evoke a large palette of emotions, ranging from despair and rage to resistance and resilience, they nonetheless avoid sensationalist discourse. Through the communication of heterogeneous affective expressions, digital content creators succeed in re-humanising the multifaceted figure of the *maħgoor*/*maħroog*/*harrag*, and in denouncing the inhumane policies enacted by the hegemonic actors who subjected them to multiple forms of neo-colonial violence. If their governments and overseas state actors, as the

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[308] "*Sans Destin*"—the title of Kamel Aflah Bouayed's 2004 novel centred on the *harga* phenomenon in Algeria—constitutes a word play that merges '*sans-papiers*' (undocumented) and '*clandestin*'. My use of this phrase in this context also alludes to Franz Fanon's (2004) expression 'the wretched of the earth' reflecting how would-be *harraga* view themselves in their immotilising source environments.

[309] Translated from French.

idiom goes, 'slam doors on their hopes'[310] and police the borders, they cannot, however, surveil the gates of their imagination or deny them virtual access to the Euro-Eldorado. The following sub-section, therefore, specifically examines *harga* dreamers' voyages *in situ*.

5.2.2 *'Neither here, nor there': Harga dreamers' motionless journeys*

As an oxymoronic construction, the phrase 'moving without moving', can be apprehended by examining *harga* dreamers' online negotiations and reconfigurations of space-time as well as their (extra) linguistic fusion and confusion of the deictic markers here/there and now/then as conveyed in their multimodal compositions. Interestingly, the English word 'there' and its Arabic equivalent '*hounak*' share a common feature as a simple elision of one letter from each, the (t) in '*t*here' and the (k) in 'houna*k*' produces a radical change in meaning. 'There' becomes 'here', and '*hounak*' becomes '*houna,*' and instantly the rhetor's direction and position in space and time alter drastically. The morphological texture of these words draws attention to the thin boundary between the two phenomena, suggesting that one can indeed be *here* and *there* at the same time—simultaneously *houna* and *hounak*–thus moving between two opposite poles through the power of the imagination. In this sense, the latter faculty enables prospective *harraga* to contemplate the possibility of 'burning' the liquid distance separating the South from the North before its ultimate materialisation as a necessary stage in their multi-layered journey. As such, waiting for the *harga* project to be initiated is an integral part of prospective *harraga*'s pre-migratory rituals reconfigured in their digitally mediated imaginary projections as an in-between space. Before engaging with Moroccan and Algerian *harraga*'s 'motionless journeys' as transposed onto digital spaces, I first unpack the interconnected notions of (im-)mobility and imagination.

Building on Pablo Picasso's contention that "everything [one] can imagine is real", Noel Salazar (2020: 768) reflects on the fluid conceptual frontier between human (im-)mobility and imagination arguing that both notions shape and are shaped by each other. Derived from the Latin verb '*imaginari*', meaning 'to picture oneself', the term imagination entails a self-reflexive activity whereby the imagining subject creates a set of images, or imagery, within a virtual private space (signalled by the reflexive pronoun 'oneself') from which imaginaries can be produced. As a "dynamic psychological process" (Salazar, 2020: 769), imagination implies

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[310] In Maghrebi dialects, "to shut the door on somebody's face" means denying them opportunity, assistance, basic needs and services, leaving them feeling abandoned and disenchanted.

putting images *into motion,* as it were*, or freezing*[311] them in a still aesthetic representation, and in doing so, generates fictive worlds, which in turn may impel one to move in space in a bid to materialise access to them. Accordingly, "imagination [can be defined as] an ever-changing embodied and creative activity both embedded in and forging the social and cultural world around" (Cangià & Zittoun, 2020, cited in Salazar, 2020: 769). The absence of mobility, however, does by no means imply absence of imagination. On the contrary, people who are deprived of the right to free cross-border movement—such as the *harga* dreamers— tend to be even more imaginatively productive than their mobile counterparts are, as they strive to transcend their condition of immobile spectators of a world in motion (Lécrivain, 2014).

On one of the *harga* Facebook pages I came across during my research, entitled '*harga w kol chi momken*' [*harga* and everything is (made) possible], the concept of possibility refers to two divergent outcomes in would-be *harraga*'s popular imaginaries: either through *harga* one can materialise their dreams by safely reaching European shores, or, conversely, they may lose their life in the depths of the Mediterranean Sea along the way. Thus, far from romanticising the illegalised cross-border journey, *harga* dreamers are usually aware of the perils awaiting them, as their Facebook walls are replete with expressions in Classical Arabic like "*moutachabithouna bi amali al-hijra, youqamirouna bi ḥayatihim*" [craving for a way out, they are willing to gamble with their lives]. As we shall see, digital content creators tend to construct themselves as ambivalent subjectivities through a 'threshold politics' blurring the line between an unhomely 'home' and an unknown elsewhere. Indeed, despite the visual poetics of their representations of their journeys *in situ*, would-be *harraga* often reflect on the possibility to migrate in realistic terms. This realism is nevertheless strictly informed by their belief in '*maktub*' [destiny] (Mastrangelo, 2018). To elucidate, religious realism is here understood as a set of beliefs and claims inspired by Islamic epistemology (namely the Qur'an and the Hadith), which are construed (by devout Muslims) as being grounded in 'objective-reality'. Put differently, they are not merely viewed as subjective or symbolic interpretations of divinely revealed truths, but as existing independently from human perception. It is through this particular lens that I read *harga* dreamers' virtual projections of their motionless trips.

Would-be *harraga*'s journeys revolve primarily around negotiating the boundary between immobility and mobility, hence the fragile hyphen separating or rather anchoring them. If read from the perspective that online spaces are digital 'stages' in the first place, the *harga*

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[311] My Emphasis.

dreamer, as performer, is essentially an im-mobile figure that burns spatio-temporal borders and in so doing, instantly evaporates or momentarily vanishes from the 'real' by putting clock time on hold and drifting in the seas of his fiery imagination (Fig. 11) as exemplified in the post below:

Fig 11. 'We will reach (you), Europe—with or without visa. I want to 'burn the sea' (that separates us).

This remastered photograph posted on the Facebook page "*Al hijra mina Al-Jazaer*" [migration from Algeria] 12 June 2016, features a young man wearing a hat backwards and casual clothes facing a sunset view of the Mediterranean Sea and pointing with his finger to its Northern shores. In this aesthetic representation, the subject is foregrounded and is thus the focal point of the recipient's attention, whereas Europe is portrayed from his angle of vision as both a fixed point in space and a fixation, i.e., an obsession translated by the caption in white and bold font placed at the centre of the frame which reads, "*ħab naħrag*" [I want to burn the border/ the sea]. Further, in the 'what's in your mind' rubric above the photo, the rhetor challenges Europe's immobility regime by boldly asserting in a rather laconic and unequivocal style, "*visa wala sans visa Europa jayin lik jayin…*!" [With or without visa, Europe we're coming to you no matter what!], articulated in a mix of Algerian *Darija* [dialect] and French, and typed in Roman letters. Bilingualism here is not merely a mark of linguistic identity—Arabic being Algeria's primary language, and French, its lingua franca—but rather a symbolic gesture whereby the rhetor burns lingual borders by strategically placing French and Algerian *Darija* words contiguously within the same space. This not only occurs at the level of the sentence, but also at the level of words as for instance, in "*Europa*", which is a combination of the French word 'Europe' and the Arabic word '*ouroba*'. Through translanguaging, the rhetor enacts a politics of language whereby he challenges the frontiers of both Arabic and French, creating an individualised hybrid expression

(Huc-Hepher, 2021). Thus, challenging the coloniality of the (French) language while at the same time refusing to exclusively use their native tongue, the Facebook post sharer wittingly de-links from both symbolic spaces and forges an interstitial realm wherein he subversively articulates a neither/nor logic, which extends to the visual space of the photograph.

This rebellious spirit of border defiance is reflected in the photographed subject's body language, i.e., through the stretching of his arm to the horizon, as if to surpass the watery distance separating him from the northern Mediterranean shores. In this sense, the subject recasts the edge of the sea where he is standing as a threshold that enables him to temporally transcend a now/here condition of inertia and access a fantasised elsewhere through the agency of his creative imagination. While in mainstream media representations the Mediterranean Sea, as established earlier, is often portrayed as hostile and cemetery-like, swallowing *harraga*'s bodies and spitting them out as unidentifiable corpses on indifferent shores, here it figures as a soothing and seductive force, serene and welcoming, inviting the *harga* dreamer to engage in reveries that transport him instantly away from his bordered condition, enabling him to navigate alternative imaginary spaces where borders are uplifted. Thus, the phrase "ħab naħrag" is also connotative of the subject's *will* to burn any referent that ensnares him in the monotonous and hell-like present, visually symbolised by the choice of thermal colours—red, orange, and yellow, which hyper-visually throw the recipient back to the fire metaphor around which *harga* discourse revolves.

Viewed together, these textual and visual signs work intermodally to communicate another facet of would-be *harraga*'s complex identities as both agentive and creative while awaiting an opportunity to embark on the sea journey to Europe. Interestingly, apart from the date of the Facebook post publication, the reference to Algeria as a pre-departure setting (evoked in the Facebook page name) and to Europe as the intended destination, the rhetor abstains from providing accurate spatio-temporal clues thereby leaving gaps in his multimodal construction. Arguably, the absence of time indicators and geographic referents, coupled with the anonymous identity of the photographed subject, call attention to the allegorical quality of this aesthetic representation. Indeed, three major elements are metaphorised in the photographic space: the man comes to symbolically represent *harga* dreamers and triggers a sense of self-identification in the audience, the sea functions as an ambivalent syndecdochal articulation of the Mediterranean 'border- bridge', whereas the opposite side stands for the *harrag*'s desired destination. Notwithstanding the complexity and the heterogeneity of *harraga*'s identities, these symbolic referents seem to be constants in their cross-border imaginaries as they run across

harga dreamers' multifarious digitally mediated photographed contemplative pauses. As digital therapy exercises, such 'extimate' posts are shared in a bid to invite a wide would-be *harraga* community (given that the page is publicly accessible) to collectively engage in a digitally enabled meditation of the *harga* project. It is important to add that the 'facilitators' of the illegalised cross-border act (this is how they are often viewed by would-be *harraga*) are also called '*harraga*', i.e., those who *enable* (as opposed to border agents who *dis-able* their access to mobility) the boat passengers to (successfully) burn the border given their knowledge of routes and their expertise in operating the vessel.[312] Although, to my knowledge, the word 'facilitator' whether in its dialectical or Classical Arabic translation is not used by would-be *harraga* in online platforms, they nonetheless inscribe their references to 'smugglers' within a larger religious discourse wherein Allah is invoked as 'a door opener'. Scrolling through the comment sections of some of the *harga* Facebook pages selected for this study, supplications such as "may Allah ease your journey" or "Oh Allah lighten our path and shorten the distance for us"[313] abound.

According to these digitally mediated cultural articulations, both the divine and the human should operate in tandem to make the *harga* act possible. Although the *harrag*-smuggler figure is not explicitly mentioned in the Facebook post under scrutiny, he is nonetheless alluded to in an elliptical fashion through the series of dots following the phrase "*ħab nahrag*". As public Facebook walls are highly interactive spaces, this statement could be read not only as an assertion of the subject's will to migrate but also as a call to the online community to 'fill in the blanks' by providing facilitators' contacts. Notwithstanding the public identity of these online spaces, conversations about future *harga* trips—often referred to euphemistically as "*mawsem el harga*" [*harga* season]—are common. Protected by the fictitiousness of fake profiles, *harraga*-smugglers often take part in these discussions via the comment section, which operates as a virtual chatroom inviting *harga* dreamers to reach out to them for more information regarding the cost of the journey, the set departure date, as well as the necessary preparations to make before the onset of the journey.

Shifting to the Moroccan context, similar multimodal digital representations of would-be *harraga*'s 'politics of im-mobility' also abound. In a post shared 8 June 2019 on the Facebook page '*Maroc Haraga 18*'(Fig. 12) featuring an image-text, the content creator appends new meanings to the concept of waiting in the context of pre-migration. Waiting is re-configured as

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[312] In Maghrebi dialects, the smuggler is also often referred to as '*rayes*' (captain).
[313] My translation.

an 'activity'—imaginative at its core—rather than a passive condition of hopelessness and powerlessness in the face of borders (Khosravi, 2020). In the text placed below the photograph, two key words carrying a religious connotation—'*irada*' [will] and '*sabr*' [patience]—illuminate my reading of the multimodal ensemble and endow the experience of waiting with a spiritual significance. However, before engaging with the meanings embedded within this photographic representation and its connection to the trope of motionless journey, it is crucial to examine its different components along with their metaphorical significance.

Fig 12. A *Harga* dreamer's 'wilful/wakeful waiting': "one day I will go to Europe… it's just a matter of time…With patience comes relief".

Captured from a low angle, the photo features a young man sitting on a dock with his arms raised and palms facing upwards—a symbolic gesture performed by Muslims when saying *dou3a*'[314] (supplication)—as he gazes out to the sea in daylight. Unlike the previously examined photograph, the horizon view is here concealed by a large ship, upon which is inscribed "Balearia and Fred. Olsen Express", which is the name of an inter-island ferry service based in the Canary Islands, Spain. The ferry represented in the photograph is part of the latter's large

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[314] In Islamic terminology, the word '*dou3a*' — derived from the Arabic verb '*da3a*' meaning to 'summon' or 'call out'—is an act of supplication through which devout Muslims seek to communicate with Allah. It is a deeply personal and immersive practice that allows the believer to express their hopes, fears, gratitude, and requests for guidance. It should be noted that in this study, the expression 'Islamic terminology' is used broadly to encompass language and concepts derived from the Qur'an, the Hadith, Islamic Jurisprudence (*Fiqh*), and other related fields. While more specific terms such as 'Qur'anic' or 'Hadith terminology' could be used in specialised contexts, 'Islamic terminology' here serves as an umbrella term for ease of reference.

fleet and operates between Tangiers and Tarifa. Only 17 nautical miles separate these two coastal cities despite being located on two different continents.

The photographed subject is casually dressed. He is wearing a cap backwards (like the one featured in the previous image), a fashion statement inspired by (American) hip-hop culture to communicate a sense of non-conformity and rebellious masculinity. On it, is embroidered in orange thread and capital letters the word 'NEW YORK' and on the back of his dark blue jacket is inscribed the word 'MOROCCO' in bold white letters, creating figure-ground contrast. At first glance, these graphic imprints may be overlooked, but upon scrutiny, they could be construed as powerful visual framing devices facilitating viewers' access to the meanings woven in the overall composition. Clearly, in this context, Morocco refers to the setting wherein the photograph was taken, serving as a reference to the young man's pre-migratory environment. 'New York', on the other hand, possibly designates his desired/ intended destination or, it might simply stand for the West (*al-Gharb*) in a more general sense. In this way, the geographic referent 'New York' plays a similar metonymic function as for instance, the statue of liberty emoji, which often figures in *harraga* Facebook posts when European countries like Spain, France and Italy are evoked as an all-encompassing visual symbol epitomising the notion of freedom from (would-be) *harraga*'s perspective. Returning to the apparel of the photographed subject, together the inscriptions 'Morocco' and 'New York' can be read as integral elements of a self-designed/chosen dress semiotics through which the subject projects his mental state onto his external appearance. Indeed, clothes as a sign-system (Barthes, 2013) reveal a great deal about people's self-perception and identity-(re)fashioning. By way of a mixture of non-linguistic and linguistic signs—i.e., his Western fashion-inspired attire and the words inscribed on it, respectively—the subject efficiently communicates complex meanings related to his condition of involuntary immobility. Viewers have momentary access to his shifting identity through both the way he '*carries himself*' and the ideas he *carries in his head*. Thus, 'carrying' Morocco, like a burden on his back, and conjuring up images of New York in his mind, the *harga* dreamer creatively destabilises the Western mind-body dichotomy and merges the 'real' with the fictive in one whole. As such, he enacts a 'threshold politics' that defies identity boundaries and geographic frontiers. In so doing, he alludes to a potential 'not yet' (Khosravi, 2020) while 'wakefully navigating' (Khosravi, 2020) an 'over there' lying beyond the vision-bordering ferry through his meditation of the possibility of crossing into an access-forbidden elsewhere. Being physically 'here,' seated on the edge of a dock in Tangiers, and metaphorically 'there' in the boundless worlds of his unbordered imagination, the photographed subject's

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politics of im-mobility is (re-)configured by creatively merging spaces and times and thereby experiencing, albeit temporarily, a sense of inter-placedness—a Morocco-in-New York/a New York-in- Morocco fused realms.

Corroborating this reading is the metaphorical significance of the wooden pier upon which the young man is sitting which is also an integral part of the larger web of symbols contained in this photographic representation. Connecting Earth and Sea, it functions as an in-between space wherein the viewer/subject can visually, physically and imaginatively experience the dynamics of movement and stationariness by witnessing for instance, the coming and going of transnationally mobile individuals, the in-flow and out-flow of goods as well as the departure and arrival of ships. Inspired perhaps by their *hypermobility* which stands in stark contrast to his burdened and '*hypomobile*' condition, the subject indulges in motionless trips mediated by his sailing imagination while beseeching Allah to answer his prayers.

As established earlier, underpinning would-be *harraga*'s border imaginaries is a complex matrix of religious beliefs and values that act as indispensable (para-)textual clues generating social and cultural meanings as well as elucidating complex socio-cultural realities. Accordingly, the concepts of will and patience become key constituents of a spiritual equation that results in perseverance, i.e., the capacity to keep *going/moving* despite the presence of obstacles. In his analysis of Tunisian *harraga*'s online discourse, Simon Mastrangelo (2018) points out that a rich religious repertoire underlies their articulations of *harga* imaginaries. Conspicuously, this discursive trend extends to both the Algerian and Moroccan digital contexts.

To further unpack the meanings inscribed in the rhetor's communicative act, it is crucial to reiterate the significant symbolic weight of the Qur'an and the Hadith in the construction of would-be *harraga*'s situated discursive realities. Indeed, patience and will operate here as hyperlinks that anchor the rhetor's discourse to a set of Islamic beliefs related to Allah's wisdom behind putting burdened subjects to the test of time. Although none of the *ayats* and Hadith citations are explicitly mentioned in the text adjoining the image, they are nevertheless threaded into its deeper structure and are hypertextually inferred. Indeed, a deconstructive discursive work here enables the unearthing of the various influences of Islam on the content creator's worldview and self-perception.

Deeply rooted in Islamic theology and philosophy, both notions of '*irada*' and '*sabr*' carry profound spiritual and moral significance. Divine will (*al-iraada al-illahyya*) is defined as Allah's absolute control over everything in the universe and closely relates to the concept of 'destiny' (*qadar*)—an aspect upon which I elaborate in chapter six. Human will (*Al-iraada al-*

insanyya), on the other hand, relates to the idea that Man is endowed with the freedom to make choices but should act in accordance with the word of Allah and Islamic teachings. Further, '*sabr*' is a highly esteemed value in Islam. For instance, Qur'anic verses such as "Allah is on the side of the patient" or "O' you who have believed, seek help through patience and prayer" (*Sourat Albaqara*/the Cow: 153) are part and parcel of Maghrebis' common parlance and are infixed in their belief and value system. Even though they do not surface in their exact form, i.e., as verbatim citations in the multimodal ensemble under scrutiny, they are nonetheless conveyed in personalised ways. Patience is presented as the 'key' to unlocking a life bound by immobility (to recall the padlock motif evoked earlier), allowing the *harga* dreamer to transcend (at least temporarily) the confines of pre-migration stagnation.

According to the Hadith, for instance, Prophet Muhammed is reported to have said: "Know that patience is at the first strike of a calamity"[315]—a statement that glorifies the patient subject and calls upon them to be forbearing for "Allah would not be pleased with any reward for them less than paradise".[316] Thus, within this religious framing, patience is both a virtue and a manifestation of the faith in Allah's power and will. Embedded in the rhetor's inner discursive layers, these verses and Hadith fragments conjunctively communicate a moral lesson that reminds (Muslim) would-be *harraga* that the more perseverant they are, the closer they are drawn to Allah, and the likelier the gates of '*faraj*' (relief) will open before their eyes.

Whether the photographed subject was the one who shared the post remains a matter of speculation, but what is nevertheless clear is the positive tone echoed in the overall composition. The narrative that emerges from the interconnection of all the aforementioned discursive and visual modes, along with the meanings they come to generate, could be summed up as follows: assisted by Allah's divine intervention and fuelled by his *will to wait*, the subject is confident that sooner or later his staged 'New York fiction' will become reality, as conveyed in the text accompanying the photograph, which translates as:

> I know that you lack the means to migrate…that you have no boat to carry you (to the other shore) nor friends to assist you. However, in such circumstances, it is your *will* and *patience* that matter most… the day *will* come when, without a doubt, you *will* be able to leave [this country].

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[315] Al-Bukhari, M.I (n.d). *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Vol.1-9. Available at [PDF] Sahih al-Bukhari (Arabic-English) Vol. 1-9 : Darussalam : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive [Accessed 30 July 2022].
[316] Ibid.

Interestingly, in Modern Standard Arabic, the word 'irada', derived from the verb 'a-ra-da', encapsulates the concepts of desire, intention and will altogether and, therefore, connotes both volition and purpose. This articulation of 'irada' is salient in other Facebook posts spotted during my searches (e.g. Fig. 13), which reveals another facet of would-be/ or rather *will-be harraga*'s complex identities as 'wilful subjects' (Ahmed, 2014) armed with a sense of determination despite their present disability to migrate. Accordingly, *harga* dreamers inscribe their sense of 'wilfulness' within a productive waiting 'mean-time' before embarking on their *harga* journey.

Fig 13. "I want/will migrate."

Through the motionless journey motif and a hope-inspiring terminology, the desire to migrate transforms into a will to act. The rhetor is addressing the *harga* dreamers' online community and calling upon them not to succumb to the evils of despair for the solution to their immobile/immobilised condition is to wait patiently and *actively* (Fig. 12). Active waiting is configured as a subjective temporal praxis (Khosravi, 2020), but one that is primarily grounded in spirituality. It is conveyed through a call to believe in both divine and human will and engage in prayer and *dou3a* (supplication) while awaiting a solution to one's border 'sickness'. As such, it is defined as a "state of consciousness" (Khosravi, 2020) sustained by the belief in the certainty of 'postponed' relief (*faraj*). The notion of delay—which has been conceptualised as a power mechanism deployed by Western border regimes (Jacobsen et al., 2020) that devalue under-privileged and 'Global South' people's time—seems to be subverted here, as the Facebook post author imbues the continuous present with meaning and conveys his certitude

about the potential concretisation of the *hrig* act via his (deliberate) use of the future tense ("*sa ya'ti yawmon…*"/the day will come). The tension that arises between the rhetor's present 'stuckedness' and his imagined future mobility seems to bring about a third force—hope— which momentarily expunges the now/then and t/here boundaries. Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that the rhetor's text embeds his assertion of (the basic political) "right to hope" (Khosravi, 2017: 15). Moreover, the rhetor's 'religious realism' and agentive temporal (re-)appropriation become forms of resistance that defy the State's unequal distribution of "better future potentialities" (Khosravi, 2017), hence the (religious) politics of waiting in times of involuntary immobility/immotility.

Reading between the lines, postponing one's migration project owing to the lack of financial means is not experienced as a problematic situation but rather as being part of Allah's plan. This stubbornness to overcome borders "one day" clearly resonates with the words of the previously examined content creator—"Europa we're coming to you no matter what!" Another intertextual allusion interlaced in the rhetor's discursive act is the Qur'anic verse from *Sourat 'A-sharħ'* [the Relief] which states that behind every delay there is goodness, "*inna ma3a al-3osri yosrah*" (verse 6) [for indeed, after hardship comes ease]. Formulated differently, from the perspective of the *harga* dreamer, if Allah is making them wait, it is because He will reward them with more than they have asked. The use of the future tense in the rhetor's post is thus interconnected with an unwavering belief in divine justice. Subsequently, risk-taking becomes less daunting and the future less dark (Mastrangelo, 2018).

Additionally, sharing a photo where he (or another would-be *harrag*) is supplicating Allah to open the doors of His mercy could be read as a call to the members and followers of the page to engage in a collective *dou3a* performance in an informal digital setting (as opposed to the formal space of the mosque), as an expression of in-group solidarity through which their supplication can be amplified. Indeed, a shared belief among Muslims is that Allah is more likely to respond to their prayers if they unite and invoke Him together in humility and sincerity. As demonstrated in Part One, in both Morocco and Algeria, imams tend to instrumentalise religion to deter would-be *harraga* from undertaking the crossing, contending that *hrig* is both a transgression of the word of Allah and of state laws. As such, mosques have functioned as hegemonic sites wherein the *harrag* figure is "symbolically immobilised" (Smets, 2019) within the boundaries of a scapegoating discourse. For instance, in Friday sermons, imams supplicate Allah to guide these 'disoriented' and 'naïve' souls to the right path. Arguably, as a counter-response, *harga* dreamers appropriate digital platforms to articulate an alternative religious

discourse that modifies the semantic parameters of the former supplication, repositioning the 'right path' as the sea lying ahead of them. Accordingly, this will "to stray from the official paths" (Ahmed, 2014: 21)—the ones traced by hegemonic discourse makers in this context—enables would-be *harraga* to "create desire lines, faint marks on the earth"[317] that disrupt the physical and symbolic boundaries imposed by state actors. As such, these individuals engage in a form of digitally mediated resistance that is not merely about crossing geographic borders, but also about contesting the conceptual demarcations that define who is entitled to move, to belong, and to claim space. By deviating from the prescribed routes, *harga* dreamers carve out new possibilities for autonomy and agency, redefining mobility as a dynamic and self-determined process.

Harga is thus re-conceptualised by (re-)using the same religious language deployed by hegemonic actors but is reframed as a form of '*faraj*'/relief' (expected to come with the adoption of alternative paths), an interpretation which radically undermines the normative construction of *harga* as a suicide attempt. '*Harga Morocco 18*' (among many other public Facebook pages) figures in this particular context as a parallel space of (virtual) communal prayers that defies the politicised religious discourse generated in mosques around unauthorised migration. To reinforce coherence, a sense of visual-textual unity is established through the discursive complementarity of the photographed subject's body language—the *dou3a* hand gesture—and the religious diction that the rhetor mobilises in his statement. Thus, as a form of both online motivational discourse and a digital articulation of "an oppositional gaze" (hooks, 1989), the multimodal ensemble under examination (re-)instrumentalises and hypertextually gestures to the Qur'an and Hadith-mediated Islamic values and teachings and re-configures pre-*harga* waiting as a political act.

From the perspective of AOM, this set of subjective and subversive practices are integral parts of would-be migrants' creativity, which essentially consists in inscribing self-designed meanings to their im-mobility by overturning borders through their dynamic (decolonial) imaginaries. Transformed into spaces of socio-political contestation as well as mobile platforms wherein migration-themed reveries find multimodal shape, *harga* Facebook pages offer renewed insights into the meaning of borders, mobility and its antonyms through a creative staging of motionless journeys. These virtual voyages are twofold and represent a distinct

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[317] Ahmed (2014: 21).

chapter in the larger *harga* odyssey narrative.[318] The bi-dimensionality of these digital representations relates to both the photographed subjects (and, by extension, the authors of the multimodal composition) and to the audiences who view them. While the former engage in flight through a therapeutic contemplation of the Mediterranean Sea and a temporary spatio-temporal suspension, the latter plunge in an (in-)finite process of speculation and interpretation while moving across the multiple grids of meaning. Whether journeying motionlessly or waiting in motion, *harga* dreamers—be they Facebook post authors and/or admins, photographed subjects or all at once—engage in a series of 'sleepless'(Khosravi, 2020) online navigation, which momentarily detaches them from the borders of 'the real'. This idea is further reinforced in the multimodal post by the airplane motif and waving hand emoji simultaneously closing the text and opening interpretative possibilities regarding the forthcoming phases of the *harrag*'s journey.

Furthermore, the trope of the journey *in situ* could also be examined through the conceptual prism of "counter-mapping" (Casas-Cortes et al., 2018; Tazzioli, 2015). While the cultural expressions of would-be *harraga*'s motionless trips analysed above may be read as creative ways of resisting mapped borders, there are other more explicit digitally mediated illustrations of counter-mapping that warrant thorough examination. The idea of digital counter-mapping is here understood as an ensemble of online communicative practices whereby content creators share their subversive re-conceptualisations of the (neo-)colonial cartographic order by using personalised maps as forms of representation. Defined within a larger decolonial reading of borders that deploys AOM as a theoretical framework, counter-mapping refers to both *harraga*'s (re-)creation (and subsequent adoption) of alternative maps that challenge hegemonic border infrastructures, and operates as a conceptual lens that 'captures' this sense of agency, and thereby enables a rigorous reading of such practices (Tazzioli, 2015). Although most of the current scholarly literature on migrants' counter-mapping practices has tended to focus on their multifarious articulations during 'the on the road' phase (Casas-Cortes & Cobarrubias, 2018) or in post-migratory spaces (Tazzioli, 2015), here I specifically look at their online-shared symbolic representations during the pre-*harga* stage of their journey. As established earlier, the latter concept is holistic in that it accounts for the different phases of *harga* from its conception to its (ultimate) materialisation. I thus read would-be *harraga*'s digital cartographic illustrations as being an integral part of their trips *in situ* and as virtual articulations of a 'geography from

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[318] The word 'odyssey' is used in this context to specifically refer to *harraga*'s journeys as part of an existential quest that is transformative in essence rather than a reference to the romantic concept of adventure.

below'. As in the digital sources analysed earlier in this sub-section, the concept of 'wakeful/wilful navigation' as a form of politicised waiting praxis is further expanded upon by specifically foregrounding *harga* dreamers' 'banalisation' of the hegemonic cartographic (b)order.

Following the analytical method deployed by Henk van Houtum & Rodrigo Bueno Lacy (2020) in their study of Frontex cartographies of migration, I examine the selected maps' visual composition by specifically looking into iconological signs like "arrows, colours, borders, […] inscriptions, projection, orientation" (van Houtum & Bueno Lacy, 2020: 197) as well as their subject matter, which in the selected cases, revolves around the conceptual nuances of the *harga*. In the context of the present study, the maps mobilised by digital content creators can be construed "both as discourse[s] in [themselves] as well as broader cultural manifestation[s] (Müller 2011; cited in van Houtum & Bueno Lacy, 2020: 197) serving as resourceful entry points into would-be *harraga*'s geographic imaginaries (Souiah et al., 2018).

In a YouTube music video titled "*Ajmal oghniah 3an al-harga fi al-3alam*"[319] [the most captivating *harga* song in the world], shared 15 June 2018 (Fig. 14), a series of stock images of iconic European landmarks, a hand-drawn map of the distance separating Oujda (Morocco) from Paris, and a photograph of a couple wearing a British flag-themed outfit are used to stage a fictional cross-border story of a would-be *harrag*. A Rai[320] song accompanying the slides of images further aestheticises the visual storytelling process and imbues it with emotional depth, thereby immersing the viewer/listener in the intimate imaginary world of the *harga* dreamer. The images appear like frozen narrative scenes, each telling—in its own fashion—a key episode of the *harga* journey from its (imagined) onset to its positive outcomes. The staged plot structure of this imaginary journey narrative defeats expectations through its confusing non-linearity and its subversion of traditional story elements. One might first expect to see the (counter-)map as part of the audio-visual story's exposition as an efficient orientation device, instead the narrative

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[319] The video is available at: https://youtu.be/EW7Gms6DzgY?si=DjCeqq8OWIJi_D11 [Accessed 20 May 2022].

[320] Rai (also spelt '*Raï*' in French) is a popular Algerian music genre that emerged in the early 20th century in the coastal city of Oran. Its name, drawn from the Algerian Arabic term 'ray' (راي), meaning 'opinion' or 'advice', reflects its origins as a medium for personal and social expression. By the 1970s, the genre had become closely associated with youth culture, as performers adopted the titles '*cheb*' (young man) and '*chebba*' (young woman) to signal a generational break from older '*cha3bi*'[traditional popular songs] singers. Characterised by its treatment of themes such as love, social pressures, disillusionment, and the desire for personal freedom, Rai music often reflects the lived experiences of marginalised urban youth. In recent years, it has been appropriated by *harraga* as a sonic backdrop for videos documenting their journeys across the Mediterranean Sea. This dimension will be explored in more detail in chapter six.

opens with a photo-shopped image featuring a luxury tourist bus riding close to the foot of the Eiffel Tour via which the dreamer projects himself in a fantasised over-there.

As the visual narrative unfolds, a photograph of a smiling young boy standing on a rock, captured from a ground-level angle, emerges followed by what appears to be a childlike cartographic sketch that visualises the different stages of the would-be *harrag*'s trip in a rather schematic fashion. The story ends with a sequence of remastered photos featuring both post and pre-migration settings as if projecting a visual stream of consciousness that defies normative conceptions of topos and chronos. What drew my attention most in this multimodal composition was particularly the visual illustration of the would-be *harrag*'s unauthorised itinerary, its flagrant simplicity, as well as its ludic aesthetics. On a white piece of paper, an uneven wavy-lined square delineates the illustrator's anamorphic cartographic content.

Fig 14. Still taken from a YouTube-shared video of a *harga* song, including a ludic (counter-)map tracing the journey from Oujda to Paris.

The latter is composed of both linguistic and non-linguistic signs including a matchstick man, different transportation means (land, water, and air), the Eiffel tower, as well as a series of indexical signs—namely dashed arrows—along with the names of countries and cities like Morocco, Oujda, Nador, and Paris, respectively. The *harrag*'s journey is expected to begin at a fixed point in space, in this case Morocco, signalled by the position of the stick figure (referred to simply as 'moi' [me] in this cartographic (dis)order) a few dots away from what appears to be a bus stop in Oujda. Following the vertical and onward movement of the arrows, the viewer understands that the following station is a port located at the uppermost edge of Nador—a coastal city serving as a departure hub for *harraga*—symbolised by a multi-deck ship upon which is inscribed the name of a Spanish ferry service company 'Armas' (short for Naviera

Armas). Interestingly, Cruise ships like Armas and the like (Fig. 15) are among the most salient visual symbols shared by *harraga* on Facebook to convey their burning desire and wilfulness to migrate.
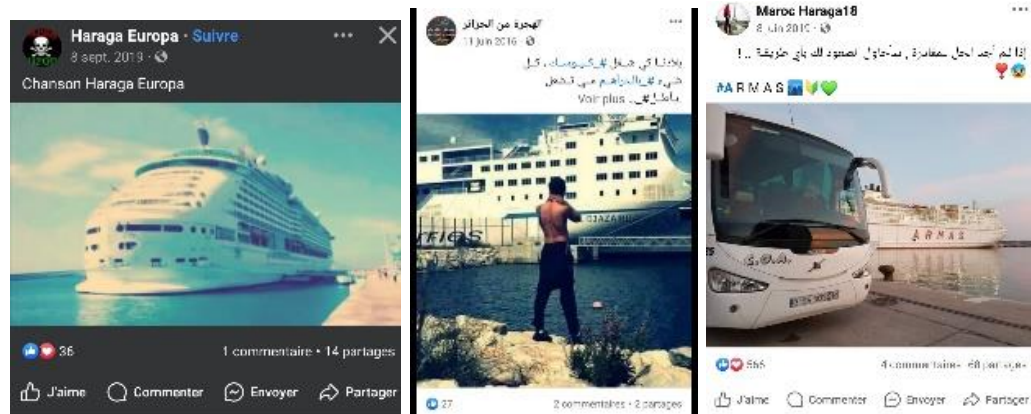

Fig 15. Photos featuring cruise ships are widespread across Algerian and Moroccan *harga* Facebook pages.

Despite the differences in their aesthetic layout, internal structure and symbolic and material functions, cruise ships and *pateras* become paradoxically synonymous in *harga* dreamers' counter-border representations. Put differently, the 'precarious' boat journey envisaged by the would-be *harrag* is playfully configured as a pleasure-inducing cruise whereby the illegalised 'journeyer' momentarily assumes the role of a tourist in his imaginary counter-mapping performance. According to the illustrator's map, the cruise ship is then expected to dock at a port near the Eiffel Tower. However, the normative itinerary of the Armas ferry usually starts in Nador and ends in Almeria, Spain and not in Paris; or begins from the port of Tangiers and ends in Algesiras. The map therefore elides the *harrag*'s inter-European border crossing by creating an alternative route that takes him directly from Nador to Paris, hence 'burning' the crossing phases in between. On the left side of the drawing, the illustrator drew an alternative route in the form of a shortcut that may enable the 'journeyer' to reach Paris in a much briefer stretch of time symbolised by an airplane that is a few dashes away from the desired destination. No return seems to be envisioned as the *harga* dreamer intends to settle in his beloved Paris, outlined on the map in the shape of a red heart shape. What further corroborates this reading is the conspicuous absence of a Paris-Nador return route. Notwithstanding its apparent lucidness, the map could be read as a decolonial counter-cartography wherein the illustrator and by extension the audio-visual narrative creator enact a critique of the coloniality of borders and the subsequent neo-colonial im-mobility dynamics shaping contemporary migrations, which compel the involuntarily immobile to opt for illegalised routes. The spatio-temporal violence

(Jacobsen et al., 2020) performed by (North-)African-European border regimes is configured visually by juxtaposing the short flight itinerary with the longer and more time-consuming land and sea trajectories that the would-be *harrag* is compelled to follow owing to his undocumented status. In the limited spatiality of an idiosyncratically drawn map, the illustrator tells recipients a short story wherein the would-be *harraga*'s complex 'matryoshka journey' is over-simplistically rendered in terms of exit, transit, and entry points, followed by a cluster of dashed arrows condensing the long distance between departure and arrival.

Indeed, the subversive quality of this cartographic (counter-)representation resides not only in its provocative over-simplicity but also, and more importantly, in its banalisation of the *hrig* act despite the violence of borders. Conspicuously, the transition from the land to the sea route is fluid—represented by the uninterrupted dash sequence— to suggest that the *harrag* can potentially bypass border checkpoints. Additionally, the map lacks accuracy and strategically *un-represents* the multifarious spaces and symbols, which are usually infixed in the normative cartographic discourse like labels, legend and grid. Rudimentary and subversively minimalistic, unambiguous and creatively inaccurate, the illustrator's map not only betrays expectations as the *harga* journey has often been depicted as perilous and life-threatening (as I shall demonstrate in the following chapter) but also debunks the 'Fortress Europe' myth (Casas-Cortes et al., 2015) that "suggests a misleading image of infallibility for the transnational and coordinated surveillance of the European borders" (898) as the Eiffel Tower seems clearly to be 'at reach'.

Through these aesthetic choices, the illustrator invites viewers to reflect on the absurdity and artificiality of the neo-colonial cartographic order, as borders are (initially) imaginary lines delineated by hegemonic actors on paper to divide, alienate and exploit a constructed 'Other' deemed inferior and uncivilised. Thus, materialised by hegemonic actors in terms of a here/there and now/then (forward/backward people) dichotomy, borders be they spatial or temporal, are here rendered invisible as one of the *harraga*'s practices is primarily the 'burning' of any impediment they encounter on their way to freedom. One might also add that the very process of sketching the map is itself a journey *in situ*, as with every line and arrow the illustrator moves across the space of the paper, which operates as an intersection point wherein the material (the act of drawing) and the symbolic (the imaginary crossing of spaces) fuse— hence yielding a neither here nor there logic.

As an epistemic articulation of a geographic imaginary 'from below', this over-simplistic topographic representation of *harga* itineraries ludically communicates an alternative mode of knowing and being in the world. Notwithstanding its iconological lucidity, it functions

as a powerful visual statement that interrogates the violence of borders by communicating a parodic spatial narrative that mimics (the much more detail-oriented) google maps and elaborate cartographies produced by and circulating among border authorities, decision-makers, media platforms, and security tanks (Casas Cortes & Cobarrubias, 2018) or those used by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency Frontex to track "undocumented mobilities" (van Houtum & Bueno Lacy, 2020: 201). The hyperbolic bold red arrows signaling massive inflow of 'undocumented' migrants, the 'quarterly risk analysis' and 'overview of (alleged) threats' sections, which figure as the key constituents of the visual/textual layout of hegemonic maps,[321] are radically destabilised by the illustrator who (also) exaggeratedly, yet ironically, depicts *harga* as encompassing a simple (but time-consuming) bus and boat ride to cross into France. Neither the stick figure, nor the character of the arrows suggests risk or danger. In counter-mapping the hegemonic cartographic order, the illustrator thus invalidates—in a simple and witty manner—Europe's excessive fear of the (post-colonial) 'Other'.

Being a version among others of "the canonical variation of a much larger and persistently recurrent [visual] discourse (Foucault 1981, 56–58) [,] [t]he 'Frontex map' has become the 'normal' and ultimately hegemonic cartographic representation of its subject matter: the geopolitics of undocumented migration to the EU" (van Houtum & Bueno Lacy, 2020: 198). With its dehumanising and flat grid, it visually normalises and essentialises "a self-made European (b)order in which those who cross are pictured […] as abnormal law-breakers".[322] Thus, as a counter-gaze, the illustrator's map challenges the dominant European cartographic narratives around unauthorised migration being a threat to national integrity and identity as the would-be *harrag*'s purpose is not to plot revenge against the former coloniser through (so-called) 'invasion' and ideological dissemination but to *simply* visit the Eiffel Tower and live in his 'beloved' Paris.

Through the use of a multimodal *mise en abîme*, the rhetor places the map at the centre of the audio-visual narrative. In the video sequence, it emerges after the photograph of the young boy standing on a rock (whom according to the song lyrics dreams of going to Almeria and Paris) and right before the photo of a woman gazing at the Eiffel Tower with the caption "one day my dream *will* come true", which draws attention to the fictionality of the entire audio-visual composition. Clearly the photos have been imported from other social media platforms and have been re-arranged in a fragmentary fashion perhaps to reflect the tormented psyche of

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[321] Ibid.
[322] Ibid., p. 201.

the narrator/singer (and, by extension, that of the content creator), and to visually stage his virtual here/there movement as the song plays in the background. Therefore, the strategic emplacement of the map between the two photographed settings (pre- and post-migratory, respectively), draws attention to the intermediary phase that the *harga* dreamer should undergo to actualise his migratory project (Fig. 16). The places and subjects featuring in the video sequence are part and parcel of the would-*harrag*'s allegorical migration representation, or an extended audio-visual metaphor of his journey *in situ*. Through this multimodal combination, the content creator disrupts the visual economy of contemporary borderscapes, ludically oversimplifies the *hrig* act while puncturing dominant spatial narratives that frame illegalised migrant movements within a hyperbolic securitarian discourse.

Maps also figure on Moroccan *harga* Facebook pages in subversive forms and serve to articulate their counter-mapping imaginaries and practices. By illustration, in a post shared 9 June 2019 (Fig. 16), the admin of '*Maroc Haraga 18*' invites followers to engage in storytelling and share their subjective experiences of *harga* with reference to a map featuring EU countries, each symbolised with a flag. Although his statement is written in the affirmative mode, it could nonetheless be translated as follows: "could each of you tell us which EU-ropean country you found the most difficult to endure, or conversely, which country you would recommend as a viable destination (recognising, of course, that provision is ultimately in the hands of Allah)? Dear brothers, let us share the story our struggle together." Here, the map to which the backhand index finger emoji points is a freely downloadable visual source initially used as an illustration for the content of the official EU website of the 'European Network For Rural Development'.[323] As such, a clear dis-placement of context was enacted by the rhetor. As elucidated by its mission statement, the website functions as a hub for information exchange related to rural development policy, programmes, projects and other initiatives.[324] Thus, as an integral part of its visual design, the map functions as an additional modal structure enabling the communication of the website's objectives. The map designer added hyperlink-flags of the different EU countries to invite a clearly defined target audience—researchers, policy-makers, stakeholders interested in rural issues—to navigate specialist-oriented content regarding partnership agreements, and network support units.

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[323] Web page available at: Connect with rural Europe | The European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) (europa.eu) - Search [Accessed 30 January 2024].
[324] Ibid.

Fig 16. Ludic re-purposing of rural map of Europe

Accordingly, the initial purpose of the cartographic reference that the admin shared is not an invitation to the (would-be) *harraga* to "connect with rural Europe", but rather to facilitate the above mentioned stakeholders' access to each EU country's rural policy overview page by a simple click on a flag. As such, by strategically dissociating the 'map of Rural Europe' from its original context and sharing it on the wall of a public *harga* Facebook page, the admin articulates "a counter-mapping standpoint" (Tazzioli, 2015: 3) that creatively 'bypasses' and subsequently alters the epistemic content of the ENRD website. In this newly created interactive context, the "click on a country flag to connect with rural Europe" caption transforms into a "tell us your migration story" digital game wherein each recipient copies and pastes an EU country flag[325] in the comment box, shares his testimony, and offers advice to would-be *harraga* as illustrated by the screen shot below (Fig. 17):

Fig 17. "If you want to live in Europe, opt for Switzerland; the Netherlands, or the Scandinavian countries, elsewhere prepare for nothing less than severe hardships": A *harrag*'s testimony shared in the comment section below the 'Map of Rural Europe post'.

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[325] The Facebook comment section can be accessed at https://www.facebook.com/share/1AREcHDuoF/

Scrolling through the comments, one can easily notice the recurrence of words such as '*mou3anet*' [suffering], '*ħadh*' [luck], and '*sabr*' [patience], which make up (would-be) *harraga*'s collective schema of concepts and facilitate access to their subjective configurations of *harga* (e.g. Fig. 18, 19, and 20). Interestingly, most of the commentators who have already crossed into Europe reflect on their post-*harga* experience negatively. For instance, some of them tend to lament the lack of job opportunities (e.g. "no work in Greece," Fig. 19) and complain about the harsh weather conditions ("freezing cold in Latvia", Fig. 20) as illustrated in the screenshots below:
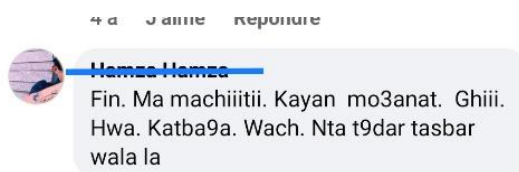

Fig 18. "Wherever you go, suffering prevails, requiring patience above all else": A *harrag*'s testimony shared in the comment section below the 'Map of Rural Europe post'.

Fig 19. "No job opportunities for *harraga* in Greece": comment shared by a *harrag* below the 'Map of Rural Europe' post.

Fig 20. "Freezing cold in Latvia and no job opportunities, absolutely none!"- A *harrag*'s comment shared below the 'Map of Rural Europe' post.

Contrary to the ludic map examined earlier, the one shared by the admin of '*haraga Maroc 18*' generated an alternative set of narratives that debunk the myth of the European Eldorado by foregrounding what is often unseen and unsaid as *harraga* tend to export hyperbolic success stories via social media by posting photos of fancy cars, night life and Euro bills (Souiah et al., 2018). What interests me most, in this context, is particularly the subversive power of the admin's cartographic decontextualisation. Indeed, by "exploiting the authority of cartography" (Peluso, 1995, cited in Tazzioli, 2015: 5), the rhetor succeeded in establishing a sense of trust with his target audience who took this interactive game 'seriously' by unhesitatingly sharing their personal stories with the rest of the followers and in so doing, opened up productive spaces for discussion and solidarity network construction. Thus, rather than connecting different actors

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across the EU with a view to streamlining the flow of information about agriculture and rural policy, the map is mobilised to bring together members of the *harraga* diaspora and those of the (would-be) *harraga* community in Morocco in a digitally mediated interactive space to share their immobility experiences both abroad and at home, as part of a larger collective national and transnational 'migration struggle' narrative as echoed in the rhetor's statement. Magnet-like, the map—with its unsophisticated character and colourful flags—was strategically used by the admin to garner the attention of the page followers whom together formed a 'web' of stories around it. As such, 'the map of Rural Europe' becomes 'the map of *harraga* in Europe' through a politics of un-mapping whereby each country flag and space becomes a window into a Moroccan *harrag*'s story rather than a technical statement about a given European country's rural profile. This cartographic illustration is thus transformed into a navigable interface wherein *harraga* (regardless of their status in destination country) and *harga* dreamers virtually trace the contours of their collective "strugglefield" (Tazzioli, 2015: 4) by engaging in solidarity across distances[326] and sharing their hypershort im-mobility narratives, hence connecting voices from *here and there*[327]. In doing this, both the rhetor and the recipients expose the limits of cartographic representation or, as Martina Tazzioli (2015:10) succinctly puts it, "play off the map".

Accordingly, (would-be) *harraga*'s unpredictability and creativity manifest as early as the pre-migration phase by destabilising the hegemonic representational order and engaging in a process of re-signification through agentive decontextualisation. Although the journey *in situ* motif might not be as glaringly articulated as in the previously examined YouTube source, it nonetheless features in subtle forms in the (would-be) *harraga*'s hypershort storytelling practices. The fact that the *harraga* reflect on their migratory journeys within an online space always already draws attention to their liminal position, i.e., between the virtual space of interaction and their material location at the time of their enunciation. Read from the standpoint of the *harga* dreamer, the *harraga*'s testimonies become spaces of virtual projection yielding im-mobile journeys into the extimate realms of those who have already crossed into Europe.

Although Moroccan *Harraga* do make use of Google Maps and other practical cartographic references to navigate previously uncharted territories and share tips on Facebook regarding the specific routes to take for a successful crossing into Europe, this tendency is nonetheless more widespread across Algerian *harga* Facebook platforms. For instance, on the

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[326] Ibid.
[327] My emphasis.

Facebook page '*Haraga Algérie*', I came across two different representations of counter-mapping posted throughout the year 2018-2019. Interestingly, one of them is an Arabic version of a Frontex map extracted from a UNHCR source, which was shared by the page admin on 25 September 2018, displaying the different itineraries taken by *refugees*[328] to cross into the Schengen zone via the Eastern and Central Mediterranean routes (Fig. 21). Clearly, posting a UNHCR cartographic reference on a *harga* Facebook page is quite incongruous and perhaps even unexpected. However, the admin subverts the map's (initial) function—which is to visually document the refugee population inflows from the Southern Mediterranean into Europe, for the purpose of envisioning more effective humanitarian responses[329]— and transforms it, through a decontextualisation/recontextualisation process, into an indispensable source of information on the (sub-)itineraries to follow if the would-be *harraga* intend to cross into the EU via Turkey as conveyed by his post, which translates as, "dear brothers, I am here providing you with the migration map from Turkey to other (EU-ropean) countries".

The tone of the Facebook post is serious, yet it is also characterised by a glimmer of hope, as the verb 'provide' presupposes that something is being supplied to fulfil a specific need, which will subsequently benefit the (target) recipient. In this sense, the rhetor constructs himself as a problem-solver doing 'a favour' to the (way-out solution-seeking) would-be *harraga* digital community. Although the map can be accessed by anyone via a simple google search, the ingenuity of the post sharer lies in his subversive re-purposing of the cartographic content to suit the interests of his target audience by inviting them to engage *differently* with its semiotic language. By drawing the viewers' attention to Turkey (in particular) as a gateway to enter the EU, the rhetor thus invites them to 'see' the map *otherwise*. As such, counter-mapping is here performed not in the form of creative cartographic re-sketching, or 'a click on the flag' digital storytelling play configuration as examined earlier, but rather as an agentive navigation of a hegemonic cartographic narrative by strategically 'unloading' its initial semiotic meanings and encoding new ones.

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[328] My emphasis.
[329] UNHCR (n.d.). *10-Point Plan in Action, Chapter 2: Data and Analysis*. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/3dah48th [Accessed 30 June 2024].

Fig 21. UNHCR-shared map of refugee movements, re-purposed by '*Haraga Algérie*' admin.

Although many other non-EU countries are mentioned on the map, the admin's choice of mentioning Turkey is due to a widespread (mis-)conception that it had become a frequently used transit hub by *harraga* to cross into the EU especially since the advent of the highly mediatised 'refugee crisis' at Europe's doors. Furthermore, even though Algerian nationals were (at the time of the post, and still are) required to obtain a visa to enter Turkey, the application process was (and still is) overly not as challenging as that of the Schengen visa and the approval rates typically tend(ed) to be high.[330] Thus, by foregrounding Turkey as a potential gateway to the EU, the rhetor is directing the attention of his target audience to another mode of illegalised migration, which consists of first travelling via *authorised* channels to Turkey by plane, and subsequently overstaying their visas and pursuing their journey to the EU via illegalised routes, as illustrated by the refugees' most frequently used crossing points epitomised by the red dots on the map. The post, therefore, targets a would-be *harraga* audience who are seeking migration options that would enable them to circumvent the risky Mediterranean boat journey and engage in alternative, and comparatively less challenging *harga* modes. Thus, the admin's choice of placing the focus on Turkey radically reframes the (initial) 'humanitarian' policy-oriented narrative of the UNHCR-shared Frontex map by enacting a change in its semantic parameters in order to accommodate the interests of the new target recipients.

Indeed, reading this Frontex map in light of the admin's post generates an alternative understanding of the iconographic language used by the cartographers to convey 'alarm-raising'

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[330] Web page available at: Turkey visa requirements for Algerian citizens [Accessed 25 May 2024].

discourses about 'massive' inflows of refugees coming from the 'Other' side of the Mediterranean (van Houtum & Bueno Lacy, 2020). Ostensibly, the initial purpose of this map is a visual documentation of South-North forced migratory movements as the word 'refugee' is deployed and foregrounded as a category referent. Notwithstanding its humanitarian terminology use the map under scrutiny does not so much differ in tone from the Frontex maps designed to (re-)trace unauthorised migrants' itineraries and 'suspect' movements across European borders as the same set of colours is mobilised by cartographers to convey "the Manichaean" Western us/them worldview.[331] Although on the map under examination, red is only used as a colour that contours the yellow arrows, it nonetheless draws attention to the gravity of the refugee movements, while light blue is strategically used to represent the EU and by extension "communicate peacefulness and innocence" (van Houtum & Bueno Lacy, 2020: 203). The peace-and-harmony-symbolising blue colour clearly masks the EU's military interventions in Libya and Afghanistan, its neo-colonial policies and practices in Africa and the Middle East, which constitute the root causes behind the forced migrations of the people of the 'Global South'.[332]

By appropriating and hence radically decontextualising the map, the admin modifies its entire rhetorical situation by *replacing*[333] its original target audience with an online community of would-be *harraga* and in doing so, generates a radically different interpretation of its sign-system from the one initially intended by the cartographers. Through this agentive and strategic replacement of perspective, the rhetor enables the new recipients to virtually project themselves onto an 'expertly' documented migration topography (with a variety of routes, numerous crossing points, and addresses of humanitarian organisations). Via this counter-mapping act, the motif of the journey *in situ* is inferred as the would-be *harraga* are invited to imagine their migration in comprehensive (geographic) detail, which would subsequently inform their pre-migration planning. Thus, seeing this map from the southern side of the Mediterranean, i.e., form the prospective *harraga*'s stand point, implies a radical mutation of its original semiotic structure through an alternative interpretation of the sign language used. For instance, the new recipients of the map are invited to construe the bold yellow arrows, which the cartographers (initially) deployed to visualise the 'massive' movements of refugees across the Eastern and Western Mediterranean channels, as an emphatic visual indication of the most

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[331] van Houtum & Bueno Lacy (2020).
[332] Ibid.
[333] My emphasis.

recommendable route to take (the bolder the arrow, the better the itinerary option, as it suggests that a large number of people have been using it). Additionally, the red dots initially used by Frontex cartographers to indicate border zones with high refugee population density—as demonstrated by the statistical content clustered in the rectangular orange cartouches on the right and left ends of the map—become, in this new context, indicative of 'potentially crossable' border fences. From the perspective of the rhetor and the recipients, the statistical information could be interpreted positively as "more than 2000 people cross the four-meter border fence everyday" becomes implicative of a high degree of border permeability rather than an 'alarming' numerical reference alerting the viewer about the high number of refugees that the UNHCR is expected to attend to.

By reversing the order of the map, the admin calls upon the digital community to instrumentalise the semiotics of a hegemonic cartographic narrative to serve their own needs—i.e., to navigate previously unknown realms by activating their imagination, and virtually reflecting on the different stages following the post-Turkey transit phase, as well as envisaging potential stop-overs along their matryoshka journey to the EU. Thus, such imaginative exercises enable *harga* dreamers to creatively 'fill in' their waiting time and efficiently design their migration project. The two main itineraries that the map visualises include two EU countries as potential crossing points, namely Greece and Bulgaria, which share borders with Turkey and are usually not regarded as destination countries by *harraga*. The latter are then faced with two options, either to cross to Hungary via a non-EU country, such as North Macedonia or Serbia, or to cross into Croatia via the northern border of Bosnia. The map gives a panoramic view of refugee cross-border movements and through its 'beguiling intelligibility [and] its deceptive iconographic simplicity" (van Houtum & Bueno Lacy 2020: 196) ironically un-complicates the intra-European border-crossing and makes it appear potentially 'feasible' (Fig. 22). The belief that *harga* is doable if one is knowledgeable enough about geography circulates among (would-be) *harraga*, as illustrated by a post shared on the same page, "*haraga algérie*", 23 December 2018, which translates as follows, "here is a trouble-free route to enter the EU: you should first travel to Turkey, then cross into Bulgaria, Serbia and then on to Hungary. Once you enter Hungary, you are in the Schengen Zone" (Fig. 23). Shared three months after the UNHCR map post, the admin's statement further corroborates the narrative that *harga* is not as complicated as it might seem as is "obvious from the map".[334] This (counter-)narrative is reinforced by the

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[334] This phrase is the title of Sohrab Moheddi & Thomas Keenan's traveling art collection featuring a set of (counter-)maps produced within a context of activism as subversive practices to articulate a politics of freedom of

plain layout of the outline map shared by the admin. It features minimal colour schemes (green, blue and beige), basic shapes delineating countries, and clear state borders. A dotted line—added to designate the 'uncomplicated' itinerary that would-be *harraga* are recommended to take to enter the EU—disrupts the (seemingly neutral) cartographic order and invites the viewer to muster up their courage and embark on their *harga* journey. In the context of this Facebook post, counter-mapping occurs not in appropriating and reversing cartographic language, but rather in having strategically selected a map type that is (seemingly) impartial and less politically charged than the one examined earlier, to 'exploit' the absence of detailed iconology. In this sense, the rhetor fills in the gaps of this visual discourse by imposing an 'exterior' sign language to communicate with his audience. The dotted line functions here as a metonymic extension, or simply a 'slice' of his creative conceptualisation of an unchallenging intra-European cross-border journey that fails to account for the "serpentine zigzag [movements] that undocumented migrants undertake" (van Houtum & Bueno Lacy , 2020: 203).

Fig 22. A *harrag*'s comment on the feasibility of the illegalised journey from Turkey to the EU posted below the UNHCR map.

Fig 23. "Easy way to get to the EU. Follow the dotted line!"

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movement. The collection was displayed at the LA-based art gallery REDCAT. Maribel Casas-Cortes, Sebastian Cobarrubias (2018) introduce and analyse these counter-cartographic representations against the backdrop of Europe's border externalisation policies and demonstrate the extent to which institutional migration maps designed to document suspect border movements are problematic and inaccurate. To my knowledge, none of the maps under examination features in the collection, I simply borrow the phrase "obvious from the map" as it aligns with the spirit of my (counter-)cartographic analysis.

Although as we shall see in the following chapter, the *hrig* act is often conceived of as a hazardous odyssey with potentially fatal outcomes, a prevalent narrative circulating across digital platforms and articulated in the lyrics of folklore songs is that the Eldorado is 'within reach'—hence the ubiquity of (over-)simplified cartographies as integral parts of would-be *harraga*'s digitally mediated border imaginaries.

As variants of *harga* dreamers' 'wakeful navigation', the sketching and sharing of maps in digital spaces are meaningful practices of resistance that challenge the dehumanising mainstream constructions of (would-be) *harraga* as 'naïve', 'suicidal', and hopeless individuals. The multimodal corpus examined in this sub-section particularly sheds light on their sense of agency, and their Islamic theology-inspired conceptions of patient and active waiting, which destabilise the here-there border logic in times of involuntary immobility.

This chapter set out to examine the digitally mediated 'responses' of Algerian and Moroccan would-be *harraga* to their condition of (State-induced) immobilism, which I reconceptualised as involuntary 'immotility' —a 'pathology-like' manifestation of the impact of bordering practices on these individuals, engendering a feeling of incapacitation, or '*3ajz*'. More specifically, my analysis offered an innovative reframing of *harga* Facebook pages and YouTube channels as dynamic, decolonial spaces of resistance, where these digital platforms serve not merely as sites of communication but also as virtual loci of active disengagement from hegemonic migration narratives. Through a meticulously curated sample of publicly accessible *harga*-themed social media posts and YouTube videos shared during the selected 2015-2019 timeframe, the analysis foregrounded the perspectives of *harga* dreamers, illustrating not only the socio-economic and political barriers that impeded their social mobility in their pre-migratory environments, but also the profound, multifaceted impact of the bordering practices imposed by the Maghreb-EU immobility regime, ultimately culminating in a pervasive sense of existential paralysis and 'dead-endedness', as well as a disruption of their socio-sexual identities.

The chapter was structured in two sections, with the first establishing an innovative methodological lens through which would-be *harraga*'s digital platforms were examined as spaces wherein they articulate their 'acts of refusal'. The posts of the admins/rhetors, provide an opportunity to critique and de-link from dominant migration epistemologies, thereby offering an alternative, migrant-centred gaze that challenges the prevailing (criminalising and

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victimising) state-sanctioned narratives. In the second section, I delved into what I conceptualised as 'the online *in situ* journeys' of *harga* dreamers, which consist of digitally mediated, multimodal compositions that allow rhetors to virtually navigate—and simultaneously invite their audiences to experience—a transitory state of being, characterised by 'a neither here nor there' logic. These representations were read as forms of 'wilful wakeful navigation' that not only serve as a momentary therapy for *harga* dreamers' immobilism but also reconfigure the time spent waiting for a potential *harga* opportunity, transforming it from perceived wasted time into productive temporalities through the creative use of imagination and an Islam-grounded sense of hope. This liminal state, as the analysis has demonstrated, destabilises conventional spatio-temporal boundaries, thereby enabling *harga* dreamers to (momentarily) transcend the immobilising effects of their 'present' condition.

As part of their online motionless journeys, (would-be) *harraga* also engage in practices of digital counter-mapping, which consist of creative subversions of established catographic discourses, re-purposing the content of maps, and inscribing new, counter-hegemonic meanings onto them, thereby inviting target recipients to see the act of *harga* 'otherwise'. Aligning with the overarching decolonial framework of the thesis, this chapter equally examined would-be *harraga*'s linguistic expressions—including Modern Standard Arabic, its dialectical variations, and translingual articulations—alongside the thematic and multimodal dimensions of their digital narratives. This critical engagement with languages, as shall be further demonstrated in chapter six, contributes to decolonial scholarship by underscoring the role of linguistic agency in asserting previously 'othered' worldviews and disrupting cultural and epistemic hierarchies.

After having thoroughly addressed the digital representations of the different nuances of im-mobility experienced by *harga* dreamers during the pre-*harga* phase, I turn, in the following chapter, to the 'on-the-road' stage of the Algerian and Moroccan *harraga*'s Mediterranean journeys, which encompass not only their unauthorised cross-border movements but also the simultaneous documentation and sharing of the *harga* experience on social media. Extending beyond the mediated (and monolingual) testimonial mode examined in Part Two and expanding on the insights garnered in the present chapter, it will ultimately provide novel and context-grounded approaches for rethinking migration representations in the 21st century.

Chapter Six—'Setting the Sea on fire'[335]: Digital documentation of *harga* from the site of the 'burning' Sea border

"Vous avez déjà vu quelqu'un brûler la mer, vous ?"[336]

Akram El Kabir, *Les Fleuves Impassibles* (2019 : 87)

How can a watery body be set on fire? What are the ramifications of the 'migration' of border burners' journey narratives from the Med[337] to the web? How do *harraga* re-configure borders, and in what ways do they challenge the 'symbolic im-mobility' and 'semantic displacements' performed by hegemonic media corporations on both sides of the Mediterranean? What new symbolic connotations does the 'White Sea in the Middle' acquire through *harraga*'s subversive practices? Lastly, what new identities emerge from the web of stories posted on Facebook and YouTube platforms? This chapter specifically addresses these questions. Although firmly grounded in an academic and scientific reading, my analysis of the metaphoric significance of the *harga* concept with reference to the Mediterranean Seascape[338] necessitates a temporary transition to the realms of 'poetic border thinking' (Anzaldua, 1987) in order to better grasp the complexity and the heterogeneity of *harraga*'s creative practices. As an attempt to think borders 'otherwise', this chapter, as its title suggests, first offers a critical reflection on the multifarious connotations of fire embedded in the word *harga* to set the tone for my analysis of *harraga*'s (counter-)narratives.

While surfing cyber spaces, I was fascinated by the '*defilé*' of *harraga*'s selfie-videos—"digital traces of self-representation" in Chouliaraki's (2017: 79) words—captured while braving the Mediterranean Sea, and I was particularly intrigued by the plurality of profiles and stories emerging from the site of the forward propelling dinghy. Thus, confronting the dehumanising narratives generated by mainstream media channels in Europe and the Maghreb, Algeria and Morocco more specifically, with *harraga*'s polyphonic accounts creates tensions and frictions, which invite us to further explore the 'crisis' inherent in migration representation.

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[335] This quote is inspired by the Qur'anic verse "And by the sea that is set on fire" (Sourat *At-Tur/The Mount*: 6) as it deftly translates the oxymoronic character of *harga* by sea, a point I shall expand upon in the introduction of this chapter.

[336] [Have you ever seen someone set the sea ablaze?] My translation.

[337] Short for 'Mediterranean' to create a poetic effect.

[338] The term 'seascape' is borrowed from Lee-Morrison, L., 2018. Migrant seascapes: Visualised spaces of political exclusion. In: *Lund Studies in Arts and Cultural Sciences*, Vol.16, pp.67-87. Lund University. Available at: http://portal.research.lu.se/ws/files/40171478/Bild_och_natur_webb.pdf#page=70 [Accessed 20 July 2022].

Opening this chapter is an oxymoronic trope that gestures towards the polysemy embedded in the word *harga*. As established in the introduction of the thesis, the latter metaphorically refers to the immotilised subjects' burning desire to migrate, as well as their 'burning' of the time-consuming and immobilising stages of the Schengen visa application by opting for illegalised routes. To "ensure untraceability" (Al-Mousawi, 2012: 51) and to subsequently evade potential deportation[339] upon their arrival on EU-rope's southern shores, *harraga* incinerate their identity papers and often their finger prints as well, as part of their pre-migratory rituals (Pestre, 2015). By literally and figuratively burning their roots, *harraga* also erase their former points of anchorage and the identity boundaries within which they were once confined. In so doing, they detach from a paralysing state of marginality, transitioning into a state of 'becoming' as they board the boat and set sail. In both Standard and dialectical Arabic, the verb to 'burn' is multivocal. Depending on the context, it may signify "free rid[ing]", "jump[ing] a queue" or "run[ning] a red light" (Souiah et al., 2018: 198), thereby conveying the idea of transgression.

Moreover, the trope of fire has a long religious, cultural, and historical genealogy and informs Maghrebis' imaginaries as it is a leitmotif in the Qur'anic verses and a ubiquitous symbol in pre-colonial discourse,[340] as well as in colonial resistance rhetoric in the Maghreb, more specifically in Algeria (Austin & McKinnie, 2022). In the Qur'an, Allah's fury is rendered through a flaming metaphor in *Sourat Al-Humazah* [the Slanderer], "the Fire of the Wrath of Allah kindled to a blaze" (verse 6), and the concepts of hell and damnation are metonymically communicated through the word '*nar*' [fire] and '*sa3ir*' [blazing fire]. *Harraga* appropriate this imagery to convey their intense feelings of anger and to depict their hell-like immotility in their source environments as in the '*maħroog*' metaphor evoked earlier. Further, in 'Berber'[341] "mythical-ritual system" (Bourdieu, 1990), fire symbolised the "masculine half of the

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[339] By destroying their identity documents, *harraga* seek to obscure their entry points, making it challenging for EU border authorities to enforce the Dublin Convention and hence deport them to the first country of arrival, thereby potentially enhancing their chances of settling in a more desirable EU country. (Papadopoulos et al., 2008).

[340] I am specifically referring to the Berber cultural heritage in North-Africa as fire used to hold multifarious symbolic significations, among them purification, transformation, vitality, passion, warmth, survival, and community gatherings. Fire was also believed to have supernatural protective qualities such as the power to ward off evil spirits and bring blessings and prosperity (Austin & McKinnie, 2022).

[341] The Berbers, also referred to as 'Amazigh' or 'Imazighen', represent a heterogeneous group of indigenous ethnic communities native to North Africa, with a history that predates the Arab expansion into the Maghreb. During the colonial era, the term 'Berber' became entrenched as a catch-all label for the region's diverse ethnic groups, particularly those speaking the Tamazight languages. Adapted from Brett, M. (2025). Berber Languages. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. [Online] Available at: Berber languages | Berber Language Family, History & Culture | Britannica [Accessed 10 January 2023]. Although 'Berber' remains widely used, it often perpetuates a reductive framework established by colonial powers, distorting and oversimplifying the intricate cultural, linguistic, and historical identities of these groups. In contrast, 'Amazigh', meaning 'free' or 'noble', has been increasingly adopted by these peoples to honour their rich indigenous heritage, autonomy, and resistance to colonial classifications.

cosmic/everyday universe"[342] and "was the means by which tools and weapons were forged for quintessentially masculine actions such as harvesting, killing beasts, and warfare" (Bourdieu, 1990: 8, cited in Austin & McKinnie, 2022: 320). As such, all these religious and cultural significations are woven into the texture of the word *harga* making it a potent metaphor that sustains *harraga*'s subversive ways of being and becoming in the world. Moreover, *harga*, as M'charek (2020) reminds us, is an anti-colonial trope, and is a reaction to neo-colonial "flows and extractions" (430), i.e., natural resources being shipped from the southern to the northern shores of the Mediterranean "with only very little return."[343] During colonial times, fire was also a frequent trope mobilised by indigenous populations in their resistance discourse, and hence a symbol of their "constructive disobedience."[344] From this perspective, fire is viewed as a weapon with which to fight back against the oppressor. According to Bachelard's conceptual division of fire, the former is 'Promethean', i.e, a form of *destruction*[345] whereby the oppressed subject "*prend le feu*" [catches fire/ fires back], which foregrounds their agency and resilience. The second dimension is informed by "the complex of Empedocles",[346] which configures fire as *self-destruction*[347] without a trace whereby the subject "*se donne au feu*"/ "*s'anéantit*"[348] [succombs to the fire/ destroys themselves]. As Austin and McKinnie (2022) rightly observe, the use of the fire trope in contemporary Algerian contestation discourse could be read in light of these two conceptualisations, as either evocative of a "[decolonial] ongoing struggle" for renewal or "a form of escape" whereby the subject "leaves nothing behind [as if enacting] a symbolic suicide" (318). Accordingly, the kind of suicide implied in this metaphoric reading is fundamentally distinct from the 'suicidal madness' argument employed by hegemonic actors, as discussed in Part One.

Extending this reading to Moroccan *harraga*'s creative (border) practices, I argue that *harga*, while being shaped by religious and cultural influences, takes on a political dimension as it often entails a destruction *without a trace*[349]—one that is radically different from the conceptualisation of '*tahlouka*' as put forth by state and religious authorities—i.e., a temporary dissolution of identity during the migratory act (and before a potential status regularisation in the target society) as well as the annihilation of borders by 'setting the sea on fire'. Whilst the

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[342] Austin & McKinnie (2022: 320).
[343] Ibid.
[344] Bachelard (1988: 125). Cited in Austin & McKinnie (2022: 318).
[345] My emphasis.
[346] Bachelard (1988: 125). Cited in Austin & McKinnie (2022: 318).
[347] My emphasis.
[348] Cited in Austin and McKinnie (2022: 320).
[349] My emphasis.

first refers to the act of identity erasure as part of *harraga*'s "politics of imperceptibility" (Papadopoulos et al., 2008); which allows them to evade the state's regulatory apparatus, the second implies the demolition of liquid walls, disrupting thereby the established border Order.

Although water and fire metaphors are abundant in both Darija and Modern Standard Arabic (Hadfi, 2015), lesser are idiomatic and poetic expressions that bring the two incompatible natural elements into dialogue. Nonetheless, when they are conjured together within the same segment as in *harga* by sea, fire and water convey images related to something extraordinary, sublime "*minna al-ma' wa nnar takhroujou el3aja'ib*" [from water and fire wonders emerge], and enlightening, "*minna al-ma' wa nnar ma sadaq*" [from water and fire comes truth]. *Harga* by sea, which is the form of cross-border performance with which I critically engage in this chapter, particularly communicates border 'wonders', alternative 'truths', and the defiance of the very laws of nature through risk-taking. The potency of the fire metaphor lies in its multi-facetedness and fecundity. For instance, prior to the *harga* act, the *harga* dreamer is said to be '*maħroog*', i.e., "*noyé dans le feu qui brûl[e] en lui*"[350] (Mazauric, 2012: 173) [drowned/engulfed in the fire that burns within him]. However, in its performative character, *harga* merges fire and water by making the former element triumph over the latter. *Harga* thus enacts a radical change within the parameters of signification as water naturally extinguishes fire. In this sense, *harga* defies natural boundaries and becomes in *harraga*'s imaginaries, a form of transcendence, a 'closure' ushering new openings, which strongly echoes the poetic graphic oceanic-fiery imagery evoked in the Qur'an with reference to the Day of Judgement "expressing the end of the present order of things"[351] as "Seas are [set] in flames" [*we idha al-biħarou soujirat*] (Sourat *At-Takwir/The Folding up*: 6), and "oceans are suffered to burst forth" [*we idha al-biħarou foujirat*](Sourat *Al-Infitar/* the Cleaving Asunder: 3). Thus, from being '*drowned' in fire*, to *'setting'* the Mediterranean Sea *on fire*,[352] the *harrag*'s identity shifts from a state of 'semi-passivity' ('partial' here owing to their 'wakeful navigation' conveyed in the form of imaginary displacements), to an 'active', or rather 'progressive' condition as they simultaneously assume the role of cross-border actor and agent of representation. Just like the flames that they embody, and the fiery desires and blazing imaginaries that transport them to unauthorised spaces, the *harrag*, as we shall see in the ensuing multimodal analysis, "is resistant to a single ongoing meaning" (Austin & McKinnie, 2022: 324).

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[350] Elalamy, Y.A., (2000). *Les clandestins: roman*. Eddif, p.65.
[351] An-Nabawiyah, M.A.M., (1991). *The Holy Qur'an: English Translation of the Meanings and Commentary*. King Fahd Holy Qur'an Print. Complex. p.1911.
[352] My emphasis.

Before engaging with *harraga*'s counter-border spectacle, it is crucial to examine how they reflect on the preparation phase of their journey, how they view the act of departure, and how such digitally mediated reflections offer meaningful glimpses into their idiosyncratic (re)conceptualisations of identity.

6.1   Harga as desired 'de-territorialisation'

"*Hajir! fa anta lasta chajarah*" [Migrate! For you are not a tree] reads the title of a book, the cover of which is photographed and shared on the Facebook page "*haraga Algérie*", 1 August 2019 (Fig. 24). The book is placed on the dashboard of a car waiting in line on the vehicle ramp before driving onto a ferry. The admin seems not to have needed to add a caption, a comment or a synopsis, for the book title succinctly communicates the meaning of migration as understood by *harraga*. Written by Algerian author Oussama Remishi[353] and inspired by true migration stories shared by *harraga* on social media plaforms, *Hajir! fa anta lasta chajarah* charts unauthorised Algerian migrants' multiplex sea journeys in lucid Modern Standard Arabic prose (with passages featuring unedited transcriptions of *harraga*'s digital testimonies), and vivid documentary-like detail, shedding light on the perils characterising *harga*, as well as the myriad forms of oppression awaiting those who make it successfully to the mythic Euro-Eldorado. At the same time, the author heroicises the adventurous *harraga* for having braved the hostile seas and reached European shores in pursuit of freedom and dignity, motivated by the fervent belief that unlike trees, they are capable of 'motility' despite being involuntarily immotilised by neo-colonial border regimes.

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[353] Oussama Thakieddine Remishi, is a 25 year old Algerian writer who garnered widespread acclaim in his country, following the publication of his generically hybrid book *hajir fa anta Lasta chajara* (2018). To my knowledge, it has not yet been translated to French or English, therefore, the title translation is mine.

Fig 24. "Migrate! For you are not a tree."

That said, the photographer subtly reframes the title by foregrounding it against a backdrop of cars making their way onto a ferry and in so doing, further stresses the idea of desired 'dis-location' or 'de-territorialisation'[354]—a self-conscious liberation from the local— or, agentive disconnection from one's roots. Although would-be *harraga* might not necessarily identify with the (unseen) car driver who seems to enjoy unregulated mobility, they nonetheless might be inspired to forsake their arborescent identity and adopt a rhizomatic one, thereby embracing multiplicity, fluidity and connectivity as empowering strategies (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) in a bid to subdue their bordered condition in a globalised world. Thus, recontextualised within the frame of a photograph, the title figures as an invitation to the (would-be) *harraga* (online) community to embrace the rhizome logic and enter new identitarian territories beyond fixed locational anchors, construct new connections, and engage in a ceaseless self-configuration. Although belonging to different natural realms, 'deterritorialisation' mediated by the botanic rhizome metaphor[355] and '*harga*' predicated on fire imagery, do conceptually intersect in certain ways. Indeed, both fire and a rhizome evoke the idea of transformative power, expansion and multiplicity. Fire radically alters the state or structure of matter through combustion and, in the process, spreads in multiple directions. Similarly, the rhizome disseminates horizontally (yet subterraneally) connecting plural points. Thus, both elements suggest the notions of decentralisation and non-linearity, and entail the idea of resilience and

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[354] In this particular context, I use the hyphenated forms 'dis-location' and 'de-territorialisation' to visually emphasise *harraga*'s intential unanchoring from their source environments. While the subsequent analysis draws on Deleuze and Guattari's conception of 'deterritorialisation'—which I retain in its original, unhyphenated form— I adapt the term typographically when referring to *harraga* to foreground the experiential and agentive dimensions of their spatial unrooting.

[355] Deleuze and Guattari (1987).

adaptability. According to the narrative generated by the photograph, *harraga* are called upon to venture into a labyrinthine journey and conquer uncharted realms in pursuit of self-discovery.

This reading is further fleshed out in a post shared on the Facebook page, "*al-hijra mina al Jazaer*" [migration from Algeria], 17 June 2016, which compactly communicates (would-be) *harraga*'s desire for radical up-rootedness as it features the image of an airplane taking off overlaid by a caption, which might be rendered as follows, "the two most beautiful feelings ever? Leaving Algeria and never setting foot here again" (Fig. 25). Complementing the photo is a brief comment expressed in a hybridised linguistic code—a mix of Darija and French—that reads "*ya bvisa ya sans visa*" [with or without visa]. Desired de-territorialisation figures in the two aforementioned posts as a form of self-conscious detachment from one's source society. This agentive dis-location is in E.Pester's (2015: 17) words, "*une tentative subjective d'arrachement radical de la terre natale*" [a subjective attempt at a radical uprooting from one's native land] read from a Lacanian perspective as 'separation' from a condition of pre-migratory alienation. Drawing on the latin root of the French verb 'séparer'—*se parere*— and its equivocal variant '*se parer*', i.e., '*s'habiller* [to dress oneself], *se defendre* [to defend oneself], *s'engendrer* [to (re-)create oneself]', Lacan sheds light on the subject's desire for '*auto-engenderment*' [self-reconstitution] through the operation of separation whereby they transform "*en un autre, par lui-même*" [into another by themselves] (Pestre, 2015: 17).

Fig 25. Desired de-territorialisation: Exit with no return.

It is interesting to note that Moroccan *harraga* use the verb '*9alla3a*' (قلّع), meaning to up-root or to demolish when the diacritical mark (*shadda*) is placed on the letter (L/ ل), or 'take off' when the *shadda* is removed '*aqla3a*' (اقلع) when referring to their departure, as is illustrated

by a post shared on the Facebook page '*Maroc Haraga*', 8 June 2018, wherein the rhetor implores his (would-be) *harraga* 'brothers' to lift their voices in prayer for him and his fellow passengers as they prepare to board the boat, or as he puts it, in Moroccan Darija, "*ra7 n9al3ou inshallah*" [We are about to take off /to leave (set off from) the shore, Allah willing] (Fig. 26). Complementing the text is a photograph depicting a group of apprehensive young men sitting on the sand under the veil of night, as they await their turn to board the boat. A petrified emoji further saturates the atmosphere with unease and thereby effectively reinforces visual/verbal cohesion. Accordingly, *harga* as de-territorialisation is conveyed in this multimodal context linguistically, visually and emotionally.

Fig 26. A few moments before the 'take/set-off'.

In the above representations, both wanting and willing to migrate with no envisioned return are also viewed by the rhetors as forms of liberation from a pigeonholed identity shaped by a banal nationalist conception of belongingness. As demonstrated in my examination of 'immotility-themed' posts in the previous chapter, the notion of national identity being contingent on loyalty and allegiance to the nation-state is debunked by admins and *harga* dreamers alike, who feel betrayed by and marginalised in their m(O)therland, hence their

agentive rupture from it. This view is pertinently visualised in another post, shared 21 March 2018, featuring a multimodal composition—a text, a series of emojis, and a photograph—jointly illustrating one of the outcomes of *harga* (as desired dis-location) on the *harrag*'s family members (Fig. 27 and 28). On the photo, a mother, clad in white, crouched by the sea, her chin cradled in her palm, and her eyes anxiously scanning the horizon for a flicker of hope, awaits her son's safe return. Interplaying in contradictory harmony are the *harrag*'s mother's feelings of *'amal'* (hopeful anticipation) and *'alam'* (haunting agony) both of which are derived from the same trilateral root (A-L-M/ ا/ل/م), yet convey dissimilar meanings. In a manner akin to poetic apostrophes, the rhetor addresses his grieving mother beseeching her to cease waiting, and instead, embrace him in her prayers for he harbors no intent to return.

Fig 27. 'The waiting mother.'

A similar narrative is generated by a photograph, shared 23 November 2018, on the Facebook page '*Haraga Maroc'* depicting a mother with her back to the camera, gazing at the sea, paired with a text that translates as, "a mother awaiting her son's homecoming. Damn you, O' homeland/m(O)therland" (Fig. 28). Indeed, the trope of the heart-broken mother is ubiquitous in both Algerian and Moroccan Facebook pages and functions as a metaphoric articulation of the impact of the *harrag*'s act of root-burning/destruction. Thus, the figure of the 'burnt' or grief-stricken mother [*maħrooga*][356] could be read as a metonymic representation of the larger *patria mater* 'incinerated' by the *harrag*'s symbolic "*brûl[ure] [de] ses attaches*

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[356] Feminine form of the Darija term '*maħroog*' (literally meaning being 'burnt' from within, i.e., metaphorically consumed by 'the fire' of suffering).

premières" [burning of their original ties] (Pestre, 2015: 19). As we shall further see in the following section, references to the mother figure permeate *harraga*'s digital narratives and take on significant symbolic connotations.
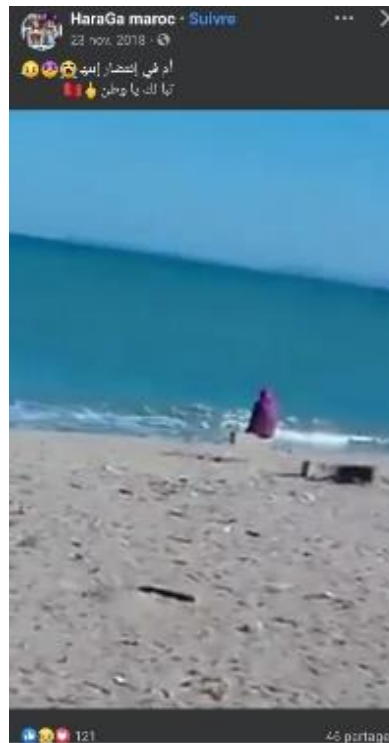

Fig 28. 'The waiting mother': 'Damn you O' m(O)therland…'

Thus far, *harga* is imagined as an agentive burning of one's branches, for as Deleuze and Guattari (1987:7) rightly put it, "the tree or the root plots a point, a fixed order" while the rhizome abolishes hierarchisation and linearity. Accordingly, *harraga*'s decision to travel without a visa, i.e., by circumventing authorised (linear and vertical) channels, is inscribed within their rhizomatic world view as crossing to 'Fortress' Europe could be undertaken via non-linear routes and through multiple entry points. Furthermore, this rhizomatic identity reconceptualisation also extends to other Facebook spaces as illustrated by a post shared 18 October 2019, on "*haraga Algérie*" page, wherein the rhetor ruminates over the meaning of '*ghorba*' and the feeling of being unmoored from his native environment as an Algerian illegalised migrant and non-citizen in a European post-migration setting (Fig. 29). In his reflections, he writes that identity is in constant flux, as one "falls and rises" and, in the process, discovers the different versions of the self through continuous ordeals. He pursues arguing that alienation and perpetual movement across marginal spaces in hostile foreign territories serve as valuable lessons imparting to the 'journeyer' the virtues of self-reliance, patience and diligence.

Fig 29. 'The de-territorialised stranger'

Thus, he views himself as dynamic, perpetually ready to begin anew, for, as he contends, the experience of estrangement is a profound tutor of life's lessons charting new possibilities in the identity project, "*al-ghorba tasna3ou minka insenan mokhtalifan, salban qawiyan bima yakfi litaħamouli machaqat al- ħayat*", (expressed in Modern Standard Arabic) [*al-ghorba* (exilic de-territorialisation) reshapes you, forging a resilient spirit to withstand life's (many) tribulations]. From the rhetor's perspective, '*ghorba*' is reconfigured as a more favourable alternative than his condition of out-of-placedness in his source environment. While the former entails hectic (yet unauthorised) mobility and plurality of experience (despite precariousness owing to the subject's illegalised status), the latter is associated with sickening immotility.

By embracing a rhizome-like identity, the rhetor celebrates movement in spaces which de-authorise it and exults the idea of adaptability, impermanence, and flexibility as part of his existential journey and ceaseless identity re-fashioning. The text's illustrative photograph further corroborates this reading as it features a homeless man (perhaps a lone traveller) reclining upon the pavement beneath a train station's watchful gaze. Beside him, a pair of shoes and a suitcase, standing as silent testaments to a journey paused amidst an unknown city's nocturnal composition. Notwithstanding its somewhat romantic allure, this visual illustration not only further poeticises the lyrical testimony shared by the rhetor but also thematically foregrounds the notion of perpetual un-belongingness, as the photographed subject, like a 'pausing rhizome', has temporarily suspended his mobility, in a bid to seek solace in repose to

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start anew. The rhetor's deliberate un-naming of the subject, his origins and the city wherein he is moving and pausing, further substantiates a rhizomatic reading of *harraga*'s identity as being in constant mutation and often in a state of 'precarity', hence challenging all forms of prescriptive (national, cultural, racial and physical) bordering.

The multimodal posts examined in this section, although non-exhaustive and therefore not necessarily representative of Algerian and Moroccan *harraga*'s conceptualisations of agentive de-territorialisation, serve nonetheless as insightful portals into the multifacetedness and multiplexity of *harga* and set the stage for my examination of *harraga*'s 'sea narratives' as well as the extent to which they diverge from the oversimplistic representations circulated by mainstream outlets across both sides of the Mediterranean.

6.2   *From the 'Med' to the Web: Digital captures of harraga on the move and subversions of 'the stuck at Sea' media trope*

This section marks a shift in thematic perspective as it displaces the lens from *harga* dreamers' digital representations of their "elastic immobility"[357] to their practices of "subversive mobility" (Squire, 2022) across the Mediterranean Sea and their synchronous sharing of their boat journeys on social media platforms. Within the AOM framework, subversive mobility is defined as the disruption of institutionalised bordering mechanisms through the deregulation of physical borders by illegalised migrants in their attempts to claim (access-denied) spaces (Squire, 2022; Casas-Cortes et al., 2015). *Harraga*'s dissident cross-border movements and their concomitant digital representations reveal a wide spectrum of creative resistance strategies that challenge dominant narratives, which frame them as 'illegal actors' or 'passive victims' and 'freeze' their matryoshka journeys within 'moving' photographs of 'stuck at sea' boat silhouettes or floating corpses, as established in Part One. In foregrounding *harraga*'s "unrestrained navigation" (Al-Mousawi, 2012: 139) of Mediterranean Waters and their parallel online postings, I seek to draw attention to the unstable hyphen between mobility and its supposed antonym, immobility, which functions, in this context, as a metonymic graphic sign gesturing to the temporally immeasurable transition of *harraga*'s narratives from the space of the moving dinghy to the digital world. As

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[357] I borrow the qualifier 'elastic' from Fast and Lindell (2016) who use it to describe the hypermobility of business elites whose lives are simultaneously rooted in specific locations and globally dispersed, "marked by various stretches and pull-backs along the home-away continuum" (436). In this context, I specifically apply it to immobility to recapitulate the concept of 'in situ journeys', discussed in the previous chapter, and to highlight how materially and geographically bounded *harga* dreamers engage in virtual mobilities, enacting an 'elastic' oscillation between stasis and movement.

such, my choice of this section title 'digital captures of *harraga* on the move' oxymoronically evokes two logics: the material dimension of the *hrig* act on the one hand, and its digital crystallisation and archiving via Facebook and/or YouTube, on the other. This agentive process of net browsing while journeying across the Mediterranean Sea enables *harraga* to perform a counter-show that challenges the prevailing deterrence spectacles orchestrated by European and Maghrebi border forces on the Mediterranean stage. Escaping the edits of hegemonic media actors, *harraga*'s raw footage, I argue, offer "alternative and highly informative views on how the 'objects' of hegemonic discourse see themselves and what [counter] narratives they propose as subjects in their own [unmediated] accounts" (Abderrezzak, 2016, x). More importantly, the following multimodal analysis aims to bring to the forefront images and stories of and around "the [contemporary] Muslim Mediterranean" (Iain Chambers, 2008, cited in Abderrezak, 2016: 17), which have been strategically elided from "the occidental narrative of the Sea".[358]

Although haunting images of dead, drowning, and drifting bodies in the Mediterranean Sea(metery), alongside capsized vessels and corpses of (North-)African migrants washed ashore on Spanish and Italian picturesque beaches have, for the past two decades, formed the shocking visual archive of unauthorised migration (Al-Mousawi, 2012), alternative 'border spectacles' (Mazzara, 2019) have concomitantly and gradually challenged such tragic and dehumanising representations. Cyber-social platforms, namely, Facebook and YouTube that predate Instagram and TiktTok, have become counter-spaces of representation disrupting official narratives around illegalised migration. While these digital applications have also been mobilised by news media outlets to enhance their content distribution, increase visibility, share real-time updates, and engage with their audiences, they have also often been instrumentalised to circulate *harga* deterrence narratives and contribute to the amplification of the gravity of the *harga* phenomenon, and the urgent necessity for intervention by state and international actors.

Although *harga* dreamers and *harraga* alike acknowledge the perils of the sea journey and the high risks of losing one's life *en route*—a condition often referred to as 'riskage',[359] a neologism formed through the morphological distortion of the French word '*risque*' and the creative grafting of the suffix '*age*'—the narratives that portray *harga* by sea in a positive light appear to be much more prevalent than those that paint it unfavourably. In the subsequent analysis, I incorporate terminology from the performative arts, specifically, 'stage', 'screen', and 'script', and apply it to my reading of *harga* by sea performances, which usually figure as

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[358] Ibid.
[359] Video available at: https://youtu.be/eV0QQBmjTC4?si=0M3oqC544zR7JImq [Accessed 06 October 2022].

isolated yet comprehensive fragments comprising dynamic scenes, which often discursively refer back to earlier ones, reinforcing thereby thematic cohesion and narrative coherence. The multifarious impressions generated by such 'shows', the filming process, or the music-video montages of the *harga* journey, along with the texts they add to further contextualise the whole performance, collectively facilitate a thorough reading of their (counter-)narratives. As such, this section enacts a reversal of perspective by displacing the focus from the *harga* dreamers' digitally mediated 'trips *in situ*' to the *harga* performers' online sharing of their ongoing journeys *extra situm*. Further, in doing so, *harraga* tend to mobilise a number of tropes: the figure of the (left behind) mother, allusions to the Prophet's '*hijra*' from Mecca to Medina, and the metaphor of 'conquest' as an anti-colonial 'striking back' discursive move.

Additionally, I read some of *harraga*'s un/moving snapshots in a re-constructive fashion by placing unconnected audio-visual pieces together, i.e. photos and video fragments shared across different time-spaces, as in a narrative collage, to further shed light on *harraga*'s tendency to banalise the border by re-imagining the Mediterranean Sea parodically as a metaphoric Chess/chasing board.[360] Thus, in terms of mood and tone, *harraga*'s sea narratives tend to oscillate between the serious/tragic and the comic/ludic, shifting along a nuanced scale of emotions and perspectives, hence their singularity and heterogeneity. Extending the method used in the previous chapter, I assemble shards of Algerian and Moroccan *harraga*'s stories posted online between 2015-2019, and enact a montage of digital multimodal compositions informed by common tropes, and 'emplace' them within a cohesive composition (without nonetheless depreciating their singular opacity) in an attempt to obtain a holistic view of the phenomenon while foregrounding the analytical significance of their sea journeys.

"*À la vie à la mort, m3ana D3awi lmima, rkibna nafs el-babour, wled el-rif wled lmdina*" [through life and death, our mothers' prayers accompany us; we boarded the same boat, sons of the countryside and the city alike] are the evocative lyrics of a popular *harga* song[361] used as background music in a video montage of Algerian *harraga* as they journey across the Mediterranean Sea on board of a dinghy.[362] Serving as a refrain, this line of the song encapsulates *harraga*'s collective belief that *harga* by sea is first and foremost a blessed journey, sanctified by the intercessions of mothers' supplications. Indeed, in the Maghreb, it is common

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[360] Video Available at: https://youtu.be/VUIpWJ6kNa8?si=CrvejKXX5rE8oPS2 [Accessed 30 March 2022].
[361] *Harga* is one of the central themes that Tunisian rapper Balti addresses in his music. Released on YouTube in 2016, '*À la Vie À la Mort*' is one of his most popular *harga* songs (along with '*Clandestino*'). The song features in a number of *harraga*'s video montages.
[362] Video available at: https://youtu.be/3fcV8M4OnPs?si=wAVaEgz5iKcK43bv [Accessed 06 March 2022].

practice among (would-be) *harraga*'s mothers to part with some of their gold or other valuable possessions to gather the necessary funds for their sons to pay smugglers.[363] Despite the anguish it brings (as demonstrated earlier through the figure of the waiting mother), mothers are often unwavering in their resolve to rescue their sons from the cycle of marginalisation within which they are entrapped viewing the *harga* journey as an essential rite of passage towards resilience, self-empowerment and personal growth. Furthermore, *harga* is also often perceived as a pathway to opportunities for generating future remitting funds and subsequently uplifting the household's condition (Chena 2015). Although not all 'awaiting' mothers are fortunate enough to witness the return of their sons as some perish at sea or face indefinite detention in the post-migration country, those who are lucky to enjoy the sight of their returning ones anticipate their comeback in prosperity with lavish gifts and luxury cars to display before their neighbours.

Moreover, mothers in Islam are highly revered and often take on a sacred dimension. Indeed, one of the most quoted Prophet's Hadiths— "paradise lies beneath [mothers'] feet"[364]— succinctly translates this belief. Both the visual and discursive omnipresence of the mother figure in the selected digital narratives attests to the profound devotion and deep emotional attachment that *harraga* have to their mothers. Thus, having received the latter's benediction, *harraga* seem to be comforted by a sense of spiritual protection and divine favour that further ignites their motivation to venture onto the sea. On board the moving dinghy, Algerian and Moroccan *young* men (and increasingly women—referred to as '*harragate*'[365] in Maghrebi dialects) on their way to the coastal cities of Almeria or Malaga often record a selfie video in

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[363] Arab and Souvannavong (2009).

[364] Sunan an-Nasa'i, (n.d). Sunan an-Nasa'i, Vol.1, Book 25, Hadith 3106. Available at [PDF] Sunan an-Nasa'i (Arabic-English) Vol. 1-6 : Darussalam : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive| [Accessed 12 June 2023]. Because Algeria and Morocco are predominantly Sunni Muslim countries (Diouane, 2024; ElTayeb, 1989), references such as *Sunan an-Nasa'i*, which are considered key sources of religious and ethical guidance, are frequently used throughout Part Three to analyse *harraga*'s narratives.

[365] In recent years, there has been a notable increase in the number of female *harraga* undertaking the Mediterranean Sea crossing, in contrast to the predominantly male (unauthorised) migration patterns observed in the early 21st century. For a more comprehensive discussion on this shift, refer to Kime, S., (2020) 'Les Harragates algériennes: La fuite vers un destin inconnu'. *Recherches Internationales*, 118 (1), pp.157-178. This phenomenon can be further illustrated by a video shared on YouTube 31 July 2022, which features a woman aboard a dinghy alongside male *harraga*. Although the video (which has garnered 1,415,731 views and 14,000 likes) falls outside the selected timeframe for this study, and while the '*harragate*' trend warrants an independent investigation beyond the scope of this thesis, it nonetheless provides an additional example of the increasing involvement of women from the Maghreb region, particularly from Morocco and Algeria, in unauthorised sea crossings. The YouTube video is available at: https://youtu.be/-7aX-yez0kU?si=xlNd9YfsH4BqK6Yx [Accessed 02 December 2022]. More videos illustrating this phenomenon can be accessed via the following links:
https://youtu.be/TUewoTMw6lU?si=ztIHOV_f9Lv6X40R
https://youtu.be/KPA40r679yk?si=1du9HcEytLv-_Pig [All Accessed 02 June 2022].

which they implore their mothers for forgiveness, entreating them to intercede with ceaseless prayers on their behalf. Often emotionally gripping, these scenes unfold in a rather melodramatic fashion, usually accompanied by a *harga*-themed Rai music backdrop.[366] Holding his phone aloft to ensure that the camera lens captures the scenic view of the tranquil sea and the maritime distance 'burnt' thus far, the *harrag* addresses his mother passionately in a long monologue speaking as though he were a post-modern soliloquist communicating in his native tongue his innermost thoughts and feelings aloud to the digital audience while appropriating the space of the dinghy and by extension, that of the Mediterranean stage.[367] The latter thus instantly transforms into a confessional site wherein the *harrag* pours forth gratitude to his beloved mother reassuring her of his commitment to honour her with his future accomplishments in an attempt to smolder the blaze of agony within her. In this extimate moment of self-spectacularisation, the actor of the Mediterranean passage offers *harga* page followers an insider view of what it feels like to cross the border by emphasising the interplay between individual and collective identity as each *harrag* carries his own wounds and his own story despite being a body among many in the confined space of the navigating boat. As such, the selfie video —a technology that foregrounds face and voice (Chouliaraki, 2017)—is mobilised by the *harrag* as an instrument of counter-visual representation that challenges mainstream media's circulation of images of faceless, voiceless and nameless 'boat people'. Distinctly seen and heard, the *harrag* is identified and hence re-humanised while becoming somebody else as he progressively de-links from his source setting, offering thereby an alternative script through which to (re-)read the micro-histories emanating from the surface of the Mediterranean Sea.

Further, the choice to integrate a Rai song into the video is highly effective as this popular musical genre is characterised by lyricism and intense emotion, which complements the *harrag*'s dramatic performance, enhancing its affective resonance and thereby captivating online spectators who track his unfolding journey 'in real time' from a distance as though watching a movie or a reality-tv show. Blessed by their mothers' grace and prayers, *harraga* fervently believe that they shall find solace in both this life and the next, as expressed in the opening words of the *harga* song refrain mentioned earlier. As part of their politics of opacity, both *harraga* and the artists committed to their cause tend to eschew narrative linearity in the

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[366] Video available at: https://youtu.be/s_gikqvclPk?si=u4fw0908BHP4qPqM [Accessed 30 January 2022].
[367] Video Available at: https://youtu.be/aEwZjv5BXiM?si=GtK0iXDZQGQ7EBvj [Accessed 30 May 2022].

composition of their *harga*-themed stories and songs, respectively. As such, the refrain line evoked earlier unfolds in reverse order starting with the outcome of the sea journey 'life or death' and ending at the moment of departure as *harraga* from the city and the countryside board the '*babour*' (possibly derived from the Spanish word *babor*, meaning port and adapted to Maghrebi dialects to refer to boats). Through the passage from departure to destination, *harraga* are shielded by their mothers' prayers, as conveyed in the words of the selfie-video creator.

Viewing themselves as socially dead in their source society, *harraga* believe that even if they perish at sea, they will have, at the very least, ventured in the pursuit of life. In this sense, they reconfigure the boat journey as an adventure (Mazauric, 2012) or, an expedition laden with promising rewards. One Moroccan *harrag* residing in a migrant detention facility in Madrid encapsulates this idea in a video shared on YouTube, 8 November 2017, (which garnered over a million views) when addressing prospective *harraga*, saying*:*

> Conquer your fear! We men fear nothing… They [the Guardia Civil] may apprehend you, beat you, torture you, but they cannot take your life, have faith and take the risk! Here, you can easily acquire status regularisation… it is simply a matter of time…"[368]

Life and death are salient themes running across *harraga*'s digitally mediated sea narratives. They are often symbolically communicated through the boat metaphor. While in mainstream news media, *harraga* are often depicted as naïve or suicidal people ready to board "*qawareb al-mout*" (death boats) in pursuit of the European Eldorado (dis)illusion, in *harga* Facebook pages they are subversively renamed "*qawareb al-ħayat*" (life vessels), or "*qawareb al-mostaqbal*" (boats of the future) carrying *harraga'*s 'brave' souls across the Mediterranean border (Fig. 30).

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[368] Video Available at: https://youtu.be/eV0QQBmjTC4?si=0M3oqC544zR7JImq [Accessed 30 March 2022]. My translation of the *harrag*'s statement expressed in Moroccan Arabic.

البعض يسميه بقوارب الموت
كيف استطيع ان اقول لكم بأن هذا القارب سيعبر حياتي إما ان
تصل او تقابل ربك ..
لاريد حظا أو عملا منك ياجزائر ايد فقط هجرتك فوق قارب أسميه
المستقبل
سأهجر في أول فرصة تتاح لي
متى ستأتي رحلتي 🤞🤞🤞😅
نشاله ربي يسهلنا ونشال كل واحد في بالو اوروبا نشاله يوصل

Fig 30. 'This is not a death boat. This is a life vessel.'

In *harraga*'s sea narratives, life and death are placed on equal footing as two possible eventualities and are inscribed within the religious realism spirit embraced by (would-be) *harraga* whose belief in *maktoub* [destiny]—what is destined/written—becomes a resistance as well as a coping mechanism that enables them to conquer their fear and challenge borders (Mastrangelo, 2018). In this sense, surrender to Allah's will—also a common phrase used by *harraga* while navigating the sea—makes the cross-border journey appear feasible since (to them) every occurrence is but the manifestation of His divine decree. Additionally, interwoven into their discursive fabric is the recurrent allusion to Prophet Muhammed's *hijra* narrative, which serves as a moral legitimisation of their illegal(ised) cross-border acts. Thus, in a reversal of interpretation, *harraga* challenge imams' moralistic reading of *harga* as an absurd, emulative version of the Prophet's forced migration from Mecca to Medina—an aspect which I discussed in Chapter Two. Commenting on a photo of a boat carrying a group of *harraga*, the admin of the Facebook page '*al-hijra wa nass al-ghorba DZ*' wrote in Modern Standard Arabic: "people have become obsessed with migration, for, when the Prophet faced injustice, he immediately left his country" (Fig.31, left screenshot).

Fig 31. 'Prophet Muhammed's *hijra* narrative re-purposed'

Accordingly, the religious persecution argument mobilised by imams to denounce *harraga*'s 'irrational' acts is here substituted by the more generic term 'injustice', which encompasses all the forms of state-induced immobilism charted in the previous chapter. From *harraga*'s perspective, the Prophet's migratory journey was a reactive gesture, a refusal to accept resignation in the face of oppression, a political act, which ultimately marked a turning point in Islamic history with the subsequent foundation of the *Ummah* (Islamic community) and the spread of Islam across the world. While scrutinising Algerian and Moroccan *harraga*'s YouTube videos, I have noticed that their narrativisation of the *hrig* act somewhat replicates the thematic structure of the Prophet's migration story, albeit with subtle variations. First, they refer to their unauthorised emigration as an act of 'escape', or '*harba*' as they put it, from an unjust system that deprives them of their basic human rights. Second, although the Prophet's forced journey to Medina lasted roughly 8 days[369] (and was undertaken overland) while *harraga*'s sea journeys often span from 6 to 72 hours (if they get lost at sea), common threads between the two, despite their occurrence across radically different time-spaces, are the perseverance and resilience displayed by the journeyers in the face of exhaustion and uncertainty. Also, their voyage, like that of the Prophet, is often undertaken with careful planning and is imbued with prayers, devout supplications, and ceaseless invocations of Allah. On their way to the southern

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[369] Boundless. (No Date). *Boundless World History*, Chapter 7, 'The Rise and Spread of Islam' [online]. Available at: https://www.boundless.com/world-history/textbooks/boundless-world-history-textbook/
[Accessed 30 January 2023].

shores of the Mediterranean, *harraga* often take videos and pictures of their provisions, like food and water, and the necessary equipment like navigation tools (GPS and phones, among others), safety items (life jackets), and post them online as irrefutable evidence that the journey is secure and expertly executed. This meticulous planning is also encapsulated in a post shared on '*haraga Algérie*' Facebook page, 25 Septembre 2018, wherein the admin outlines fourteen key guidelines that prospective *harraga* should follow prior to embarking on their maritime journey, with the aim of ensuring their safe arrival on the southern shores of Europe (Fig. 32).

Haraga Algerie
25 sept. 2018

الخلاصة : اخي الحراق قبل الاقلاع تذكر :
1- الماء
2- الأكل الازم للرحلة و الطوارئ (التمر)
3- البوجيات
4- الجيباس
5- البوصلة
6- البنزين
7- ملابس دافئة
8- ملابس محفوظة في اكياس ضد الماء
9- اشحن الهاتف
10- علي
11- اخبر اخال
12- خذ معك مائك
13- سافر مع أصدقائك
14- الخطوط البحرية تتمنى لكم رحلة موفقة

Fig 32. 'Instructions for *harraga* before onset of sea journey'

Furthermore, on board, *harraga* often allude to the words of the Prophet Muhammed, "*antom a-ssabi-quna wa naḥnou al-laḥiquna*" [you are the forerunners and we are the followers/successors][370]—a phrase he used when addressing the deceased in cemeteries acknowledging their precedence in death and underscoring its inevitability—in reverse order, "*naḥnou a-ssabi-quna wa antom al-laḥiquna*"[371] [we are the forerunners and you are the followers]. In so doing, *harraga* radically re-purpose and re-contextualise it when addressing *harga* seekers in live interactions as they approach the southern coasts of Europe. Thus, the Prophet's words undergo a process of re-signification (through a repositioning of pronouns and a substitution of death with life) and are instrumentalised by *harraga* as a counter-discursive gesture against the necropolitics of the Maghreb-EU immobility regime. Additionally, the statement, in its inverted form, is used to motivate the would-be *harraga* online community to

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[370] Sunan an-Nasa'i. (n.d), Hadith 2039, Vol(3), Book of Funerals. [Online]. Available at: الدرر السنية [Accessed 01 June 2022].
[371] Video available at: https://youtube.com/shorts/CukLGXoj9N4?si=OKwuEkUilcM3Df5M
[Accessed 02 January 2022].

undertake the sea journey and succeed them in reaching the 'shores' of a new life in Europe. Lastly, just as the Prophet performed a prayer upon his 'safe' arrival at Medina, so too do some *harraga* prostrate in gratitude to Allah upon setting foot on the sands of Europe's shores for having triumphantly traversed the Mediterranean border, as pertinently illustrated by a photograph shared 13 September 2018 on '*haraga Algérie*' Facebook page (Fig. 33).

Fig 33. Euphoria of arrival: *Harraga* prostrating upon arrival on Spanish shores

It is crucial to emphasise that this religious reading does not, in any way, imply a direct comparison between Medina and Europe, but it does nonetheless shed light on the allegorical dimension of the crossing, the thematic and discursive parallelism between the Prophet's and modern-day *harraga*'s migration narrative, which comes in the form of 'repetition with difference' (Deleuze, 1994). Armed with the belief that their migration is legitimate—as opposed to the hegemonic actors' conceptualisation of 'clandestine' crossings as transgressive of both Divine and state Law—*harraga* cross the Mediterranean Sea with the echoes of "*Allahou Akbar*" [God is the Greatest] emanating from the northward-surging dinghy, and simultaneously cascading through the digital ether to reach online audiences. Thus, by 'setting the sea on fire' while evoking Allah's greatness and reminding audiences that their *hijra*, like that of the Prophet, is rightful, *harraga* disrupt the present 'legal' order of things, by inviting spectators to rethink the difference between the concepts of 'lawfulness' and 'justice', and thereby draw attention to the unjustness of immigration laws and, by extension, that of the neo-colonial border regime. As Grant J. Silva (2019) rightly observes, while "lawfulness refers to law coming from the proper legal authority (pedigree) [and] must adhere to the basic legal norms and principles that undergird all [state] laws" (n.p.); justice, on the other hand, refers to "the rightness or

wrongness of the [latter], holding [them] to standards of morality or righteousness".[372] Viewing contemporary immigration laws and the increasingly stringent visa requirements to enter the EU as deviating from their subjective construals of a 'higher law'—one which is just and respective of human beings' basic rights—*harraga* engage in "migratorial disobedience",[373] a form of constructive defiance that radically departs from and challenges the normative configurations of borders.

In response to the strategic displacement of illegality by hegemonic actors—from laws that immobilise nationals to the so-called 'illegal' body of the *harrag* in unauthorised spaces—*harraga* tend to post caricatures on social media to critique and challenge their governments' migration policies. These online visual representations offer a form of resistance, using humour and hyperbole to highlight the dehumanising effects of systemic border violence. One such example can be found on '*Haraga Algérie*' Facebook page, posted 03 January 2019, featuring a *harrag* attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea, looking back at his pursuers and mockingly asking in Algerian Darija, a question that could be translated as: "if I come back, any chance you'd hire me?"[374] (Fig. 34) Their answer showcases the state's immobility policies as well as their violation of the right of migrants to return safely (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art.13) to their source country— "if you come back, we will arrest you [for breaching the law] you'll see!" Through the online dissemination of such satiric dissensus discourses, admins of *harga* pages draw the attention of their followers to the double entrapment that (would-be) *harraga* face: being immobilised in their source soicieties which they view as 'cages', and the risk of being forced to return if their attempt to cross to Europe fails. Having nothing to lose, they perceive the cross-border act as a potential gateway to freedom, a risk worth taking. In this sense, they regard their act of defiance as disobedient not by choice, but as a result of having no other option, and thus potentially constructive.

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[372] Ibid.
[373] Silva (2019, n.p).
[374] My translation.

Fig 34. *Harrag:* If I come back, any chance you'd hire me?
The Government: If you come back, we will lock you up, you'll see!

While in mainstream news media the Mediterranean Sea is often portrayed as a highly militarised border or a liquid space wherein precarious migrant boats are immobilised, in *harraga'*s YouTube videos, it appears wide, wondrous and welcoming. Addressing *harga* page followers in a live video (later uploaded to YouTube) while *en route* to the southern shores of Italy, an Algerian *harrag* shouts in excitement, "Italiano-Romano!" as he pans his phone camera over the seemingly borderless expanse of water stretching ahead of him and his fellow boat passengers, pointing out that there is not a single coast guard in sight.[375] The image of the illusively unending sea view is a common leitmotif in *harraga*'s videos and serves to project their utopian vision of a world where the artificial segregational frontiers between South and North are abolished. As Samia Mehrez (2002: 54) aptly observes, these illegalised emigrants "not only refuse to recognize these boundaries but read them as sheer distances that must be crossed". In these audio-visual (counter-)representations, *harraga* offer alternative border epistemologies, and in so doing, re-configure not only their identities as constantly in flux as they narrate and reflect upon their migratory enterprise, but also recast the 'White Sea in the middle' as a repository of divergent narratives, a liquid archive of heterogeneous maritime journeys, wherein migrant metonyms are frozen and unfrozen, where meanings are dis-placed and replaced by new ones, in brief, a site of "simultaneous, intertwined and overlapping discourses".[376]

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[375] Video Available at: https://youtu.be/DCrm62hPGa0?si=DRwbmQP8-pvoTK8N [Accessed 30 January 2022].
[376] Proglio (2017: viii).

Appropriated by *harraga*, The Mediterranean Sea also unfolds like a blank slate, upon which is re-written a set of micro-histories that challenge official narrativisations of South-North unauthorised migration as threat to national integrity and security. Satirising right-wing readings of illegalised cross-border movements as attempts to 'invade' 'Fortress Europe', both Algerian and Moroccan *harraga* tend to mockingly re-use the derogatory terminology deployed by European mainstream media actors and policy makers. In doing so, they foreground the latter's ungrounded fear of the 'Other' as well as their cultural obscurantism. For example, *harraga* often tend to employ the Arabic term '*ghazawet*' [incursions/raids] (satirically) in their Facebook posts as a discursive substitute for the phrase 'boat journeys'. Originally, '*ghazawet*' denoted military expeditions during the early Islamic period, particularly under Prophet Muhammed and the subsequent caliphates undertaken within the context of territorial defence and expansion to extend the political and territorial influence of the Islamic state and spread Islamic teachings and principles beyond the Arabian peninsula.[377] Thus, referring to their *harga* as '*ghazwa*' (singular form of '*ghazawet*'), and their prospective 'infiltration' of European borders as '*i9tiħam*' [assault], *harraga* enact two forms of semantic displacements. First, they agentively remove the word from its past context and adapt it to a new one, and in doing this, subvert its meaning through contextual appropriation (Fig. 35).

Fig 35. Appropriation and subversion of hegemonic terminology: *Harga* as 'assault'on European borders.

[377] Al-Maani, (n.d). Online Dictionary. Available at: تعريف و شرح و معنى غزوة بالعربي في معاجم اللغة العربية معجم المعاني الجامع، المعجم الوسيط ،اللغة العربية المعاصر ،الرائد ،لسان العرب ،القاموس المحيط - معجم عربي عربي صفحة 1 [Accessed 02 May 2023].

Historically, the Islamic military expeditions undertaken by the Prophet's successors (caliphs), involved sophisticated naval transportation means like war ships and galleys (especially used by the Ottomans in the Mediterranean), which were often equipped with various forms of artillery like cannons, siege weapons and mortars among others. Using the word '*ghazawet*' while simultaneously capturing footage of the modest interior of a dinghy or a zodiac— containing barrels of water and gasoline along with basic food supplies—is part and parcel of *harraga*'s parodic border show for, conspicuously, there is nothing particularly threatening to 'Western civilisation' and its values in a group of (unarmed) young men (and in some cases women and children) uttering prayers, interacting with online audiences or bidding farewell to their family members in a live video while carrying basic items to ensure a safe journey. Although discursively (re-)framed as a parodic "colonisation / [invasion] in reverse" (Bennett, 1986), *harga* unfolds ironically as a reminder of the colonial trauma and the urgency to write/strike back against the former coloniser. However, unlike their former colonisers, modern-day *harraga* seek to enter Europe 'by force', i.e., without documents, with the intention to work and gain benefits in return, not to exploit, appropriate land and resources and conduct pillages in the name of post-colonial revenge. *Harraga*'s reiteration of their desire to make a decent living and honor their loved ones (as demonstrated by the audio, visual and textual material discussed earlier in this chapter) stands in stark opposition to the stereotypical narrative that frames them as passive consumers of European welfare systems or as potential criminals.

Extending the parodic spirit, yet slightly diverging from a religious reading and conspicuously overturning the media's dehumanising representations of immobile vessels and bodies, are online-shared videos and photos featuring *harraga* celebrating the crossing.[378] In these alternative framings, the Mediterranean Sea is bathed in sunlight and hence rejoicing in life—as opposed to the clichéd watery graveyard imagery mobilised by mainstream media— and *harraga* are exuding vigour and vitality as they buoyantly flash (v)ictory signs and thumbs up while the dinghy is racing across the waves with bold and unerring speed (Fig. 36). As Rai music plays in the background, some of the passengers are rapturously smoking their '*garou*' [cigarettes] and inhaling the fiery essence of their desires, smiles playing on their lips as they face the camera. Interfering with the delicate notes of the song is the cacophony of the Yamaha

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[378] Videos Available at :
https://youtu.be/ne6qFcINEM8?si=PVyoHofisun8AM4i
https://youtu.be/MrSkCOTwaiU?si=prkX2YV_Rr4EhKD4
https://youtu.be/fKXIAb1hU4I?si=9xh68GuM4dgu61mO
[All accessed 02 February 2022].

engine's thunderous roar— a testament to its power and vitality— while the GPS hums with precision. In these videos, neither *harraga* nor the boat that carries their bodies exude precarity and the Mediterranean Sea is pictured as a festive theatre, a stage filled with motion and mirth, housing these post-modern border players as they enact their subversive mobility.[379]

Fig 36. 'Euphoria of the crossing'

Furthermore, some of these videos appear in a creative compilation as is the case of a series of audio-visual narratives of Algerian *harraga* crossing the sea. Each segment is given a title that encompasses the name of the source and the target country (eg: 'Annaba-Italy/Oran-Espana') giving spectators a sense of the chronotope of the journey (Fig. 37). Each trip appears more like a pre-booked boat ride rather than an illegalised cross-border act. It is also important to add that by appending a Rap or *harga* song to the video, *harraga* not only boost the number of views but also simultaneously advertise the musical piece. Thus, the fusion of the video content and the *harga*-themed song weaves a rich and compound cultural tapestry 'from below', smoothly embedding itself into a digitally mediated memory.

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[379] Videos available at:
https://youtube.com/shorts/PsKoVXZ_BKI?si=oYUOTQY3yt2RZ61U
https://youtu.be/s_gikqvclPk?si=tGD4WfPnNSF5PvAG
[All Accessed 02 February 2022].

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Fig 37. Annaba-Italy trip: Still taken from a YouTube-shared *harga* video

In these video sequences, the *harrag* renders himself 'hypervisible' in an attempt to compete with the hegemonic spectacularisation of migrant immobilisation scenes circulated in dominant deterrence narratives around illegalised migration and in doing so, doubly defies the discursive and visual hegemonic regime of representation within which *harga* is referred to (paradoxically) as a clandestine/secretive act of 'illegal' migration performed under the veil of night to avoid being intercepted and arrested by coast guards. Moreover, illegalised cross-border movements, which used to be part of the 'migration crisis' hidden geographies (Squire, 2022), enter a regime of transnational perceptibility through online circulation, as the *harrag* video maker/sharer 'snatches' the right to be seen. Even though these audio-visual fragments unfold in Moroccan or Algerian dialects with a few exceptions of code-switching or linguistic appropriation and distortion (eg: "riskage, Romano, Spania, Oroba"), the body language of the boat passengers testifies to their cross-border euphoria. In some Facebook posts, even the notion of risk—which by definition, connotes danger, uncertainty and responsibility—is semantically played with and ridiculed. For example, the admin of '*Maroc Haraga 18'*, shared a video in which he derides the Moroccan Navy's fruitless attempts at chasing *harraga* at sea with a caption that translates as, "I am running (away) and the government [border authorities implied] is running after me! If the journey isn't risky[380] then you won't drink whisky!" (Fig. 38 and 39)

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[380] The admin playfully uses the rhyming scheme 'risky/whisky' in the original quote to achieve a comedic effect. In this context, the vocable '*risky*' is an arabisation of the French word '*risque*', and figures in the post in Arabic letters.

Fig 38. '*Harraga* chase'   **Fig 39.** Still taken from a Facebook-shared video of Guardia Civil chasing *harraga* at sea.

In this regard, the flight to Europe is framed as an escape from religious constraints (as the consumption of alcohol is prohibited in Islam) along with other factors. Even though drinking alcohol in modern-day Morocco is common practice, especially in licensed venues like hotels, bars, and restaurants, in some culturally and religiously conservative areas, namely in the rif regions, it is deemed disrespectful to family members and the community as a whole. As such, exiting Morocco, and entering the EU via Melilla unfolds symbolically as a celebrated departure from moral confines, laced with a playful taunt of humour. Additionally, in this satirical multimodal ensemble, the rhetor reconfigures border agents' endeavours to immobilise *harraga* at sea as a ludic 'chasing/chess' game wherein the *harrag* moves tactically like a 'knight' capable of making unexpected moves and manoeuvres across the 'board'—the Mediterranean stage within this cross-border logic. Indeed, like a chess knight, the border burner/runner is envisioned as a daring adventurer endowed with the ability to 'jump over other pieces' (borders), and 'control key squares' (movement across nautical miles) with a view to gaining a positional or a material advantage, and subsequently evading their opponents—coast guards in this metaphoric reading. Moreover, it is reasonable to argue that, *harraga*, like chess knights, do not aim to 'attack' a 'Fortress' in the sense of seizing control over or invading it, but rather seek to 'disrupt' its defences, i.e, its invisible borders, strategically, and in doing this, subsequently 'force' the reactions of its inhabitants (a metonymic reference to European border figures, decision-makers and anti-migrant people). Within this 'chasing' logic, *harraga* recast

themselves as agile, tactical, strategic, and dynamic 'border players' (Cuttitta, 2014) appropriating not only the Mediterranean stage, but also regulating and altering the rules of the border '*duel*' in its emobodied and discursive dimensions. The act of auto-spectacularisation enacted through a gaze displacement from the 'eyes' of border surveillance to the perspective of the agent of the cross-border act, and its simultaneous representation, adds suspense to 'the show' and enhances audience engagement and interaction. Through these subversive audio-visual productions, *harraga* could be read as "active constructors of the realities they find themselves in, or of the realities they create when they move" (Papadopoulos et al., 2008: 202, cited in Squire, 2022: 1050), and therefore, as fierce resistors of both physical and symbolic violence. In this parodic visualisation of the border spectacle, *harraga,* as the post sharer mockingly puts it, look forward to toasting their arrival at 'Fortress Europe' with "whisky".

Notwithstanding the multiplicity of readings that *harga* by sea representations yield, claiming the right to move (across geographic boundaries, through territories, and into new spaces) is inscribed by border burners in a decolonial politics of mobility. *Harga*, as "decolonial migration" (Achiume, 2019), is primarily a contestation of neo-colonial spatialised inequalities resulting from the historical legacies of exploitation and dispossession.[381] Setting the Sea on fire, is not only a disruption enacted at the level of "spaces of sovereignty" (Achiume, 2019), but, more importantly, it is a *statement of*[382] sovereignty, i.e., of the right to self-determination.[383] As Achiume (2019: 1571) points out, "it is migration responsive to the unfinished business of the European colonial project, and it seeks to counter the persisting subordinating effects of this project", in short, an expression of "decolonising consciousness".[384] These unauthorised migrations, thus, challenge Europe to "confront its colonial amnesia" (Echchaibi, 2020) and (symbolically at least) grant them a portion of the wealth and resources acquired though imperial means (Bhambra, 2017). Thus, by de-linking from their pre-migration environments through the symbolic act of identity incineration, *harraga* set their past of subordination aflame, or, in Zied Hadfi's accurate expression, "f[ont] table rase du passé"[385] and in doing this, transcend historical inertia, which is manifested in the residuals of failed decolonisation and contemporary forms of neo-colonial economic and political dependency. Accordingly, *harga* unfolds as a "decolonisation at the personal level" (Achiume, 2019: 1552),

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[381] Squire (2022).
[382] My emphasis.
[383] Ibid.
[384] Ibid
[385] This phrase could be translated as "make a clear break with the past", or "wipe the slate clean (of the past)" given that *harga* is perceived as an act of renewal and self-regeneration.

a quest for "a corrective distributive justice",[386] i.e., a 'rectificatory' gesture that has been denied to them. Setting the Sea on fire while everyone is watching, is a demand to be not only 'seen' but also recognised by the ex-coloniser as politically equal subjects (rather than 'an economic migrant' or 'a bogus refugee' as they are often dubbed), in other others, as "co-sovereign".[387]

By replacing the European and Maghrebi state-centric lenses with a gaze from the margin, *harraga* illuminate the Mediterranean Sea as "a [productive] epistemological device" (Proglio, 2017, xii) through which to re-view the polysemous character of borders. Through the use of ICTs, *harraga* digitalise a 'liquid archive'—the Sea as a site of ephemeral stories—and contribute to the production of a mobile cyber (counter-) memory wherein multiple cross-border narratives are immobilised/immortalised. Before engaging with what I metaphorically call 'cyber cinders', i.e., *harraga*'s digital traces and their connection to the notions of im-mobility, dis-placement, and crisis as an 'open closure' to Part Three, I first critically reflect on online re-presentations of *harraga*'s death at sea as subversive responses to the necropolitical character of the (North-)African-EU immobility regime, and the '*harga* scare' rhetoric instrumentalised by hegemonic actors as an ineffective deterrence mechanism.

6.3   *'Firing up the threads of the Net': Digital memory and the im-mobility of harraga's counter-histories*

As its title suggests, this section evolves from the water/fire metaphor explored earlier and advances the discussion around *harraga*'s defiance and disruption of dominant regimes of migration representation by drawing on a figurative parallel between the Sea and the net, which serve as boundless archives for their struggles and stories. Indeed, just as the Sea's vast expanse holds the weight of *harraga*'s fiery struggles, so too does the net carry the residues of their stories. By 'residues' I mean not merely what lingers after the sea border has been set afire, but also what remains after the border has consumed the very force that ignited it. As such, this section explores the (counter-)narratives around *harraga*'s death at sea and the im-mobility of digital memory, which functions as a decolonial archival space. Not only does this section serve as a thematic and analytical extension of the previous one, but also builds on its findings by foregrounding the decolonial character of *harraga*'s digital discourses. The concept of archive, as established earlier, is problematic when approached from a decolonial perspective. In line with the notion of de-linking (Mignolo, 2011), decolonial memory simultaneously builds on the

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[386] Achiume (2019: 1553).
[387] Ibid.

past and breaks away from it. Put differently, it links and delinks, producing spaces in between which are unstatic and evolving. My choice of the metaphoric tournure 'firing up the threads of the net' as a section title is informed by my understanding of digital spaces as fertile sites wherein (would-be) *harraga* in the national contexts under examination, cultivate voice empowerment as a means of asserting their subjectivities through 'igniting' discussions that disrupt monolithic narratives on *harga*.

Traditional archives, as Hoskins (2017) explains, used to be centralised, institutionalised, and hence represented a stable space where artefacts of the past were stored and "walled by memory keepers" (5). However, with the advent of the internet and the proliferation of digital devices and applications, the very semantics of the 'archive' has radically shifted from being the embodiment of collective memory, to that of the 'multitude' mediated by online users' constant practices of snapping, sharing, posting, liking, linking, and chatting on virtual 'walls'.[388]Resultantly, digital memory in all its multiple forms is, as Hoskins puts it, "all over the place, scattered yet simultaneous and searchable: connected, networked, archived" (3), hence its ambivalent status.

This first sub-section engages with forms of digital grievability as a counterreaction to the necropolitics of the border regime while the second closes the analysis—albeit in a rather open-ended fashion— with a critical reflection on the problematic status of *harraga*'s virtual archives, the crisis it is likely to generate with regards migration representation, which explains my use of the phrase 'cyber cinders'.

6.3.1 'Burnt but still alive': Harraga's death at Sea and digital grieving through a 'mobile' necroethics

"Verily, unto Allah do we belong; and verily, unto Him we shall return" (*Sourat Al-baquarah*/the Cow: 156)—a phrase recited by Muslims when calamity befalls them—marks the opening of posts by admins of *harga* Facebook pages when announcing the deaths of *harraga* who perished at sea during their attempt to cross to Europe in search of decent livelihoods (Fig. 40). In Islam, the phrase is primarily an invitation to contemplate 'the bigger picture', and remind oneself that this life is transitory and ephemeral, and that the life of the hereafter is the everlasting one. In the context of *harraga*'s digital representation, the phrase particularly

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[388] Hoskins (2017).

acquires a political significance as it introduces a discourse not only of regret and lamentation but also one of contestation.

Fig 40. "Verily, to Allah do we belong, and to Him we shall return: Hamza, from Agadir (Morocco) has left us."

The admins of *harga* Facebook pages seek to pay tribute to those who died chasing their dreams while simultaneously laying the blame on their government's necropolitical governance of migration. In these digital contestatory discourses, the immobility regime sustained by governments on both sides of the Mediterranean through partnership agreements and coordinated border control, is held responsible for *harraga*'s opting for illegalised and perilous routes at the cost of their lives. Moreover, as demonstrated in Part One, in Algerian and Moroccan mainstream news channels, the dehumanising images of *harraga*'s corpses adrift the sea—itself visually and discursively framed as a liquid deathscape—are used to consolidate governments' deterrence narratives, in other words, "to justify their politics of repression and border militarisation" (Mazzara, 2020: 2). As an attempt to challenge these '*harga* scare' narratives wherein the deceased *harraga* are reduced to numerical entities, admins and followers alike engage in virtual commemorative ceremonies to honour the departed *harraga*, cultivating

thereby a digital 'necroethics'. Although the latter term has been used as a neologism by Joseph Pugliese in his 2010 essay "Necroethics of Terrorism", in which he critiques suicide bombers' so-called 'ethical stance' and putative moral justifications of their terrorist acts in the videos they record prior to the terrorist act, in the context of this study, I re-purpose and re-contextualise it as a framework or a set of (online) practices informing *harga* Facebook pages admins' ethical considerations related to the treatment of the photographic representation of the *harraga* who died on their way to Europe.

While photos of the refugees who died during their attempts to cross the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas have often been 'artified', 'memefied', and spectacularised in online spaces as was the case with the iconic image of three-year old toddler Alan Kurdi washed ashore on a beach in Turkey (Ibrahim, 2018), *harraga*'s photos have not undergone this process as it is deemed 'unethical' and disrespectful to the deceased and their families—a belief informed by Islamic teachings. Although the permissibility of photography or any other visual art form featuring human bodies in a more general sense (and depicting Prophet Muhammed more specifically) is a highly debatable matter among Islamic scholars as such artefacts are seen as encouraging idolisation, taking photographs of corpses is generally viewed (although this is not exclusively limited to Islam) as unethical, raising questions about the deceased subjects' dignity, which may potentially cause harm to their family. As Yasmin Ibrahim (2018) observes, in the open spaces of the internet, the bodies of dead migrants can become the "sites of the spectacular [for they can be] claimed […] re-appropriated" (1) and *set into motion*[389] through processes of sharing, posting and re-posting. She also convincingly argues that through the "viral consumption modes"[390] enabled by the mass circulation of such artefacts, the migrant's dead body is fetishised and hence dehumanised, which invites us to rethink questions regarding the ethics of online visual representation of death, and thereby reflect on our "ethics of seeing [the Other]" (Sontag, 2004).

Although visual art forms articulated within a "politics of dissensus" (Rancière, 2009; Mazzara, 2019) can be a powerful way of grieving the migrants who lost their lives at sea as they challenge the necropolitical character of the border regime and "breach a [hegemonic] representational order that prioritises […] their invisibility [and their ungrievability]" (Mazzara, 2020: 8), the aestheticised photography of migrants' dead bodies—when "stripped of its context" (Ibrahim, 2018: 1)—can transgress ethical boundaries and metamorphose the deceased

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[389] My emphasis.
[390] Ibrahim (2018: 1).

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into objects of online voyeurism. While Ibrahim (2018) engages with a digitally mediated "necroaesthetics" whereby iconic photography of dead refugees produces a "sensorium" (Rancière, 2009) that invokes "a whole array of affective reaction in the public" (3), and fosters what Lilie Chouliaraki (2006) aptly describes as "a spectatorship of suffering", I propose a reading of a digitally enabled 'necroethics' as an alternative lens through which to examine the moral, affective and political engagements that the strategic online sharing and circulation of deceased *harraga*'s photography promotes. Rather than viewing dehumanising images of "bodies of water" (Pugliese, 2006) floating on the surface of the Mediterranean Sea as eliciting feelings of pity and fear, as demonstrated in Part One, what we commonly see on Algerian and Moroccan *harga* Facebook pages are profile photos of *harraga*, which are often (re)posted with an added caption including information about their age, the day they left their country of origin, and the circumstances of their death, offering thereby a hypershort narrative (Darcy, 2008) that rehumanises them (Fig. 41).
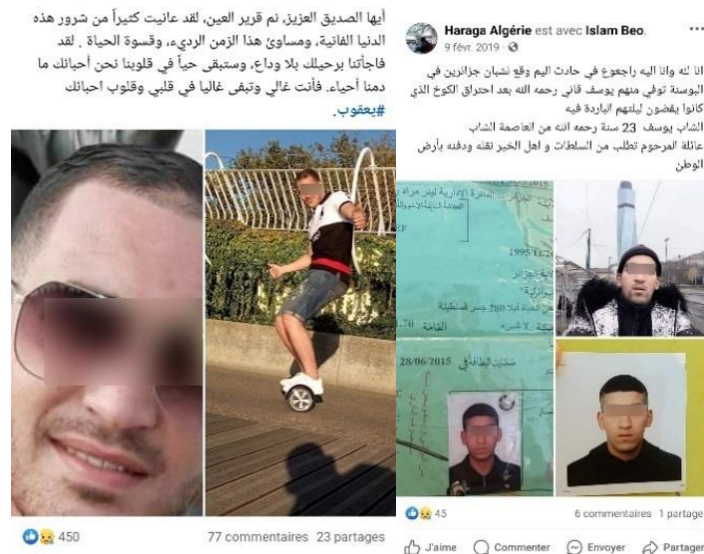

Fig 41. Photos of *harraga* who died attempting to cross to Europe

There is nothing particularly aesthetic or poetic in these digital representations as iconicity is conspicuously not the intended effect. As part of their ethics of dead *harraga*'s visual representation, admins foreground the latter's faces as a symbolic gesture, which is reminiscent of Muslims' tendency to unveil the face of martyrs (rather than their bodies) as an act of recognition and commemoration of their 'noble' deeds, bravery and sacrifice. Indeed, admins and followers of *harga* Facebook pages, along with creators of *harga*-related videos on YouTube, often tend to portray *harraga* who died at sea as "*shouhada*" [martyrs] (Bensaada,

2022), or "*moujahidin*" [fighters/strivers] (fig.42-43), with both religious and political arguments underpinning these interpretations of their deaths. In this context, the kind of '*jihad*' implied by the term '*moujahid*' refers to a non-violent, existential struggle and as such, is redefined away from the militarised or radical connotations associated with 'jihadism'. This re-imagined '*jihad*' reflects instead the migrant's relentless efforts in the pursuit of life, dignity, and self-betterment in the face of systemic oppression and marginalisation. By reframing *harraga*'s death in these terms, these representations form part of a broader digital counter-discourse that resists the hegemonic media constructions of *harraga* as engaging in self-destructive or suicidal acts, as discussed in the second chapter of Part One. It is noteworthy that, according to some interpretations of the Hadith, Muslims who lose their lives (accidentally) while travelling, by drowning[391] or from burns caused by fire exposure, are considered martyrs.[392] In this sense, *harraga* appropriate and 'update' these religious understandings to rehabilitate the status of the migrants who drowned while 'burning' the Mediterranean Sea, holding their government accountable for their tragic fate. Beyond the religious interpretation of *harraga*'s death at sea, Ouafa Bensaada (2022) highlights the political dimension attributed to their 'martyr' status, particularly in "on-land"[393] (as opposed to "on-line") spaces of contestation, such as street protests (like the Hirak in Algeria). She argues that in these protests, the *harraga* who lost their lives in the Mediterranean Sea are not merely viewed as rebels but are "elevated to the rank of national martyrs",[394] with their portraits displayed alongside those of the War of Independence heroes. This rehabilitation, Bensaada explains, forges a symbolic link between the struggles of the colonial past, and those of the neo-colonial present, illustrating how the historical trauma of *hogra*—which she describes as "*le significant d'une histoire passée*

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[391] In a video shared via *An-nahar* TV's official YouTube channel on 5 October 2017, featuring a debate on *harga*, an Algerian imam unequivocally expressed his opposition to the practice, aligning himself with the stance of state-endorsed imams who condemn it. However, his interpretation of *harraga*'s death at sea, in particular, marked a radical departure from the prevailing narrative, offering an alternative perspective on their fate. Unlike other government-sanctioned religious authorities who frame *harga* as an act of suicide—viewing the maritime journey as an attempt at self-harm—this imam argued that the young men and women who lost their lives while crossing to Europe were not seeking death but rather a better life. In his view, people who drown at sea (unintentionally), as is often the case with *harraga*, should be considered "*shouhada*" [martyrs], as he emphatically put it, "*al harrag alghariq shahid*". As such, his approach not only presents a more 'compassionate' religious reading of *harraga*'s death (seemingly intended to alleviate the intense grief that consumes their bereaved mothers) but also resonates with the perspectives found in *harga*-related social media narratives, which portray *harraga*'s death as a tragic consequence of a (legitimate) quest for dignity and survival. The video is available at: https://youtu.be/x7iCuofMACA?si=SFOedIXunVboT0VC [Accessed 12 February 2022].
[392] Al-Bukhari.M.I. (n.d.). *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, *Book 56, Hadith 45* [online], https://tinyurl.com/ycyxkhw8 [Accessed 05 October 2022].
[393] I borrow Saskia Huc-Hepher's (2017) phrase "on-land and on-line" to succinctly capture the material and virtual dimensions of the discursive spaces I am examining in this particular context.
[394] My translation of the original quote: "les *harraga* morts en mer sont hissés […] au rang de martyrs" (84).

restant actuelle"[395] (85)—has been reactivated in contemporary Algeria. This trauma is not only a consequence of the persistent colonial legacy but also a result of the post-independence state's indifference and inaction towards the aspirations of its youth. Thus, in lieu of undergoing a process of spectacularisation, dead *harraga* are subjected to a process of 'martyrisation' (Souiah, 2020) "on-land and on-line" as they are believed to have died for a righteous cause— the pursuit of dignity and justice— and in tragic circumstances away from their families. In the popular imaginary, the *harraga* who perished in the Mediterranean become, in Souiah's words, "*des figures symboliques d'une Algérie sacrifiée*" (47) [symbols of a sacrificed/ 'sold out' Algeria].

Fig.42. Still taken from a YouTube-shared *harga* music video (10 January 2016) featuring a young woman kneeling in supplication before the raging waves, beseeching Allah to grant the departed the status of '*shaheed*'.[396]

Fig 43. '*Harrag* referred to as a '*shaheed*' and a '*hero*' for having rescued young people from drowning during the sea journey to Europe, ultimately sacrificing his own life in the process.

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[395] [*Hogra* is 'the signifier' of a past history that still reverberates in the present].

[396] Video available at : https://youtu.be/yGpaQk5uSjc?si=e1Buvhddz9Xj2_8l [Accessed 20 January 2022].

As established earlier, from the perspective of the *harraga* digital communities selected for this study, a *harrag* is often viewed as an altruistic person willing to sacrifice their life to improve the livelihoods of their loved ones. In this sense, the *harraga*'s religious 'sublimation' of their migratory act and ceaseless invocations of Allah, before and during their journey (Mastrangelo, 2018), also contribute to their posthumous honorification and 'redemption' as '*shaheed*/hero' (Fig.43). From their view point, if they fail to reach the earthly 'Eldorado', they will cross into the everlasting '*Jannah*' [paradise]. Further illustrating this idea are the evocative words of an Algerian *harrag*, Mehdi, which he engraved in Modern Standard Arabic in black paint on a weathered white wall, which translate as "I shall die happy endeavouring to reach the other shores/ I shall die at peace if I drown while attempting to migrate". The photo of this graffiti was shared by the admin of '*haraga Algérie*', 26 June 2019, as a powerful statement of resilience and resistance (Fig. 44).

Fig 44. "I shall die at peace if I drown while attempting to migrate". Signed Mehdi.

That said, *harraga* whose life and death are always already constructed as 'ungrievable' (Mazzara, 2020) by the border apparatus, become in *harraga*'s digital worlds "[subjects] of mourning", to use Arianna Jacqmin's phrase (Mazzara, 2020: 2). Indeed, in the Moroccan and Algerian Facebook pages selected for the present study, bidding farewell to the departed through

heartfelt posts imploring Allah to ease their journey to the Hereafter and grant them a place in *Jannah*, as well as offering solace to their loved ones, are common practices inscribed within a virtual politics of grievability. These posts frequently showcase photographs of the departed in moments of happiness, which not only serve as enduring tokens of their once-vibrant lives but also evoke a sense of their continued presence, as if they were still among the living. These joyful snapshots (Fig. 43) also function as a stark reminder to decision-makers that they are to be held responsible for having brutally cut their lives short—an attempt to instill a sense of guilt and shame in them. This symbolic act of 'presencing' (Chouliaraki, 2017) the absent is intended to stir decolonial empathy (Pedwell, 2019)—as opposed to the neo-colonial forms of empathetic engagements discussed in Part Two—among *harraga* online communities who view the departed as their equals, their 'brothers' ['*khouti*'] as they put it, rather than 'pity-inducing' victims of their Euro-Eldorado (dis)illusions, or criminals threatening the European Other's security. By posting these portrait photographs, admins invite us "to connect to [their] affective grammar" (Chouliaraki, 2017: 10), and more importantly, to engage in what French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas calls "the face-to-face […] mode of ethical address […] and to confront us to the humanity of the Other" (Chouliaraki, 2017: 9) in an as if "now and here mode"[397] enabled by 'face'-book. As such, through online viewers' solidaristic interactions, supplications, and psychological support to the deceased subject's family expressed in their empathetic comments and sharing and re-posting practices, viewers and followers of *harga* Facebook pages contribute to the enhancing of dead *harraga*'s visibility, and hence to their memorability and immortalisation (Ibrahim, 2018). In this ethical regime of photographic representation and circulation, is usually nested a plea for justice urging state actors to repatriate the deceased migrants' bodies to be laid to rest decently and in accordance with Islamic rituals and traditions (Fig. 45).

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[397] Chouliaraki (2017: 9).

Fig 45. A call to the Algerian government to repatriate the bodies of deceased *harraga,* so they can be laid to rest with dignity in their country of birth.

Thus, the sharing and re-posting of (dead) *harraga*'s photos within a context of contestation wherein their bodies are claimed to be buried properly (rather than to be dehumanisingly hypervisibilised and fetishised as objects of compassion) in their country of birth, become digital strategies of resistance and pressure on the government as well as powerful catalysts for mobilising radical action aimed at recognising the 'grievability' of those lost lives. For instance, acts of protests have been thoroughly documented and comprehensively examined by Farida Souiah (2020) in the context of the Hirak in Algeria in 2019. However, in the (expected) absence or failure of governmental authorities to respond effectively to such popular demands owing to their misgovernance or their reluctance to engage in body retrieval operations, Moroccan and Algerian *harga* pages admins's ethical use of deceased *harraga*'s photography could be read as a collective articulation of a digital politics of archiving that forms an integral part of a *harga* (counter-) history from below. Thus, the circulation of these photographs does not contribute to the dehumanising spectacularisation of the *harraga*'s dead bodies, as portrayed, for instance, in the news narratives examined in Part One, nor does it function as a form of death imagery iconisation as was the case of three-year old Alan Kurdi's body lying motionless on Turkish shores (Ibrahim, 2018). Rather, these photographs constitute

a counter-narrative move against the anonymity of the dead *harraga* evoked in the demeaning visual framework of representation perpetuated by mainstream media on both sides of the Mediterranean.

In a bid to symbolically "subvert the crisis of [migrants' immobile bodies'] (un)traceability" (Mazzara, 2020: 6), admins and followers alike engage in a formation of a digital memory wherein the image of the deceased *harrag* stands as a durable "techno-trace" (Chouliaraki, 2017). It becomes hence an im-mobil (ised) visual (and narrative) testimony to the sequelae of the immobility regime and evidence that the 'burnt are still alive'.

6.3.2 Harga stories as 'cyber cinders'

> *"Cinders there are, […] there are only cinders."*
> Jacques Derrida, *Cinders*, (2014).

At its core, *harga*—as a metaphorical, or more precisely, a metonymic articulation of the semantic multiplicities of fire in contemporary North-African migratory contexts—draws attention to the absent presence/present absence of its practitioners who, in their process of imaginary, symbolic, and material border burning, occupy two distinct spaces, the here/there-now/then, life and death. Serving as both an epigraph to this final sub-section as well as a poetic epilogue to this thesis, Derrida's "old gray words" (Derrida & Lukacher, 1991: 13)—"cinders there are, there are only cinders"—which come into being via a process of anadiplosis creating a rhythmic and memorable effect, are (paradoxically) a *vivid*[398] reminder that there are no ashes without fire, no ruins without destruction. Like Derrida's "nearly untranslatable phrase" (Derrida & Lukacher, 1991: vii) "*il y a là cendre*", the figure of the *harrag*, owing to its conceptual plurality (Souiah, 2016), fiery fluidity, and ashen complexity stubbornly resists any attempt at being defined and is, therefore, representation-proof, hence the quasi-impossibility to trace its unending contours. Indeed, like ashes, *harga* may at face value appear simple and (conceptually) tangible, encapsulated in a line or two, as an 'illegal/clandestine cross-border act performed by young people, mostly men, escaping poverty in search of better life opportunities in the Euro-Eldorado'—a tentative paraphrasing of some of the dominant simplistic narratives circulating across the Maghreb and Europe. However, upon deeper scrutiny of *harraga*'s digitally mediated multimodal testimonies, a thick layer of complex meanings progressively

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[398] My emphasis.

unfolds yet resists definitive 'capture', much like the cinders that remain after the burnout of fire.

Through mainstream media's symbolic im-mobility and semantic displacements as illustrated in the first thematic part of this thesis, *harraga* are portrayed as 'clandestine' signifiers anchored to a set of reductive signifieds floating on the margins of (migration) representation. To counterbalance such demeaning constructions, *harga* page admins and followers alike mobilise Facebook walls and YouTube interfaces as spaces hosting and housing previously un-authorised voices and silenced cross-border narratives. As my tripartite conceptualisation of digitally mediated im-mobility tropes has demonstrated, *harraga* as well as the hypershort stories surrounding them offer alternative and unfiltered gazes upon a phenomenon that defies straightforward comprehension owing to its perpetual evolution.

Being a slippery and multifaceted character, the *harrag*—dreamer, fighter, performer, adventurer, resistor, smuggler, comic border player, liberty seeker, devout Muslim, whisky lover, or an (un) traceable body/image— unsettles the archaic and hegemonic conceptions and configurations of identity that are still widespread ironically in the post-modern, 'post-truth Age' (Harsin, 2023). Using a mixture of Modern Standard, Dialectical Arabic and (Arabised) French, along with different representation modalities like photography, audio-visual montage (music videos), caricatures, emoticons, and (counter-)maps to stage their imaginary displacements and communicate their migratory journeys across the Mediterranean Sea in a live fashion, (would-be) *harraga* and the admins monitoring *harga* Facebook pages content jointly create a decolonial archival source of micro-histories (Appadurai, 2019) that radically de-links from dominant Maghrebi and Euro-centric epistemologies. However, despite its permanent character and its 'traceability' through search engines, digital memory—like cinders— is also prone to "dispersal [and loss owing to the frenetic] digital practices of individuals" (Hoskins, 2018b: 2), i.e., "the posting, linking, liking, recording, swiping, scrolling, forwarding, […] [of] digital media content",[399] as mentioned earlier. Thus, navigating through *harga* Facebook pages, one "will find only […] the traces that remain[ed]" (Derrida & Lukacher, 1991: 25), what I describe as "cyber cinders"—fleeting echoes of a granular view of the past, online-shared memories, which may lose their vitality if they are not re-visited and re-posted on Facebook walls.

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[399] Ibid.

Notwithstanding their fragile and unstatic character, *harga* stories as cyber cinders operate within the rhizomatic structures of social media, and therefore, spread out horizontally and can occupy multiple locations at once, hence their resistance to erasure. It is interesting to add that *harraga*, as Al-Mousawi (2012) and Mazauric (2012) have thoroughly demonstrated, often refer to their migration as '*hadda*'[400] (along with *harga*) in Maghrebi dialects, meaning the demolition of walls, which metaphorically suggests the annihilation of all sorts of frontiers presenting obstacles to their materialisation of their migratory project. Transposing the metaphor of '*hadda*' to digital spaces*, harraga* seem to initiate their *harga* journey by first setting (virtual) walls on fire, through the posting, sharing, and circulation of their immotility narratives via Facebook or YouTube, and in doing so, challenge the borders of hegemonic representation. However, despite their online mobility, heterogeneity, and their often translingual articulations, *harraga*'s digital counter-narratives remain nonetheless entrapped in the 'immobility of translation', and may not reach a transnational audience due to the language barrier. Although my contribution as mediator has been to make 'visible' these cyber cinders, my analysis remains constrained owing to the limited scope of this study, the never-ending slipperiness of these epistemological clusters, and my dis-abled access to *harraga*'s private online realms. From subversive multimodal representations and communications of multivalent im-mobilities, to digital content administrators' and viewers' "hyperconnected" (Hoskins, 2017) practices and dissident discourses around dead *harraga*'s grievability, online platforms (oxymoronically) constitute fluid preservation sites from which to access remnants of digitally mediated *harga*-centred narratives—cyber cinders.

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[400] The word '*harga*' originates from urban discourse whereas '*hadda*' is more commonly used in the rif regions (Mazauric, 2012). In modern day Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia, both are often used interchangeably within the same context.

Conclusion

In line with the encapsulative words of Cultural historian, Peter Leese, this thesis set out to demonstrate that in essence, "there is no single way to read history" (2022: 271), and that there is no single way to write and record a story. A migrant's cross-border journey narrative can, in fact, emerge in myriad forms depending on the regime of representation wherein it is evoked, the context of its (re)production, and the agents regulating and controlling its parameters. As such, a migrant's journey can be (dis)articulated in a fleeting media fragment, a well-fleshed out narrative in a book or in a series of connected multimodal cultural formations roaming in the infinite, rhizomatic spacelessness of the internet. The endless plurality of migrant narratives—be they generated by official and institutionalised border discourses, collaboratively written testimonials, or digital hypershort first-hand accounts—makes it challenging for a specific migrant story to stand out and thus, be re-membered. Thus, as Leese, reminds us, both migration and its representations are dynamic, ever-changing processes, hence the quasi impossibility to historicise them. Yet, despite our inherently bordered and finite capacities to fully address the complexities of migration in its diverse forms, it is our ethical obligation as researchers to continue the search for the subtle and deep cracks (Khosravi, 2024), and explore uncharted territories to unveil what has thus far remained obscure(d).

At the onset of my PhD journey in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic induced a global state of immobility, unprecedented lockdowns, and even more draconian restrictions on travel on those who were and still are involuntarily immobile. In a world stuck in suspended motion, I was prompted to delve into the polysemy of immobility, interrogating its multifarious embodied and symbolic dimensions. Although I abstained from exploring COVID-induced migrant immobilities, as I felt, at the time, that I lacked the necessary perspective to analyse their intricate dynamics as they were unfolding, I nonetheless scrutinised a heterogeneous set of im-mobility-themed (counter-)narratives, produced in Arabic and French against the backdrop of another 'crisis'—one co-constructed by European nations and their southern neighbours—from the stand point of someone experiencing immobility firsthand. Looking in retrospect, this approach, I believe, enabled me to draw nuanced insights and contextual understanding, bridging complex past representations with the then lived and embodied experience of COVID immobility.

Migration, in its symbolic and material forms, as Jorgen Carling and Francis Collins (2017) remind us, is multifaceted, all encompassing, and always already resistant to definitional boundaries. In light of this, this thesis also endeavoured to examine some of its conceptual layers by looking into the ways in which it could be managed, suspended, re-activated through legal and discursive bordering, imagined in cultural representations, and experienced in material terms. Although circularity and closed-endedness are not the intention here, my allusion to the lines that opened this thesis is only an attempt at shedding light on the problematic nature of both the migratory act and its endless representations. Notwithstanding the hectic flows of goods, services, information, and monetary transactions, and the rapid proliferation of 'unwalled' networks enabled by the World Wide Web, borders of all kinds fundamentally shape the 21st world intensifying neo-colonial racialised violence and exacerbating 'global South-North' socio-political, economic, and spatial inequalities. However, as I have shown throughout this thesis, the increasing militarisation of the Mediterranean Sea has proven ineffective in the face of (North-)African *harraga*'s unyielding resistance and subsequent demolition ('*hadda*') of walls in pursuit of freedom and dignity.

Indeed, as the findings have illustrated, despite all attempts at inhibiting their vocalities and interrupting their subversive mobilities, *harraga* snatch at potential openings, i.e., exit and escape opportunities, be they in the form of online-shared reveries and European Eldorado fantasies via which they transcend their immotility, or through material crossings into spaces of (non-) arrival. Whether huddled in a foetal position, squeezed into an overcrowded pick-up truck traversing harsh and inhospitable deserts, or seated aboard a music-filled dinghy gliding across the serene Mediterranean Sea, *harraga*, from both ends of the African continent, challenge the (North)-African- EU immobility regime as well as the narratives it produces to immobilise and displace them at the margins of (un) representation. As demonstrated by the research findings, both Moroccan and Algerian hegemonic actors, like their European counterparts, have tended to frame *harga* as a problem deploying "an approach [that] is grounded on the method of externalisation, exceptionalisation, and pathologisation" (Khosravi, 2024: 2350), thereby obscuring their violent co-implication in its production. In fact, as Mazauric (2012) reminds us, these (unauthorised) migrations, are inherently postcolonial, i.e., a reactionary mechanism against the persistent coloniality of power structures, a form of 'migration as decolonisation' and a decolonial pursuit of justice and equality (Achiume, 2019).

That said, not all *harraga*—at least based on the findings of this research—deploy the same 'means' to unsettle the Maghrebi and Euro-state-centric border epistemologies. While

some appropriate digital spaces to project, share, circulate, and record their border practices and discourses, establish networks of solidarity, and secure contact with potential smugglers, others seek alternative venues to make their stories heard. Although, as established from the outset, my reading of the testimonial accounts of 'sub-Saharan', Algerian, and Moroccan *harraga* is not based on a comparative approach, I demonstrated that—regardless of their origins— they often tend to experience the Mediterranean border in similar ways. My aim was to explore how the phenomenon of (North-)African *harga* to Europe was approached and narrativised by foregrounding the view from the southern Mediterranean and exploring the cultural representations that emerged concomitantly with those generated in Europe against the backdrop of the 'migrant crisis'. When I first started collecting data about the ways in which Algerian and Moroccan *harraga* were portrayed in their countries' government-owned or aligned media outlets, I found that like 'sub-Saharan' (transit) migrants, they were frozen in metonymic constructions, and subjected to similar forms of symbolic violence. Thus, integrating 'sub-Saharan' *harraga* into the study corpus entailed a parallel exploration of potential counter-narratives in order to offer a comprehensive view of the phenomenon at the symbolic or representational level. Two main reasons directed the research towards an analytical engagement with multimodal (un)mediated first-hand accounts. First, there was the dearth of counter-narratives in the form of autobiographies, i.e., written testimonies published by *harraga* in their source societies or in their post-migration settings. To my knowledge, most *harga*-centred literary texts, despite their abundance in transnational markets, were written by diasporic migrant authors who did not experience *harga* firsthand, which lent these works a paternalistic dimension. As far as 'sub-Saharan' migrants are concerned, their individually produced testimonials were either rejected by Moroccan and Algerian publishers due to censorship concerns (as I discussed in Part Two) or shared in abridged versions on the websites of NGOs.

Although unmediated digital narratives by 'sub-Saharan' migrants offer rich potential for examining contemporary forms of self-representation, I deliberately chose not to engage with them in this study. This decision was informed primarily by the considerable linguistic heterogeneity that characterises 'sub-Saharan' Africa—a complexity that presents both practical and methodological challenges for comparative analysis, while also demanding a dedicated inquiry that falls beyond the scope of this thesis. In the course of my search for migrant-authored testimonials that could potentially challenge dominant representational gazes, I identified a number of documentary narratives characterised by hybrid authorship—co-produced by 'sub-Saharan' migrants and Western journalists and anthropologists. This discovery subtly redirected

the focus of the research, prompting an inquiry not only into the extent to which these co-authored narratives challenge or complicate hegemonic modes of seeing and narrating unauthorised migration, but also into the possibilities they open for developing a multiscalar approach to representation. Such an approach made it possible to examine the varying degrees and forms of mediation through which the migrant voice is articulated, negotiated, and sometimes constrained. In doing so, the research remained aligned with its original objective: to explore distinct representational spaces wherein the different nuances of migrant im-mobility are (re)configured and analyse the shifting dynamics through which contemporary migration is framed, contested, and reimagined.

The ones I have selected were, to my knowledge, among the very few which not only corresponded to the 'migrant crisis' time-frame, but also revolved to a large extent around Morocco and Algeria as 'spaces of transit and/or arrival, and therefore, offered potentially explorable angles on the *harga* phenomenon from a previously bordered perspective. Scratching the surface of these texts and navigating their paratexts, I came to the realisation that despite their apparent counter-narrative potential, they remain ventrilocated accounts, appropriated, to varying degrees, by the migrants' Western co-authors. More importantly, these recollected testimonials were produced in French, hence symbolically bordering the identities of the migrant protagonists. As I endeavoured to show in Part Two, these accounts were initially brought to the 'shores' of transnational visibility as a result of a (neo)colonial pact whereby the content, structure, and marketability of the books would be 'regulated' by the Western co-authors. I have demonstrated, that through ventriloquial manoeuvres, the migrant identity has been 'infiltrated' (Leese, 2022) and conveyed according to the 'terms' of a transnational French-(speaking) audience yearning to engage with an 'exotic Other', yielding thereby neo-colonial empathic engagements rather than generating claims for justice and action. These fetishised identities do not, in essence, differ markedly from the dehumanising metonymised contructions of 'sub-Saharans' as 'clandestines', 'illegals', or potential 'criminals' as portrayed in mainstream media outlets on both sides of the Mediterranean. In fact, both the media and the co-authored narratives, albeit different in their communication parameters and generic 'identity', present limited perspectives of 'seeing' unauthorised migrants and their journeys if placed upon a 'representation scale' and a 'vocal authority continuum'. Put differently, both representation spaces have proven to be problematic as they are characterised by discursive borders impeding spectators and readers' access to migrants' complex histories (respectively) and replicating in the process the power differentials characterising intra-African as well as African-EU-ropean

relations. Kouamé as the embodiment of the 'deserving refugee archetype', Victor as 'protagonist of France's deterrence spectacle', or Jackson as 'the model migrant' who worked hard to obtain status regularisation in Morocco, feed into broader neo-colonial narratives of (un)deservingness, as illustrated in Part Two. Although reductive and essentialising, the three co-authored testimonials offer nonetheless additional insights into the complex texture of unauthorised migration representation.

As the analysis moved in crescendo, i.e., from a quasi-absence of migrants' voices to a conditional vocality through ventriloquy, the last part of this thesis aimed to 'make heard' the highest note of the vocal scale by specifically engaging with Moroccan and Algerian *harraga*'s hypershort stories—or first-hand multimedia narrative fragments—shared on digital platforms using "the means at their disposal" (Leese, 2022: 37), namely Facebook and YouTube, as well as audio-visual montage applications. As opposed to the mediated representations of unauthorised migration, Part Three explored *harraga*'s digital worlds as productive gateways through which to navigate their migration imaginaries and practices in times of involuntary immobility (Carling, 2002) and immobilism (Abderrezak, 2016), as well as the strategies they use to overcome the latter conditions.

Like Parts One and Two, the third part stretched the conversation around unauthorised migration representation by experimenting with the semantics of 'im-mobility', 'dis-placement' and 'crisis', and by reading them as tropes characterising Moroccan and Algerian *harraga*'s identity reconstructions in digital spaces. While in the media, *harraga* are symbolically immobilised by the 'order' of hegemonic discourse, entrapped in labels and dehumanising death imagery, and radically robbed of agency and authority, in their online worlds they subvert the borders of representation and enact an epistemic shift from margin to centre. Mobilising a politics of digital (im)perceptibility, they turn social media platforms into loci of decolonial resistance voicing a "dissensual" (Rancière, 2009) discourse via creative multimodal compositions enabling them to project in myriad forms their migratory desires, aspirations, and experiences. Translingual practices and recurrent allusions to Islamic values and teachings seem to characterise their digitally-mediated resistance narratives. As the findings have shown, *harraga* cross or fluidify 'lingual borders', and in so doing, develop their own codes of communication. Running across the different Facebook and YouTube-shared sources is the (would-be) *harraga*'s belief in *maktub*, which frames their conception of their migratory journey from its onset to its materialisation or end. As such, to transcend their condition of state-induced immotility and marginalisation (*ħogra*), *harga* dreamers append a spiritual meaning to their

patience ['*Sabr*']. Thus, '*Sabr*' and '*amal*' [hope] enable them to transcend their '*alam*' [pain] and boost their '*irada*' [will] to materialise their migratory aspirations. Similarly, the fear of the Mediterranean crossing is appeased through prayers and '*dou3a*', and the belief that (non-) arrival is the outcome of Allah's will.

Further, as illustrated by the findings, *harraga* tend to mobilise a 'necroethics' in response to the necropolitics of the Maghreb-EU immobility regime as part of their digitally mediated practices of resistance. This is achieved through the circulation of pre-mortem photographs of deceased *harraga* as a symbolic act to show that they are still alive in the memory of their loved ones. Digital practices like sharing, commenting, and liking, boost the visibility of those who during their lifetime were cast in the margins of invisibility. Notwithstanding the unstatic character of digital memory, and hence the im-mobility of dead *harraga*'s imagery and stories, *harraga*'s cyber necroethics enable them to grieve the loss of the departed, and thereby enact a politics of remembering as opposed to the institutionalised politics of forgetting (El-Tayeb, 2011). In this way, *harraga*'s digitally mediated discourse of resilience and resistance in the face of borders radically overturns the reductive media portrayals where they are depicted as helpless, uneasy in their skin, immoral, and suicidal.

By foregrounding the view from the southern side of the Mediterranean and attempting to bring previously obscured discourses to the centre of scholarly attention, I have not merely sought to 'amplify' the voices of the marginalised or 'speak on their behalf', nor act as a native informant being a researcher from the so-called 'Global South' presenting an 'external', 'localised' perspective on Maghrebi representations of the phenomenon of *harga* to the Western intellectual community. Instead, through this research, I have endeavoured to weave together theoretical and conceptual perspectives offered by 'northern' and 'southern' scholars and thereby bridge disciplinary and geographic borders, in a bid to enhance 'connections' and foster, albeit limitedly, a more comprehensive and inclusive discourse on migration and the violence of borders. Thus, by "accentuating" (Khosravi, 2024) previously bordered epistemologies and simultaneously underscoring their individualised "accented"[401] and subversive translingual and cross-border practices, I have contributed, I hope, in challenging, (even if in a constrained way given the non-exhaustive nature of the selected digital sources) the 'walled' discourses on *harga* on both sides of the Mediterranean. Additionally, in uncovering the symbolic bordering to which 'sub-Saharan' *harraga*'s "accented" knowledges have been subjected through Western

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[401] Ibid.

ventrilocations of their stories and identities, I have sought to participate in the global decolonial denunciation of the persistent neo-colonial subalternisation of so-called 'Other' languages and epistemologies.

Notwithstanding the gaze-displacement that this thesis has attempted to enact with regards unauthorised migration representation and the valuable insights that a hybrid theoretical, conceptual, and methodological framework, coupled with a heterogeneous set of narratives and counter-narratives have generated, certain limitations remain. Future research in this area should account for the COVID-related immobilities and incorporate perspectives from the broader Maghreb, as this study has only focused on the Algerian and Moroccan contexts. Additionally, the stories of (North-)African female *harraga* represent a notably under-explored area, exacerbating their double marginalisation across social, political, and representational dimensions. Once accounted for, this research direction will contribute in further diversifying perspectives on the *harga* phenomenon and thereby cultivating a more balanced understanding of the migratory experience and promoting gender-sensitive approaches in migration management.

Diversifying research on immobility-centred narratives in pre-departure settings, 'transit', and 'destination' countries can equally facilitate the evaluation of the ambiguities and gaps in the existing legal frameworks governing migration. Foregrounding a historically-informed and a migrant-focused perspective can therefore foster a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities of modern-day forms of *harga* and open productive conversations that interrogate the ongoing violence of borders. More importantly, the role of the media is pivotal in shaping public discourse around migration. Thus, promoting ethical journalism and establishing guidelines for responsible reporting can counteract the negative framing often associated with unauthorised migrants. In this regard, journalists and researchers alike should deploy terminology that acknowledges migrants' dignity to promote respect for difference and help mitigate violence and xenophobia. Moreover, public awareness campaigns aimed at rehumanising migration experiences are indispensable as they can challenge misconceptions, and cultivate empathy. In sum, a cohesive strategy that encompasses legal protections, community engagement, media responsibility, and international cooperation can significantly improve public attitudes towards both unauthorised immigrants and emigrants in Algeria, Morocco, and beyond.

Further, in order to enhance the integrity of testimonial narratives in collaborative research projects, a more participatory writing approach should be adopted to preserve the

'authority' of (unauthorised) migrants in the storytelling process. This could be achieved by ensuring the centrality of their perspectives through, for example, the incorporation of their indigenous language(s) and the inclusion of the historical, social, economic, and cultural contexts that have shaped their experiences. Migration representation agents in this co-production context should strive to decolonise their research methods by challenging rather than reinforcing (willingly or inadvertently) the 'fetishistic' categorisation of migration.

While digital platforms offer *harraga* valuable opportunities to share their border experiences, it is crucial that they do so with a heightened sense of responsibility. Digital content creators should provide context for their narratives, encouraging critical engagement from their audiences. By framing their journeys within a broader discourse that acknowledges both the hardships and the 'triumphs' entailed by such practices, they can further contribute to a more balanced account of their *harga* journeys. Having briefly mapped potential directions for future research, it is important to underscore that this thesis may serve as a stepping stone for both novice and seasoned researchers specialising in immobility narratives, inviting them to expand upon its findings and explore other 'Global south-based' migrant gazes. Indeed, incorporating heterogeneous voices in the discourse surrounding migration can help foster more inclusive scholarly conversations that transcend racial, geographic, linguistic, and institutional frontiers and cherish the 'human' dimension of migration.

Ultimately, further exploration of the fissures and gaps in migration discourse is essential to unearth alternative ways of seeing, feeling, knowing, imagining, and experiencing borders as this will contribute a vital piece to the ceaselessly expanding narrative cartography of unauthorised migration where representations are in perpetual motion—never anchored, always shifting—and hence never entirely fixed in place.

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Public Facebook Pages

Maroc Haraga 18
Haraga Algérie
DZ Al hijra w Nes Elghorba
Haraga Europa
Al Hijra mina al-jazaer
Harraga jazairiin
Haraga w kol-chai momken
HaraGa Maroc
Haraga Ta lmout
Haraga talmcen al-3assima Annaba
Nes Al-harga wel harba
Haraga Spain
Al Hijra ila Euroba

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Appendices

Appendix A— Law 02-03 on the entry and residence of foreigners in the kingdom of Morocco, irregular emigration, and immigration of Moroccan nationals

- Law 02-03 entered into force on 20 November 2003. It concerns the entry and residence of foreigners in Morocco, emigration and 'irregular' forms of migration.
- It establishes the rights of 'irregular' migrants in the context of deportation, returns to the border and expulsions.
- It also provides the legal framework within which foreigners can enter, stay, and leave Moroccan soil in authorised ways.

Article 42: any person who enters or attempts to enter Morocco without a valid travel document or who remains on Moroccan soil without authorisation shall be liable to a fine of 2,000 to 20,000 Dirhams or imprisonment for a term ranging from one to six months.

Article 43: any stay without a registration or residence permit is punishable by one to six-month prison sentence and a fine of 5,000 to 30, 000 Dirhams. In case of a repeated offence, the penalty shall be doubled.

Article 50: 'illegal' emigration from Morocco is punishable with a fine of 3,000 to 10,000 Dirhams or a prison sentence of one to six months.

Article 51: The organisers and those involved in the transport of 'irregular' migrants shall face penalties of two- to five-year prison sentence and a fine of 50,000 to 500,000 Dirhams.

Adapted from: 'Report on legislation concerning International migration in central Maghreb.' (2006). *ILO*. 31 January. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/yb2nsmsa [Accessed 29 January 2022].

Appendix B— Law 08-11 on irregular entry, stay, and departure from Algeria

- The law entered into force on 25 June 2008.
- It stipulates the conditions of entry into, stay, and movement of foreigners in Algeria.
- . It grants Algerian authorities the power to penalise and expel foreigners whose entry into and stay in Algeria is unauthorised.
- It includes 52 articles that impose severe penalties for all forms of 'illegal' migration: one- to six-month prison sentence for 'illegal' stay and up to twenty years' imprisonment for migrant smugglers.
- Expulsion is usually applied to migrants who commit repeated offences or those who commit serious crimes or represent a threat to national security.

Adapted from: Guillet, S. (2012). 'Migration and Asylum in the Maghreb', *EMHRN*. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/munee23f [Accessed 15 January 2022].

Appendix C— Law 09-01- Algeria's Amendment of Penal Code

The penal code was amended by Law 09-01 on 25 February 2009 to introduce a criminal offence related to 'illegal' exits, applicable to both Algerian citizens and foreigner nationals:

- Two- to six-month prison sentence for any foreign resident or national exiting the country via 'illegal' channels.

- A three- to five-year prison sentence for migrant smugglers (exit from the territory), reaching up to 20 years in case of aggravating circumstances.

- A three- to ten-year prison sentence (reaching twenty years in case of aggravating circumstances), 300,000 to 1 million dinars for human trafficking.

Adapted from: Di Bartolomeo, A., Jaulin, T., Perrin, D. (2010). 'CARIM-Migration Profile: Algeria.' *Migration policy centre*. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/5n89257w [Accessed 10 January October 2022].

Appendix D— Transliteration Table

If no explanation is provided it is similar to English sound made by letter		
aa	'a' as in dad	ا
b		ب
t		ت
th	as in 'through'	ث
j	as in 'jump'	ج
ħ or 7	Aspirated 'h'. The number 7 is also used in informal digital communications	ح
Kh or 5	No equivalent. The number 5 is also often used in informal social media posts.	خ
d		د
dh	'th' as in 'they'	ذ
r		ر
z		ز
S		س
d	'd' but darkens the 'a' sound	ض
t	't' but darkens the 'a' sound	ط
dh	darkens the sound 'th' as in 'though'	ظ
3	Is used in Arabizi transliteration system as the letter ع has no direct equivalent in the latin script.	ع

gh	No equivalent (similar to the French 'r')	غ
f		ف
q or 9	No equivalent. The number 9 is often used in informal digital communications instead of 'q'	ق
k		ك
l		ل
m		م
n		ن
h		ه
w or ou or wa		و
y or "ii"		ي
' or 2	Indicates a glottal stop/ sound similar to 'uh/ih/oh' depending on vowel mark- the number 2 is also used to represent 'ء' (*alhamza*) in informal social media posts	ء

*Arabic phonemes that do not have direct equivalents in the Latin script are often represented using numerals—7 for 'ح', 3 for 'ع', and 9 for 'ق', 2 for 'ء' — a practice also known as 'Leetspeak'. This transliteration system is frequently employed by Arabic speakers, particularly in informal digital communication such as social media posts. (Would-be) *Harraga* for instance, tend to use a hybrid transliteration system, blending letters and numbers, to circumvent character limitations or to express phonetic nuances specific to their dialects.

Transliteration table adapted from: University of Oregon Libraries (2024). *Transliteration Table* [online]. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/2a4bmpbu [Accessed 5 June 2023].