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Migration and/as Translation: Negotiations of New Forms of Sexual Subjectivity and Reparations of Colonial Legacies in Nina Bouraoui's Autofictional Writing

As Walter Benjamin has famously remarked, the translator's task lies in "aiming at that single spot where the echo is able to give, in its own language, the *reverberation* of the [original] work in the alien one." This paper argues that these very echoes and their reverberations reflect the performativity of translation and/as counter – translations as they intersect with the social, historical, and cultural conditions that produce them, thereby exposing translation not only as a socially – mediated and ideologically – constructed practice, but as one that is potentially dissident and resistant to unimpeded correspondence or reciprocity between and within languages. The performativity of translation is complicated further in the autofictional work of queer writers from the Maghreb who have emigrated to France, thus providing a discursive space to translate their emergent sense of self textually into literary form through the crossing of borders, a translation that is never a simple reiteration or reflection of the self in its present understanding at the time of writing, but always already a performative enunciation of identity, but only partially or contingently so. Given that the processes of migration and diaspora incite strategies of agency, resistance, negotiation, and struggle in the overlapping spaces between cultures in the attempt to bridge geographical distance from the homeland, while negotiating new identities alongside the pressures of a foreign space in the culture of settlement, migration and translation operate together as mediating between hegemonically – defined identities, geopolitical spaces, and cultural practices where alternative modes of perception and identification are negotiated, while remaining constituted by residues of difference that refuse domestication, equivalence, or complete integration. In this sense, migration and/as translation serves as a metaphor for queer as a transgressive practice that disturbs and destabilises the legacy of imperial relations and essentialized notions of origins, producing new, unassimilable circuits of gender and sexual difference.

These highly complex textual and political strategies respond to the fact that queer francophone writers from the Maghreb, such as Nina Bouraoui, negotiate and produce new translations of sexual subjectivity as a shifting site of signification and meaning given that Franco – Maghrebi spaces of sexual dissidence are inflected by globally – circulating discourses and embodiments of queerness, reducible neither to received conceptions or norms of homosexuality, presently or historically, in the Maghreb, nor to Western forms of sexual identity or sexual politics. These translational performances, which will be examined in Bouraoui's autofictional trilogy *Garçon Manqué*, *Poupée Bella*, and *Mes Mauvaises Pensées*, occur within the French language as its received meanings are transgressed and reworked through the processes of translocation and transcultural negotiation, yet not without acknowledgement of a history of colonialism, as Bouraoui reminds us early on in *Garçon Manqué*, which takes place in her Algerian homeland, prior to her family's emigration to France, '*je viens de la guerre*,' a reference to the French – Algerian War of 1954 – 1962 which ended colonial rule in Algeria, and which she did not witness personally but has inherited its effects. The paper argues that migration and/as translation operates in Bouraoui's work as a mode of being and as an interminable process, as a way of negotiating shifts in meaning between Algerian cultural heritage and lesbian identity in the space between two different cultural worlds, and as a way to rethink and repair the personal effects of the historic colonial wound of French – Algerian relations whilst living in France.