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Rip Van Winkle and the Pluriverse

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Abstract: How have the perspectives motivating ethnographic work in North Africa changed between 1989 and 2019? Have new approaches substituted new dominant narratives or eschewed arrogance in favor of pluralism and support for intellectual diversity? This article provides a critique of the literature from a Pyrrhonic skeptic's perspective. It finds both substantial and significant change in the thirty years between 1989 and 2019 on a number of counts: authorship in the literature is vastly more inclusive and now is dominated by work by North Africans while pluralism has become standard as support for counter-narratives. Invidious comparison has remained a problem.

Keywords: Ethnography, Pluralism, Skepticism, North Africa, Inclusivity.

The following brief remarks about recent ethnography of Morocco and North Africa are intended to capture the period since 1989 and evaluate what is new methodologically and intellectually. In 1819, Washington Irving published a story about a Dutch-American named Rip Van Winkle who fell asleep before the American Revolution and woke up 20 years later to find his world utterly changed.[1] At a conference on 19th Century Morocco at Harvard in 1989, Ernest Gellner, after reading the papers circulated before the conference, gave a Keynote address in which he said he felt like and unlike Rip Van Winkle; he had been away from Moroccan studies for 20 years, yet unlike Rip he found on his return to this world that nothing much had changed. To say this claim caused some consternation would be mild. One participant even swore in the Men's room to go after Gellner "with a knife and fork." While much was new in the historical contributions at the conference we can safely assume Gellner referred primarily to the methods and foci of the participants. My focus in this article is two-fold a) to evaluate how different anthropological work on Morocco has been after 1989 and b) to ask, does recent ethnographic work focus more intensely on pluralistic and subaltern world views. Pluralism advocates, in the sense I will focus on, views of the world that problematize the dominant scientific, cultural and economic discourses largely prevalent since the 1980s.

1. Washington Irving, *The Sketch book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent* (New York: C.S. Van Winkle, 1819).

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Ernest Gellner's major work on Morocco (*Saints of the Atlas* published in 1969 based on field work for his dissertation completed in 1961)[2] was written in a period when anthropologists of his generation went abroad to learn from others stuff that might provide a new critical perspective on their own and many other societies' institutions. They focused on subjects such as family organization, ethnicity, sexuality, kinship, economics and politics. Ethnographers imagined their work as having broad utility for enhanced scrutiny of prevailing institutions in all countries. Gellner's focus on ethnicity (Berber), religion (a *zāwiya*), and national politics in Morocco contributed substantially to the views expressed in his many later publications (23 books followed his 1961 research in Morocco). It is important to note that in this classic ethnographic period through the 1960s there was a dominant rationalism that, however ardently non-ethnocentric some of it was, still evaluated phenomena from the perspective of what was viewed as rational science. Many anthropologists of Gellner's time were alienated from and critical of the dominant and hegemonic cultures that their governments took for granted but, they were little inclined to abandon the positions associated with the enlightenment.

From Gellner's perspective in 1989, a number of the papers at the conference followed themes he could have foreseen in 1969 such as reform (the title of the conference), authority, or government relations but, most of the papers dealt with issues specific to the 19th century; e.g. travelers, Jews and the protection system, the role of Islamic reforms coming out of the Middle East, intellectual trends and printing, critique of the concept of a 19th century financial crisis, new archival inspired insights into 19th century relations between Europe and Morocco, analyses of the gift (*hadiyya*), or studies of the vocabulary of social practice, that were not on the table in the 1960s even if they were inspired by work in the 1960s to 1980s. To provide some support for Gellner's high handed remarks, it might be said that Gellner correctly noticed that all papers set about to find out things in much the way he had set out to discover the relationships between religion, ethnicity and national authority. In current terms, neither history nor ethnography were in themselves problematized. No doubt Gellner had also kept up with the anthropological work of the 1970s and 1980s and knew it all had at least philosophical roots in the material he had assimilated by 1969.

As an historian and an anthropologist who since that 1989 conference has primarily done my ethnography in sub-Saharan Africa, I ask myself if, on

2. Ernest Gellner, *Saints of the Atlas* (London: The Trinity Press, 1969).

reading recent ethnographic work on Morocco done over the last 30 years, I feel more like Ernest Gellner or more like Rip Van Winkle himself? Like the changed world of 1819, is 2019 a year in which ethnography is and should be done quite differently than in 1989? Giving the field three decades, has it evolved to be a quite different, yet hegemonic, world of research? Or have we come to see it as many research perspectives, each authentically different, and each capable of contributing to a diverse and productive future.

Pluralist Arguments

Paul Feyerabend provided one the the most cogent criticisms of the claim that the scientific method was uniquely qualified to improve our understanding of the world.[3] Instead, Feyerabend suggested that, as currently constituted in institutions of his day, the scientific method had a tendency to stifle most original ideas and promote small incremental improvements within well-established frameworks of discourse. Most astonishingly to many, Feyerabend instead suggested that the rationality of our beliefs will be much improved if everyone contributes to decisions about what is to be taught and believed rather than the system mandating that the authority of big shots alone should determine education, research funding, and government more generally.[4] His early advocacy of democracy being allowed to mellow and improve both the dominant discourse and research itself was poorly appreciated at the time. As an early example of criticism of the scientific method it fit, if not stylistically, into some of the issues others such as Foucault had been discussing since the 1960s.

Late in his life, Michel Foucault, the scholar largely seen as most persuasively putting postmodernism in the center of academic discourse, noted that while in his youth he had claimed that there were great intellectual ruptures (modernism, postmodernism) he now saw he had been committing one of the most noxious habits of contemporary thought;[5] to characterize history as the history of forms of rationality which form and then disappear. Instead, a year before his death, he saw the world as continually transforming with no indication that reason (modernism) founders and is followed by a new improved form of reason (postmodernism). Rather he envisaged history as many incessant transformations in rationality rather any great ruptures. We might view this Foucauldian wisdom, even if it represents a Foucault few acknowledge, as a quintessential anti-dominant academic discourse narrative that demotes the notion that academics should devote themselves

3. Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method* (London: Verso, 1975).
4. Feyerabend, *Against Method*, 309.
5. Michel Foucault, *This is not a pipe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

to arguing over ever new dominant narratives about national or global logics. As such argumentation is a key play for intellectual hegemony in academia, Foucault's late position has not been a popular position, primarily because it so discourages the invidious comparison on which so many thrive.

In 1994, Charles Taylor[6] introduced a way of studying identity that emphasized the importance of recognition (respect) and authenticity. Multiculturalism, in his view, required not a simple non-judgementalism (aka cultural relativism) but a full recognition that different cultural perspectives are capable of supporting authentic lifestyles and identities. Taylor traced the concept of authenticity to Herder and then Rousseau but viewed this current age as the age of authenticity: an age in which people strive to have both individually authentic lives constructed along lines of their own choosing and to draw on specific cultural traditions as the bases for their authentic lifestyles. When I did my first ethnographic work in Morocco, the state was a considerable distance from the multicultural table. There were the beginnings of Berber movements for recognition in the 1970s and 1980s but, Berbers were still struggling to overcome the opprobrium cast on their cultural movements by the colonial French preoccupation with separating Berbers from Arabs on cultural grounds as part of a classic divide and conquer imperialistic agenda.

In 2000, Lawrence Rosen, one of the participants in the 1989 conference, published *The Justice of Islam* which promoted a pluralist perspective on Moroccan law.[7] He suggested that Moroccans, and other North Africans, seek to resolve the myriad socio-economic issues they confront by having recourse to a pluralistic legal structure comprised of a plurality of legal systems (custom, *sharī'a*, and civil law) a plurality of courts (from local courts largely guided by the views of a *qā'id* expressed through an elected untrained individual serving as judge, up through the various levels of courts staffed by professionals formally trained in legal matters), as well as a variety of dispute regulating institutions outside the court system. Individuals, he argued, use each option to attempt to resolve disputes in their own favor. Yet, as not all disputes can be resolved in a perfectly satisfactory manner for each party many disputes are continuing affairs that pop into the legal view as small issues that actually represent a component of larger matters that involve a significantly greater number of individuals and families than initially appear. For Rosen, these competitive and negotiated outcomes are fundamental to Morocco's legal pluralism.

6. Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

7. Lawrence Rosen, *The Justice of Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

In 2019, Arturo Escobar published a book, *Designs for the Pluriverse*, which captures more elegantly than his earlier publications his suggestions for a radical (somewhat utopian) perspective in the social sciences. He argues for a pluriverse viewed as "a world where many worlds fit" (Escobar takes this phrase from the proclamations of the Zapatistas).[8] This perspective, building on the multi-cultural movement, is presented as an utter change from the neoliberal claim that would have everyone fit into a single, simplistic moral universe where wealth and consumption are the key goals for everyone despite obviously disastrous effects on the planet, its populations, and cultures. Escobar's argument focuses on the value of autonomy and, in its aggregate, diversity and their role in social movements. He imagines a link between autonomy, autopoesis, and prosperity at the level of social groups. The argument thus implicates language movements, ethnicity and relations between dominant states and weaker states as well yet, Escobar's focus in brief is the value of cultural and intellectual pluralism. His suggestion is that societies need to avoid the modernity/postmodernity dualism and focus on imagining the world as a set of micro-revolutions for self-determination.[9] Autopoesis involves feedback and emergence of novel behaviors which impel authenticity into increasing diversity. Thus far from advocating static tradition, Escobar advocates freeing diversity to transform and improve the world – much as Feyerabend was advocating in 1975. While Escobar does reference Rosen's legal pluralism in Morocco, in this paper I use Escobar's idea of a pluriverse to provide a more general perspective on recent ethnographic work in Morocco.

As an ineluctable, if skeptical child of the enlightenment, I feel some obligation to be at least minimally reflexive before providing my evaluation of Moroccan ethnography. Unfortunately for the dramatic effect often gifted by angst, I grew up traveling the world with my anthropologist father and spoke several languages by eleven, lived in numerous countries and found them all inhabited by human beings filled with personality and interesting cultures. I grew up, in short, not having any sense of the exotic or romantic or what "othering" might even mean. I had had friends everywhere. Then in college, at McGill, my training in philosophy led me to Pyrrhonic skepticism which has seemed ever since to be vastly preferable to cultural relativism, a term I had heard no praise of as a child. Pyrrhonic skeptics amass arguments pro and con and have opinions on which arguments are strong, middling, or

8. Arturo Escobar, *Designs for the Pluriverse: Radical Interdependence, Autonomy, and the Making of Worlds* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2018), xvi.
9. Ibid., 182.

weak and make decisions according to those evaluations but are not driven to assemble any list of absolute truths or dogmas. I arrived at this philosophical position primarily through reading and, only secondarily, by evaluating my own life in retrospect. Hence during my work in Morocco, I was curious, and many experiences modified my opinions, but I rarely thought Moroccan views were clearly less persuasive than those with which I was more familiar. This perspective did not preclude strong feelings about some things being wrong. For example, I felt even then that Hegel's master-servant dialectic captured the key elements of exploitation in an elegant way that had ample applications.

My personal background and preparation (5 years of classical Arabic and two of dialectal Arabic plus some work on *Tachelḥyt* in Paris and myriad courses on North African history) may have left me untroubled and happy during my ethnographic work at least compared to some ethnographers. But, a biological explanation may also be relevant. It is possible that a mutation from the diethylstilbestrol that my mother took when I was in utero (a human subjects experiment at the University of Chicago which narrows the corpus callosum and would not now be allowed) may have contributed to my life long failure to experience any angst. My advisor, Aidan Southall once remarked that I was the only student he had ever had who only wrote back happy letters from the field.

Once in a later field work site, sitting on a large reed mat under the stars in a village in Senegal I had my first test of my Pyrrhonism. The conversation drifted to the beauty of the moon, as it often does in such circumstances, and the conversation turned to the American claim to have landed on the moon. The Senegalese on the mat agreed with a famous Senegalese religious scholar, reputed to know everything, that this was arrant nonsense. It appeared this was clear because as the scholar had long since noted, the moon is not the sort of object on which one can land – clearly the falsehood of American claims was revealed by this category mistake. A German scholar on the mat also agreed that the Americans had not landed on the moon, apparently she had attended a lecture by John Glenn some years earlier and he had not talked about the moon landing so she had concluded it had been a hoax. My comment that I had a geologist cousin-in-law who studied moon rocks at UCLA clearly emphasized to the Senegalese only the widespread nature of this category mistake and the German scholar also scoffed at this as evidence. As a Pyrrhonic skeptic, I felt no need to find either proposition convincing, but I recognized that the Senegalese postulate was part of the tip of a cultural construct that might be worth further investigating and was unlikely not to

involve both moral and intellectual issues of real significance. The moon hoax rumor had already been studied in the US but I still ruminated on authenticity, respect, and skepticism.

My ethnographic discussions of the ontological character of the moon and some more general concerns about frequent simplistic discussions of the ontological character of nature, industry, humanity, or culture explain why I would argue that some characteristics of multi-culturalism or even the pluriverse work better from a Pyrrhonic perspective than from an avowedly postmodern perspective – at least one that echoes President Trump's notion that anything can be made true if repeated enough or believed by enough people. The Pyrrhonic perspective totally avoids any truth claims and gives preference to the quality of the arguments pro and con as viewed by the observer. Thus for example, the whiff of a lion on the wind may persuade a gazelle to flee: that it could arise merely from fairly recent urine and a breeze from a new direction need not concern us as evolution equipped the gazelle to be cautious. Absolute knowledge of truth does not enter into the gazelle's decision. Nor need it for us.

I once, in Phoenix, studied some new age practitioners known for curing via crystals and discovered that they believed themselves to be taking orders from invisible entities and had been recruited as part a larger effort in a galactic war. When I gently inquired about how they knew these entities were superior enough to justify obedience, I was told that they were important lords in a great galactic civilization. When I inquired about the political and social organization of said civilization, the new-agers had lots of details that quite clearly were patterned on early medieval European political organization. When I pointed out that even lowly earthlings had implemented forms of democracy and political institutions that seemed substantially superior to those of these entities and wondered if perhaps they should take it upon themselves to instruct the entities in modern political science, my interviewees were completely nonplussed. When, up on Table Mountain (in Phoenix), I admitted that I could not feel/sense/see the invisible space ship, I knew it was time to end the ethnographic work as without any semblance of belief this universe was inaccessible to me and, perhaps, I had no business meddling in galactic affairs.

Ethnographic Approaches in Morocco

In the 1980s, many in the social sciences were becoming besotted with "development" which critics suggested imagined making far away places resemble Iowa where everyone (putatively) would be a good rational

economic actor and aspire to participate in and benefit from world trade. The decade after the 1989 conference, saw a further hardening of the development narrative, the neoliberal assault on diversity and multiculturalism reached truly Rostowian take-off levels and "well meaning" people flocked even to anthropology with the intent of going out and saving foreigners from their poverty, traditional perspectives, and cultures. Paradoxically, for others the period involved a major romanticization of the Other that reminds one of Montesquieu's 18th century *Esprit des Lois*.[10] The development model and justification for this romance of the Other drew from different sources: for the former, the glamor of global benefits, e.g. in terms of increased life expectancy and better health from the spread of public health measures and for the latter, a reworked orientalism that transformed Gellner's generation's impulse to learn from others into an impulse to learn things that would unsettle the received wisdom expressed in the fundamental positions of the dominant narrative. The health examples seemed to imply to some that something similar could be done with the mental health of distant peoples to get them on board with the neoliberal project to produce higher incomes in a global consumer society. To others, the discourse in medicine and the social sciences should be confronted with the "intrinsically" different and intractable truths of other narratives about medicine and society.

The coincidence of a rising Foucauldian concern with power and knowledge opposed to the neoliberal push in fields such as economics during the 1990s would not have surprised Hegel a bit. A renewal as well of a romantic perspective on the Other remotivated some anthropologists disaffected from their own societies' perspectives to do research in foreign lands either as personal therapy or to motivate a spiritual, intellectual, or political basis for freeing themselves from cultural shackles they found uncomfortable. It is difficult to understand the ethnographies of Morocco since 1989 without recourse to these perspectives but there is some reason to think as well that Escobar's idea of the pluriverse is beginning to rise as a post-Foucauldian counter-narrative within the new ethnographies now authored by Moroccans as well as foreigners. There is something about reflections on autonomy and authorship that lend themselves to thinking in terms of an idyllic pluriverse rather than a revolutionary replacement of one dominant narrative by another. A question that arises is whether, in this idyllic world view, it is possible to criticize any non-hegemonic perspective.

10. Charles Montesquieu. *De l'esprit des lois* (Genève: Barrillot & Fils, 1748).

Twelve years before the conference, Paul Rabinow published his *Reflections on Field Work in Morocco* (1977);[11] a book that has had extraordinary influence on the field of Anthropology but had no discernible influence on the contributions of those attending the 1989 conference. Rabinow had prepared to do work in Indonesia but, by his own account, failed to get government authorization and went instead to Morocco with Clifford and Hillary Geertz despite his inadequate preparation in Arabic. One of the virtues of the book, if read against the grain, is that it provides a stellar reflexive account of how Morocco deals with celebrity researchers. Interviewing Rabinow's key interpreter/informant in 1980, I had learned that as a long-term employee of the Moroccan secret police he and others had been assigned to keep eyes on the research and summarize its import. The company Rabinow kept, and some of his own unscrupulous behavior, may have been a key reason he found many Moroccans were reluctant to talk with him. I would guess that inadequate preparation in Arabic and the general tenseness of the consequent research were an ideal crucible for bringing reflection on one's own role in fieldwork to the fore. Yet, this early work was a gem in as much as it set up both local perspectives and hidden government agendas to be put squarely into the anthropological lens. When reflexivity swept through anthropology as Michel Foucault's writings about the relationship between power and knowledge became better known, Rabinow's work became much discussed (positively and negatively) and in particular even scholars with area studies backgrounds began to try to reflect on their own relationships with those they studied.

In 1999-2000, the 11th edition of *Mediterraneans/Méditerranéennes* appeared (titled, *Voices from Morocco/Voix du Maroc*) which provided more than 30 brief contributions from North African and foreign researchers with a focus on providing a collection of stories and ethnographic perspectives reflecting subaltern lives.[12] Habiba Boumlik contributed an insightful discussion of two women, rural-urban immigrants/*Djebbeliyyat*,[13] from the working class in Tangiers whose hard lives seldom benefited from recognition or respect. Abderrahmane Rachik contributed a brief account of the 1980s popular uprisings (émeute) and the evolution of social uprisings in the

11. Paul Rabinow, *Reflections on Field Work in Morocco* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).

12. Kenneth Brown and Mohamed Berrada, *Voices from Morocco* (Paris: L'association méditerranéens, 2000).

13. Habiba Boumlik, "Rahma la laveuse, Sou'dia la montagnarde," in *Voices from Morocco*, eds. Kenneth Brown and Mohamed Berrada (Paris: L'association méditerranéenne, 1999), 261-6.

early 1990s.[14] Mokhtar Zagzoule's contribution on the origin of the musical group Nass al-Ghiwane[15] contrasted markedly with Abdelhaï Diouri's brief discussion of fragments of the autobiography of a M'allem Gnawi despite the broad social influence of both types of music in Morocco.[16] Articles on cities, language, traditional tales, poetry, unwed mothers, street children, and ritual fill out the volume.[17] Maati Kabbal's "Méditerrannée express" dealing with popular responses to the migration across the Mediterranean and the many who are never heard from again notes how the anthropomorphic view of the Mediterranean as an eater of people is ritually blended with modern perspectives on travel and police views of popular attitudes as disruptive and even, seditious.[18] While some of these contributions would have been well received in the 1960s the sheer breadth of so many contributions from Moroccan scholars would have been astonishing.

Susan Slyomovics (*The Performance of Human Rights in Morocco*, 2005) provides us an ethnography of human rights policies and human rights abuses under Hassan II that could never have been written during Hassan II's reign yet its real innovation is to focus on the viewpoints of those arrested and tortured, those whose narratives she could find, that is.[19] She does this with careful attention to the Arabic legal concepts used in Islamic law and how they differ from those prevailing in the European courts. Slyomovics also examines the new models of activism developed by Islamists in prison including the rotating hunger strike – given the prohibition in Islam of suicide. This had the potential of lengthening public attention beyond that possible with a single protester's fast. Yet, while it could not have been published in an earlier era, methodologically it added little that was new in the broader literature and,

14. Abderrahmane Rachik, "Entre l'émeute et la protestation urbaines," in *Voices from Morocco*, eds. Kenneth Brown and Mohamed Berrada (Paris: L'association méditerranéenne, 1999), 233-40.

15. Mokhtar Zagzoule, "Nass El Ghiwane," in *Voices from Morocco*, eds. Kenneth Brown and Mohamed Berrada (Paris: L'association méditerranéens, 1999), 195-202.

16. Abdelhaï Diouri, "Al-Genbri: Un entretien," in *Voices from Morocco*, eds. Kenneth Brown and Mohamed Berrada (Paris: L'association méditerranéenne, 1999), 175-83.

17. See for example, Souad Guennoun, "Enfants des rues or "Les Incendiaires"," in *Voices from Morocco*, eds. Kenneth Brown and Mohamed Berrada (Paris: L'association méditerranéenne, 1999), 255-60; Fenneke Reysoo, "Unwed mothers in Morocco," in *Voices from Morocco*, eds. Kenneth Brown and Mohamed Berrada (Paris: L'association méditerranéenne, 1999), 250-3; Mohamed Tozy, "Le taureau de Sidi Ameur," in *Voices from Morocco*, eds. Kenneth Brown and Mohamed Berrada (Paris: L'association méditerranéenne, 1999), 161-7; Clifford Geertz, "Modernités," in *Voices from Morocco*, eds. Kenneth Brown and Mohamed Berrada (Paris: L'association méditerranéenne, 1999), 192-281; Ahmed Toufik, "Titularisation," in *Voices from Morocco*, eds. Kenneth Brown and Mohamed Berrada (Paris: L'association méditerranéenne, 1999), 63-66.

18. Maati Kabbal, "Méditerrannée express," in *Voices from Morocco*, eds. Kenneth Brown and Mohamed Berrada (Paris: L'association méditerranéenne, 1999), 111-4.

19. Susan Slyomovics, *The Performance of Human Rights in Morocco* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

oddly, barely used the performance literature in its analysis. Slyomovics does, however, speak to power and its imbrication with knowledge and silencing in considerable detail using a multitude of sources, and as such is a closer to Foucault's ideas than any papers Gellner encountered at the 1989 conference. Adopting explicitly the perspective of the tortured and imprisoned, with no credence given to the state's perspective, Slyomovics sets the work squarely in the subaltern narrative camp. The book thus raises the question of the authenticity of an explicitly postmodern or relativist perspective. Perhaps some "truths" are scarcely credible, after all.

Hsaïn Ilahiane's and John Sherry's Intel funded work on cell phones in Morocco[20] interrogates a liberal truth, that modern technologies are fundamentally ways to facilitate/impose dominant views and discourses. Instead they find that cell phones have positively transformed the work space inhabited by the poor in urban and rural areas. This transformation has greatly facilitated the access to work within the informal economy (*le noir* as Moroccans call it). Because cell phones in Morocco are cheap and work for receiving calls without paying for any minutes, all those with labor or skills to sell can network easily not only within a city or region but at any distance allowing for a reasonable commute time. Personal cell phone networks thus vastly enhance access to work across Morocco. One of Ilahiane's informants even went so far as to refer to the cell phone as the sixth pillar of Islam. Ilahiane's work also provides one of many arguments for less dogmatic and ill-informed arrogance among the politically correct whose counter narrative may suffer as much from dogmatism as other master narratives.

Jamila Bargach occupied the mixed position of native Moroccan and foreign trained expert in an early post Ph.D. contract from a German firm to study SolFem, an organization founded by Aïcha Chenna[21] to help women who suffer both financial shortfall and social stigma for having children out of wedlock. Trained at Rice University in Texas, Bargach was matriculated in post-positivist social science and imbibed the necessity of recognizing subjects as embodying complex identities and of reflecting on the researcher-subject relationship. SolFem, despite its important and even critical role in a society where pregnancy outside of marriage was heavily stigmatized, still fit clearly into a development framework from the 1980s and Bargach's mandate from her German sponsors was to evaluate how well it did its job as such. Her

20. Hsaïn Ilahiane and John Sherry, "Economic and Social Effects of Mobile Phone Use in Morocco," *Ethnology* 48, 2 (Spring 2009): 85-98.

21. Jamila Bargach, "Shortcomings of a Reflexive Tool Kit; or, Memoir of an Undutiful Daughter," in *Encountering Morocco. Fieldwork and Cultural Understanding*, eds. David Crawford and Rachel M. Newcomb (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 146-64.

chapter articulates marvelously the problems with fitting multiple universes of meaning within a single framework. Her research subjects included, the real victims ("mad with suffering and confusion") of the legal situation in 1980s Morocco, women gaming the institution (concealing repeat pregnancies or looking for easy handouts despite lack of desperate circumstances), and cynical staff refusing those they knew were less than lost or desperate.

The simple development questions; whether SolFem promoted gender equality and whether it spent its money in the ways the funder expected, turned out to be significantly unsuited to the interpretive framework's focus on subjectivity and ambiguity in subject-expert relationships due to its expectation of more objectivity than the interviews might justify. Bargach has elegantly reported the funding issues tied to dominant rationalist paradigms and the lack of mesh between them and the worlds inhabited by anthropological subjects. This may be the tip of the iceberg but it does locate the general position of a real problem. While causality is often presented by the development folks as simple and physical there is no reason, given modern notions such as complexity, chaos, and autopoesis that we should so regard it.

Vincent Crapanzano's eloquent memoir[22] finally explains the personal trajectory he followed that ended up with his psychological biography of Tuhami[23] that at the time of their publication struck most of us, unused to the psychiatric couch and Lacan's dramatic approach to psychiatry, as so extraordinary. Psychiatry in the West tends to be about internal (mostly unconscious) constructs that influence our worldly behavior, while Tuhami, like many Muslims, viewed these types of constructs as external forces impinging on the spirit. Interestingly, Crapanzano also recounts the recurring dream of chaos and the destruction of the world following the moon landing.[24] Eternal social harmony, even if only an ideal, can be shattered with terrible consequences if a vision of the universe is challenged. Could it be that those with precarious sanity can more easily refrain from rejecting matters that do not fit? Is sanity the habit of rejecting what does not conform to received wisdom? While many of us had concerns about Tuhami as representative of the broader Moroccan society, this issue was to a degree addressed by Stefania Pandolfo's study of Moroccan postcolonial historic and poetic imagination.[25]

22. Vincent Crapanzano, *Recapitulations* (New York: The Other Press, 2015).

23. Vincent Crapanzano, *The Ḥamadsha: A Study of Moroccan Ethnopschiatry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973); idem., *Tuhami: Portrait of a Moroccan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

24. Crapanzano, *Recapitulations*, 360.

25. Stefania Pandolfo, *Impasse of the Angels* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1997).

In a second book focusing on psychology and poetry Stefania Pandolfo brought anthropological research into the worlds of both the mentally troubled and the inspired.[26] She provides wonderful insights into the ways religious scholars in Morocco are reconciling Islamic beliefs about the mind/soul and the spirit with the work of modern Moroccan psychologists treating the mentally troubled. Her work thus opens perspectives on memory, spirituality, and humanity in a country confronting social problems and violence. These are issues linked rather clearly to geopolitical concerns and activities of other countries who push a dominant rationalist enlightenment agenda at every level. Pandolfo makes perhaps one of the best cases for cultural and intellectual pluralism. Reminiscent of Evans-Pritchard's education in witchcraft by the Azande,[27] Pandolfo's conversation with "the Imam," a man devoted to spiritual curing of the mentally troubled, leaves us rather persuaded that the psychological establishment does not cover the issues that concern "the Imam." His argument is that the core causality for some mental illness is abandoning tranquility and giving into anger and grief, and this is a spiritual issue not a medical one. Like the Azande, who ask why was this person sleeping under the granary when it collapsed if not due to witchcraft, he asks how did the medical illness come about and why to this person at this time. The worlds of poets are well known to be imaginative commentary on the past, the present and the possible future but, Pandolfo provides an insight into Moroccan poets that also provides a nuanced and unparalleled insight, via careful linguistic analysis, into the conceptual fundaments of Moroccan world views. It would be hard to imagine this work being done in 1989, yet this impression highlights the extraordinary prescience of Crapanzano's earlier work.

A discussion by Seteney Shami and Nefissa Neguib[28] recognizes the continuing relevance of Fredrik Barth's work[29] but focuses on the changing dynamic in which nation states seek to control and channel ethnicity. The construction of identity has proven more robust than any specific success in as much as its power of theorization lends it to so many ways of critiquing a hegemonic position. As mentioned, the take on Berbers in Morocco when I

26. Stefania Pandolfo, *Knot of the Soul. Madness, Psychoanalysis, Islam* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2018).

27. Evans E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1937), 69-70.

28. Seteney Shami and Nefissa Neguib, "Occluding difference: ethnic identity and the shifting zones of theory on the Middle East and North Africa," in *Anthropology of the Middle East and North Africa*, eds. Sherine Hafez and Susan Slyomovics (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 23-46.

29. Frederik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries. The Social Organization of Cultural Difference* (Oslo: Universitets Forlaget, 1969).

did my dissertation was heavily weighted toward the theme of ill-intentioned French colonial powers using the Berber Question to divide and conquer Morocco and consequently the disparagement by the modern state of all Berber culture groups. Fairly quickly thereafter Morocco found other more serious minorities to oppose: first Marxist leftists with international financing, then, as the times changed, radical Islamic groups (often including former leftists), also with international financing, came to be greater sources of angst for the security forces. In what appears from the outside as a clear historical borrowing, it seemed that, to the state, some empowerment of Berber language and culture, following the French model, might help divide and conquer the enemies of the state.[30] During the short lived Arab Spring, it seemed that pluralistic values might take some wind out of the sails of the hegemonic forces. While this so far has been successful in only the smallest ways, it has left cracks in the facade of nationalist controls over all forms of culture. Shami and Neguib, despite writing when hopes for the Arab Spring were still high conclude correctly that the ideas of pluralism and the fight against the occlusion of difference is promising, if over the long haul.

Jonathon Glasser's exemplary work on Andalusian music pushes an anti-hegemonic pluralism as well.[31] He introduces Marx's notion of the hoarding of money in pre-capitalist societies as akin to the way North African states try to nationalize the musical "patrimony" to increase national value. This requires standardization and efforts to vulgarize the patrimony as a repertoire of classics rather than to encourage diversity of musical expression and tradition. Music has such a high capacity to stimulate that it speaks to identity and tradition better than most other cultural forms, perhaps more so even than cuisine. As such, Glasser draws attention to a more nationalistic dominant narrative and its influence through discouragement of innovation or multi-culturalism of the musical variety in North Africa (there are echos here of the traditional centrist arguments agains *bida'a* in Islamic discourse). Having no musical abilities, I am spared any urge to argue for the respective merits of any genre of North African music yet, Glasser's example encapsulates many of the arguments for a pluriverse: surely, in music, variety is a significant part of bliss and there are few even moderately persuasive arguments for minimizing diversity in music.

30. Bruce Maddy-Weizman, *The Berber Identity Movement and the Challenge to North African States* (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 2011), 153-82.

31. Jonathan Glasser, *The Lost Paradise. Andalusi Music in Urban North Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 13, 106ff.

Aomar Boum provides a probing critique of inter-ethnic relations that demonstrates rather persuasively that, at least in Morocco, relations between Jews and Muslims are heavily dependent upon the period and the context in which people came of age.[32] He has put the cohort into the center of ethnic relations rather than the individual, religion *per se*, or the ethnic group itself. His work suggests that ethnic perception is shaped both by real memories and false stories often passed around for purposes of invidious comparison. Boum eschews any postmodernist claim that each perspective is equally valid. Indeed he seems to suggest that, in this case, the old are indeed the wisest. He thus raises in his low key way the important question about our obligation to critically assess our subjects' claims. I have no doubt that as a black Moroccan he has a degree of immunity to claims of political incorrectness that some might envy. Nevertheless, if we follow this insight we might imagine a pluriverse with constructions of reality that range from historically accurate to wildly imaginative and ill informed. Yet, as disturbing as this may seem it may be best to follow Boum and to start with perceptions of reality in their real diversity, to examine their support structures, and then actually to draw conclusions, however tentative these might be. From a Pyrrhonic perspective we need not insist on any absolutely correct perspective but, the more insightfully we understand diversity the better world we might imagine and construct.

Rip Van Winkle or Ernest André Gellner

This brief set of examples, constrained by the space limitations of an article, are enough, I think, to justify some tentative answers to my original questions. If we follow the later perspectives of Foucault and relinquish the game of eagerly replacing one dominant discourse with another, we may be open to a skeptic's pluriverse in which arguments are evaluated in terms of their degree of persuasiveness rather than as true or false and virtuous or evil. As Hume (1738)[33] and Kant (1781)[34] intimated, the empirical world and the world of human perception may not be susceptible to comprehensive truth evaluation. While a science limited to Popperian falsification may still encounter the problems adumbrated by Feyerabend,[35] a thoroughly pluralistic approach would not. In my reexamination of Moroccan ethnography, I have

32. Aomar Boum, *Memories of Absence. How Muslims Remember Jews in Morocco* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).

33. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (London: John Noon printers, 1739).

34. Immanuel Kant, *Critik der reinen Vernunft (Critique of Pure Reason)* (Riga: Johann Friedrich Hartknoch, 1781 [English, 1787]).

35. Feyerabend, *Against Method*.

now to admit that the question of whether I feel more like Rip Van Winkle himself or Ernest A. Gellner is that I feel like both.

As regards my first question, there seems to have been a qualitative change since 1989 in some Moroccan ethnographic research. A hard enlightenment approach has in some cases given way to a more pluralistic view. The broader interests of anthropology now influence both North African and foreign researchers doing work in North Africa. Our 1989 conference was firmly dominated by enlightenment inspired scholarly research uninterested in its own problematization. In ways that in 1989 had scarcely been broached in Moroccan research, there now seems room for evaluating a range of researcher-subject relations, the insightful readings of poets, myriad subaltern perspectives including the insights of the mad and those who are desperately concerned with their own welfare. On the other hand, in one sense things have not entirely changed, there may always be an element of the romantic in other cultures for the young and those not well traveled. That the "Other" may be frequently viewed through rose tinted glasses is not all bad as it helps inter-cultural interaction without which conflict would be greater. Too much worldliness deprives the researcher of some of the insights so apparent in works by curious strangers. The advantage of a monocultural upbringing (e.g. an 1835 Alexis De Tocqueville) should not be ignored: a great deal more appears interesting and memorable if one is not blasé.

As for my second question, and its sub-question, ethnographers still seem to be unsure whether to join cliques and disparage all those not with them as against them, on the pattern of numero-phobes demeaning non-qualitative research, or whether to go with a genuine respect for different academic approaches. The latter would be compatible with respect for an Islamic psychology or finance, for example, while the former breathes an air dense with hypocrisy. For the moment, my sense is that such true pluralism is lacking and that this is due largely to academic infighting and invidious comparisons of the sort shared by racist and bigoted arguments. Obviously, we can hope for less dogma, fewer conceits, and more skepticism about the received truths in academe. Although invidious comparisons have long been the favorite tropes of humankind, in and out of the academy, they seem particularly hypocritical in an era of putative post postmodernism.

A significant amount of anthropological theory involves dressing up earlier ideas in new garb. In a 1970 publication, *Marx's Theory of Alienation*, István Mészárós argued that the core Marxian model involved a dialectical relationship between humans, human industry, and nature in which each of

the three were continuously transformed by the other two.[36] This became an inspiration for the founding of the *Journal of Political Ecology* in 1992 (publication began in 1993).[37] The journal has attempted ever since to recognize the causality emanating within each sphere and to de-anthropomorphize and problematize causality and agency themselves. Within the concept of the pluriverse, we could embrace the many indigenous world constructs that similarly insist on the agency of non-human elements, including but not limited to "nature" and spiritual beings, such as jinn. An additional aspect of the political ecology approach is that such a Marxian fundamental dialectic precludes a virgin concept of nature or humanity: both are and have been under continual transformation. They are best viewed as an evolving well-connected system of species, flora, fauna, geology, perception, culture, belief, and energy flows.

These days we have many anthropologists advocating a "new" multi-species perspective in which inter-species relationships evolve over time.[38] As is usually the case there is something new and something old, if little appreciated, in these views. If, as the later Foucault suggested, each day is like those before but a little different, perhaps much the same can be said of the theories to which so many dedicate their careers. While this new democritization favors a different pluralism, it also exemplifies another case that would benefit from deep and critical readings of theory if the novelty of a multi-species pluriverse is to be evaluated. Skeptics neither find all perspectives equally and fully persuasive nor equally unpersuasive. More generally, even Hamlet's suggestion (there are more things in heaven and Earth, Horatio than are dreamt of in your philosophy) need not to be beyond consideration.

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37. https://journals.uair.arizona.edu/index.php/JPE/index

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في ذكرى ڤان وينكل (Van Winkle) وأعماله الإثنوغرافية عن شمال إفريقيا

ملخص: كيف تغيرت وجهات النظر التي تحفز العمل الإثنوغرافي في شمال إفريقيا بين عامي 1989 و2019؟ هل حلت المقاربات الجديدة محل السرديات السائدة الجديدة أو تجنبت الغطرسة لصالح التعددية ودعم التنوع الفكري؟ يقدم هذا المقال نقدًا للأدب من منظور المشككين البيرونيين الذين يعتبرون كل شيء موضوعا للشك والتساؤل. لقد حصل تغيير جوهري وهام في الثلاثين عامًا الأخيرة، بين سنتي 1989 و2019 وذلك بناء على عدة اعتبارات من بينها أن التأهيل في الأدب أصبح أكثر شمولاً إلى حد كبير، ويهيمن عليه الآن الباحثون والكتاب من شمال إفريقيا، بينما أصبحت التعددية معيارًا لدعم الروايات المضادة. وتبعا لذلك، ظلت المقارنة غير الصائبة مشكلة قائمة في حد ذاتها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الإثنوغرافيا، التعددية، الشك، شمال إفريقيا، الشمولية.

A la mémoire de Van Winkle et son ethnographie nord-africaine

Résumé: Comment les perspectives qui ont motivé le travail ethnographique en Afrique du Nord ont-elles changé entre 1989 et 2019? Les nouvelles approches ont-elles remplacé de nouveaux récits dominants ou évité l’arrogance en faveur du pluralisme et du soutien à la diversité intellectuelle? Cet article propose une critique de la littérature du point de vue d’un sceptique pyrrhonique. Il constate des changements à la fois substantiels et significatifs au cours des trente années entre 1989 et 2019 à plusieurs égards: la paternité dans la littérature est beaucoup plus inclusive et est maintenant dominée par le travail des Nord-Africains tandis que le pluralisme est devenu la norme en tant que support de contre-récits. La comparaison désagréable est restée un problème.

Mots-clés: Ethnographie, pluralisme, scepticisme, Afrique du Nord, inclusivité.