

An Anthropologist in Dialogue: Living with Villagers, Discussing Human Rights, and Looking beyond Casablanca

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Abstract: The author recounts his relationship to Morocco over five decades – initial contact with Morocco, then work on his doctoral dissertation and his three books addressing different aspects of Moroccan society – and relates how each project changed as it progressed, how and why he went from one project to another and how, sensing the uniqueness of his encounters with individual Moroccans, he sought to incorporate their words in his writings. In choosing different forms of “dialogue” in response to the different situations and aims of each of his books, and in relating these to the theme of the “wager,” the author encourages anthropologists to recognize their own vulnerability and that of their discipline and society, and promotes a critical approach to his own work and to relationships between societies and between individuals and society. Returning frequently to Morocco over five decades, the author presents some of the many entanglements between his Moroccan experiences and his personal life, and discusses the new challenges that arise as his first book, *Moroccan Dialogues*, is translated into Arabic, and as his relationship to Morocco continues.

Keywords: Taroudannt and the Souss plains, Dialogue, Wager and Vulnerability, Human Rights, Cinema, Translating and Repatriating Texts.

Introduction: More Questions than Answers

I have been to Morocco innumerable times over some five decades. Several months after my most recent visit, in 2018 to the Taroudannt region, I was asked by the editors of this volume if I would like to contribute to it and write about my experiences in Morocco. I immediately agreed, believing this to be an inspired theme for a volume and one that provided me with a very welcome occasion to look back over these experiences.

After reading some of my early writings, rummaging through cartons, looking over bookshelves, going through old papers (some in New York City, some in Tunis, and many of which were never processed or led to dead ends), and recalling many memories that had been forgotten (and sensing that many more would never be recalled), writing had to start, and questions arose in rapid succession: how do I want to do this? where do I begin? do I pose a problem that I then try to solve? do I present a series of anecdotes or give a more experiential presentation? is the approach to be synthesizing, particularizing, projective, retrospective? will it be the story of one anthropological career

or perhaps an abridged autobiography or memoir? or an attempt to address various aspects of my work on Morocco and how they relate to one another? or an insight into Morocco over 50 years? or something of each? or something else entirely?

Perhaps I would focus on my major writings concerning Morocco – a Ph.D. thesis in 1974 on entrepreneurial activity in a rural community in the Oued Souss plains; a first book, growing out of my experience in that community and questioning the foundations and practice of anthropology (*Moroccan Dialogues*, 1982); a second book that discusses ideas about human rights in Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt (*Arab Voices*, 1991); and then a third that explores Moroccan filmmaking (*Beyond Casablanca*, 2004). And I might discuss how I passed from one to another of these relatively unrelated topics. Or I might attempt to trace the changes occurring in that rural community over 50 years, as I returned to it again and again, although for much shorter periods after the mid-1970s.

Or perhaps I would highlight the contrasts between these rather traditional forms of anthropological research and writing, involving prolonged contact with particular communities (villagers, intellectuals, creative figures in the film world) and other activities I carried out in Morocco, among them several consulting projects (a study of leather crafts in Fes, assessing the human impact of oil extraction in Tarfaya and of several different irrigation projects), accompanying and lecturing for a group of well-off UK residents who were touring Morocco, and writing over several years the Morocco Country Report for the well-known British weekly, *The Economist*. There were also a number of what could be called pro-bono activities – writing a radio program for the BBC that dramatized some sections of *Moroccan Dialogues*, collaborating with the well-known Moroccan sociologist and public intellectual Muhammad Guessous in delivering a series of lectures to COSUMAR executives, participating in a number of academic conferences in Fes.

Or, I might consider that, as important as Morocco has been in my experience, it is only one of the many places I have lived in – aside from growing up in New York City and having spent university years in the US cities of Boston, Chicago and New Haven, I lived for two years in France before having any knowledge of Morocco; then 12 years in London, half of that time working on human rights in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region for Amnesty International; then marrying and moving to Tunis where I continued writing and took on some consulting projects; then seven

years in Cairo as a professor of anthropology at the American University in Cairo; and then two years in Singapore and one in Sweden, in both cases accompanying my wife who occupied academic research positions there. And there were also short periods in various places where one certainly learns a lot but without the depth that characterizes prolonged anthropological research – at academic conferences in other Maghreb countries (Algeria, Tunisia), on a few consulting assignments in other African countries (the Comoros, Djibouti, Ghana) and in Central America (Guatemala, Costa Rica, and Belize), and some research studies of just a few weeks in Senegal and South Africa. Perhaps I should explore how these experiences helped me put Morocco in perspective, in relation to its neighbors and to the broader global community.

So, with all these possible avenues to consider in my relationship to Morocco, and perhaps others that I am forgetting, how to proceed?

The major landmarks in my relationship to Morocco certainly involve all the research experiences and writing that led to the Ph.D. dissertation and the three books I published, as well as a number of other writings related to each of these projects. Here I will try to address aspects of these experiences and writings that are not usually discussed, in particular how these experiences evolved, how looking back and reflecting upon them, and how returning to the original sites of research, may provide some insight into Morocco and into the discipline of anthropology. This will include, toward the end, a discussion of how a translation of *Moroccan Dialogues* into Arabic – a project initiated and carried to completion by Moroccans – raised a number of interesting problems, conundrums, and dilemmas.

I. Beginnings: France, Morocco, Anthropology

A. Encountering “Difference”

In September 1963, as a 22 year-old university graduate from New York City, I took a nine-day boat trip across the Atlantic, ultimate destination Lyon, France where, knowing very little French, I was to take up a one-year position as an *assistant d’anglais*, as part of the Fulbright program.

I don’t remember many details about that year although looking back I’m always amused by a coincidence I could not appreciate at the time, that the room I rented in Lyon was located on Place Maréchal Lyautey. One classroom incident does stand out in my memory. In September of 1963, just as I was beginning to teach English to students in *Lycee La Martiniere*, the Ku Klux Klan, a white supremacist group in the US, bombed a church in Birmingham, Alabama and four African-American girls were killed. This incident came

several months after the police unleashed dogs and turned hoses on African-American students attempting to integrate schools, also in Birmingham. Some of my students in Lyon, for whom the USA was a strange and exotic place, asked me about these events and I explained how deeply rooted racism was in US society, how indelibly marked the US was by the institution of slavery and the strongly racist attitudes that still prevailed among much of the white population, and how the society also had been involved in the genocide and dispossession of the indigenous populations on the North American continent as Europeans arrived and settled. I attempted to bring these aspects closer to the students' experience by suggesting that perhaps there were some parallels between what was happening in the US and France's behavior in its colonial territories and, in particular, in Algeria, which had recently achieved independence, in 1962, after a long and sometimes violent struggle. At this mention of Algeria one student shouted out, insultingly, "mais ce ne sont que des arabes!" A few students challenged this, some others echoed the insult, and I wish I had a record of the ensuing discussion because it was very animated, to say the least.

For that year's winter vacation I decided to go to North Africa, in large part because of the attraction of newly independent Algeria.¹ I would first hitch-hike from Lyon to Granada to visit a Spanish friend, and then continue on to Malaga (or perhaps it was Algeciras?), from where I would take a boat to the Spanish enclave of Melilla (or perhaps it was Sebta?) on the Moroccan coast. I would then take buses across the north of Morocco to Oujda, then continue on to Tlemcen in Algeria, cross Algeria to Constantine and then go on to Tunisia, either hitch-hiking or taking buses or trains, whatever seemed easier.

All went reasonably well – from the trip's beginnings in the impressive beauty of the Alhambra, through its endings in my wandering through the souks of Tunis and the return by boat to France via Marseille. My French, still rudimentary after only a few months in Lyon, nonetheless enabled me to engage in conversations throughout this trip. No doubt the most interesting of these took place in Algeria where almost every interaction I had in the various cafes and cheap hotels I frequented led to discussions of politics and showed the impassioned attitudes Algerians had toward their newly independent nation, their anger at the behavior of the former colonial power, and their strong belief that an independent Algeria had a promising future.

1. The term "North Africa" was used more commonly than the term "Maghreb" by French and English speakers in the mid-1960s.

But perhaps the most striking single experience was the bus ride through northern Morocco. I didn't realize it at the time but these first sights and sounds of Morocco, these encounters with the utterly new and different – the manner of dress, the marketplaces, the incomprehensible language – sowed seeds that would blossom several years later.

B. “Mais, ce n'est pas du français!”

I spent a second year in France as *assistant d'anglais* in Paris, and from there I went to the University of Chicago for a Masters in French. I did reasonably well in the Masters Program and one day the department chair came up to me, suggesting that I pursue a doctorate in French. I wasn't averse to this, not having a clear idea of what I wished to do after the Masters. He then asked what I would like to study if I went for the doctorate. With my trip across the Maghreb a couple of years earlier still strongly etched in my memory and aware of the region's literature in French, I answered that I would like to work on the francophone literature of North Africa. His response, amounting to *une douche très très froide*, was simple and devastating, “mais, ce n'est pas du français!”

I knew immediately that I had to look elsewhere.

I had a friend in the University of Chicago's doctoral anthropology program at the time who suggested that I explore anthropology. I went to the anthropology department, said I had an interest in North Africa, and was immediately directed to Prof. Clifford Geertz. I had no knowledge of Geertz's importance in anthropology nor of his work on Morocco, which was then in its early stages, so I was not particularly discouraged when his welcome was, to put it gently, rather reserved. He sent me summarily to another faculty member, Prof. Paul Friedrich, who was much warmer, more receptive, and even encouraging. Since Geertz's name meant nothing to me at the time, I didn't feel his cool reception outweighed Friedrich's warm one, and I applied and was accepted in the graduate anthropology program. And I was able to pay part of my fees for this by teaching the elementary French language course required for graduate students, some of whom were my fellow anthropology students.

Although Geertz never became what you might call comradely, he did become somewhat more welcoming as one got to know him better, and this happened as he periodically invited into his home a few graduate students interested in Morocco. There I certainly met Tom Dichter and Larry Rosen and perhaps also Paul Rabinow.

II. Morocco

A. Early Choices

After one year in the graduate anthropology program at the University of Chicago I transferred to Yale University, where my wife – I had just gotten married – was beginning her graduate studies, also in anthropology. At Yale, no faculty member had any experience in the Maghreb and I began to work with Professor Sidney Mintz who specialized in the Caribbean but had also done some research in Iran. More importantly, I was interested in economic anthropology and this was one of Professor Mintz's specialties.

I had already decided on Morocco as my field research site and my wife fully agreed to make it hers too, with both of us thinking that our knowledge of French would be useful during our first months there, before we became conversant in Moroccan Arabic. We had considered other Maghreb countries but Morocco seemed the most suitable – Algeria at that time was rather closed to US researchers and Tunisia had already been studied by a number of US scholars. And while Geertz and his students at Chicago had begun their work on Morocco, they were largely limited to one region – Fes and Sefrou – and, in any case, had not yet published much on Morocco.

At Yale I continued to study Arabic, which I had begun at Chicago, but this was not intensive and was not Moroccan *darija*; and I wrote papers for various courses, based exclusively on library research, on subjects such as “Tribal emigration in Southern Morocco,” “The effects of modernization in Morocco on Berber society,” “An analysis of exchange in Moroccan religious brotherhoods,” “Islam and secular behavior,” “Insurrection and Islamic political ideology: a Moroccan example.”

In September 1969, two years after I had arrived at Yale, my wife and I found ourselves in Morocco, to begin our fieldwork. We had no specific locations in mind, so we took a long drive around the country over a period of about a month. As we weighed the potential of various sites for our research, based on the very fragmentary knowledge we were gaining during the 2-3 days we spent in each place we visited, we decided that Taroudannt and its region seemed very promising, in part because it seemed to have an interesting mixture of rural and urban – Taroudannt was then a small urban center with a population of between 20 and 30 thousand – and was therefore suitable for both my wife's research project on the legal system and mine on rural marketplaces. It was also attractive because we didn't know of anthropologists who had worked in that part of the country and we could think of our work as breaking new ground; and it was rather distant from Morocco's main

metropolitan centers, thus satisfying our wish to be in a place that, for two people who had grown up in New York City, was significantly “different.” We then had to spend months in Rabat getting official permission to begin our research and we moved to Taroudannt as 1969 was ending.²

B. A Dissertation and Three Books

Once field research begins we confront a complicated world that almost inevitably pushes us to alter or even reject our initial research topics. Then, as we wrestle with the task of putting this experience into a form that can be communicated to others – in writing, photographs, video, and so on – a new series of problems arises, as the anthropologist grapples with questions of audience, style, language, etc. How did these challenges and my responses to them evolve in the course of my work?

1. Dissertation: Obstacles, Permissions, Redirection

Several months after arriving in Morocco, and then Taroudannt, I began my research on rural marketplaces, a topic that had its origins in my interest in economic behavior, in my critical view of the development and modernization theories relating to colonialism and post-colonialism that dominated discussion in the 1960s, and in my search for a domain that would bring me close to individual lives.

From the very beginning my research confronted a major obstacle: before I was able to meet the marketers and see whether they would discuss their activities with me, I had to secure approval from local officials – the *moqaddem* or *shaykh*, who might be using a little room at the marketplace site as a weekly office, or the *qaid* or *super-qaid* who occupied permanent offices in the main urban areas of Taroudannt, Ouled Teima, Inezgane, etc. It quickly became apparent that this administrative approval was far from automatic and would often require further meetings and uncertain delays. I began to think of other ways to carry out my research.

During our first months in Taroudannt, a vegetable marketer I had gotten to know took me to Ouled Filali, an Arabic-speaking village situated on the right bank of the Oued Souss, west of Taroudannt. There, he introduced me to Faqir Muhammad, a farmer then about 60 years old, through whom I

2. During our time in Morocco from 1969-1971, we had very little contact with other researchers working in the country: during our early months in Rabat we found ourselves in the same two-star hotel as Malcolm Blincow, a Canadian anthropologist also beginning doctoral research; then, while we were based in Taroudannt and Ouled Filali, we met the historian Ken Brown in Agadir; and, on a couple of other occasions, while driving around Morocco, we stopped to spend a few days with Tom Dichter and his family in Fes, cementing a friendship that had only been hinted at in Chicago but that strengthened in Morocco and that continues to this day.

met a number of other villagers.³ Over the course of a number of visits to the Faqir and Ouled Filali I began to consider the possibility of settling in Ouled Filali and using it as a base for my research. Once I decided on this it took many more months and several trips to Rabat and Agadir to get official permission and it was only in the fall of 1970, a year after we had first come to Morocco, that I was able to settle in Ouled Filali, with occasional visits back to Taroudannt, usually on the market days of Thursday and Sunday.

Now based in Ouled Filali, I began to rethink the direction of my research. I still wished to focus on entrepreneurial aspects of economic activity, but now I thought it might be interesting to explore this with regard to agricultural production rather than in the marketplaces. With this new orientation I became more and more involved in the inner workings, disputes, and events of the village, and I gathered a wealth of material on village economic activities relating to land tenure, labor activities, planting and harvesting, etc., some of which went into the dissertation but much of which remains in the form of unprocessed notes, lists, diagrams, and so on.

After leaving Morocco at the end of the summer of 1971 I spent much of the following three years writing my dissertation. Aware of some of the complexities of village life and wanting to convey this in my writing, I decided that I would present a number of complicated social events – what were being called in the anthropological literature “ ‘extended cases,’⁴ ‘social dramas,’⁵ or ‘documents.’⁶ But I also wanted to convey the viewpoints of individuals, so I would “present narratives offered by selected Moroccans of the important economic events in their lives.”⁷

This approach had two important advantages for me. On the one hand, in the course of my studies I had become critical of efforts by many anthropologists to fit anthropology into the natural scientific paradigm that dominated the search for knowledge in many fields. That paradigm had been convincingly criticized by, among others, Thomas Kuhn,⁸ who “attack[ed] the [paradigm’s] view that facts [are] independent of theory,... [and]

3. I am using the same pseudonym for the village that I used throughout *Moroccan Dialogues*.

4. Max Gluckman, “Ethnographic Data in British Social Anthropology,” *Sociological Review* 9 (1961): 5-17.

5. Victor Turner, *Schism and Continuity in an African Society* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1957).

6. Clifford Geertz, *The Social History of an Indonesian Town* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1965); Kevin Dwyer, “The Cultural Bases of Entrepreneurial Activity: A Study of a Moroccan Peasant Community,” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1974), 129.

7. Dwyer, “*The Cultural Bases of Entrepreneurial Activity*,” 131.

8. Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

suggest[ed] that both are intimately tied to one another and to the definition of a problem for study.”⁹ This criticism seemed even more apt with regard to anthropology.

I was leaning towards a more “hermeneutic” approach, with its central tenet being “(...) that there is no presuppositionless knowledge (...) knowledge is primarily a circular process, one in which there is interdependence between a view of the parts and a view of the whole, between fact and theory, between event and structure (...). One thus moves back and forth, between ‘guessing and validating,’¹⁰ or between what might be called a creative act of interpretation, and a confrontation between the interpretation and the reality which it structures.”¹¹ This seemed much more in accord with the process I was going through in learning about life in Ouled Filali.

The second advantage was that it enabled me to convey the power and authenticity I had felt in the words that people had spoken to me. After listening for hours and hours to Moroccans talking about their lives, problems, and plans, and having the opportunity to question some of them at length on these matters, I grew increasingly attached to their words as expressions that I did not wish to paraphrase but wanted to convey as faithfully as I could.

While writing my dissertation my wife and I were able to return to Taroudannt and Ouled Filali for one month in the summer of 1973 – she had already finished her thesis and earned her Ph.D., but I needed a little more research in order to finish mine. My thesis, “The Cultural Bases of Entrepreneurial Activity: a study of a Moroccan peasant community,” was accepted and I received a Ph.D. degree from Yale in 1974.¹²

9. Dwyer, “*The Cultural Bases of Entrepreneurial Activity*,” 122.

10. Paul Ricoeur, “The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered As A Text.” *Social Research* 38, 3 (1971), 547.

11. Dwyer, “*The Cultural Bases of Entrepreneurial Activity*,” 123-4.

12. One of my writings at this stage – my first public presentation based on my fieldwork – brought together a number of expressions meant to be humorous (jokes, anecdotes, sarcastic sayings) that villagers voiced regarding Amazigh populations (in this case speakers of Tashelhit, referred to *Shluḥ*), and I saw these as providing an insight into how villagers constructed their identity as Arabs (Dwyer 1973).

In a somewhat related and amusing incident suggesting how people outside Morocco viewed Arabs and Amazigh populations in Morocco, in the summer of 1973 my wife and I traveled by bus and train from Morocco across Algeria and then to Tunis, and from Tunis we took a plane to Egypt, the first time I had been to “*Umm al-Dunyā*.” By this time our Moroccan *darija* was rather fluent and as we spoke to people in Algeria, we were sometimes asked whether we were Moroccan; then in Tunis we were asked whether we were Algerian. When we reached Cairo the question often became, “Are you Berber?” (Much later I addressed at greater length some issues relating to humor in Morocco and Egypt, with particular reference to the work of Clifford Geertz – see Kevin Dwyer, “Geertz, Humour, and Morocco,” in *Clifford Geertz in Morocco*, ed. Susan Slyomovics (Abingdon UK and New York USA: Routledge, 2010), 78-96.

2. *Moroccan Dialogues: Dissatisfaction; Events and Dialogues; the Wager, Criticism, and Self-Criticism*

In the summer of 1975, two years after our previous visit, my wife and I went back to Morocco – to Taroudannt and Ouled Filali respectively. My aim was simply to confront some of the dissatisfaction I felt regarding the research and writing I had done over the previous years. This confrontation took me roughly seven years to work through, culminating in the book, *Moroccan Dialogues*.

I tried to summarize the early stages of this process in *Moroccan Dialogues*' preface: "As I planned my coming summer visit to Morocco, I decided that, if nothing else, I would confront my dissatisfaction directly (...) I would simply spend time with people I had come to care about and enjoy myself with and who seemed to feel similarly toward me, I would try to be sensitive to my needs and theirs, and I would seek to assess my doubts about academic anthropology."¹³

These doubts had to do with the difficulties I encountered trying to articulate my experiences in Morocco within anthropology's main traditions. I was unhappy with both the "scientific" approach, which I felt "radically distorted the experience because, at the very least, it overlooked the role played by the anthropologist in constructing the situation and eliciting the behavior that he or she later reported in ethnographic monographs or professional journals;"¹⁴ and with the "personal account" which "usually presented that experience 'naively,' without questioning the implications of the anthropologist's presence and comportment (...) trying to recount that experience subjectively, in a manner somewhat akin to a novel."¹⁵

That summer's experience took shape rather spontaneously. "As the summer progressed, I became more and more aware that for me and for Faqir Muhammad, a Moroccan cultivator in his mid-sixties with whom I had spent much time over the years, our most satisfying activity together was a series of tape-recorded interviews. These began provisionally ... I simply intended to ask him a few general questions (...) and I had only one interview in mind. Our second interview was prompted by the unexpected visit of a regional leader of a religious brotherhood (...),"¹⁶ leading to an "event" that involved a gathering of Tijanni brotherhood members (*dhikr*). And as the summer

13. Kevin Dwyer, *Moroccan Dialogues: Anthropology in Question* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), xvi.

14. *Ibid.*, xv.

15. *Ibid.*, xv.

16. *Ibid.*, xvi.

continued, and as I began to pursue more consciously the “event + dialogue” pattern, “I sensed that something about this whole process was critical to the effort to understand and appreciate people of other cultures and therefore critical to anthropology (...).”¹⁷

I argued that, “(...) the events and dialogues illustrate the structured inequalities of the partners during their encounter: the anthropologist singles out “events” and poses questions; the informant answers, embellishes, digresses, evades (...). The events and dialogues do not hide this inequality but, instead, help to display it (...).”¹⁸

These personal interactions had implications for relations between societies, “This particular kind of inequality is not an accident (...) but is one aspect of a wider social confrontation between the West and the rest of the world (...) [where] the West has systematically intruded upon the non-West and reworked it (...) according to the West’s own needs. This asymmetry has its counterpart in the anthropologist’s project (...) a personal expedition into the Other’s cultural and social territory, to seek a kind of understanding that has been defined by the needs of western institutions. The personal expedition is thus inevitably tied to the interests of the society from which the anthropologist comes, and all he says and does (...) provides a commentary on those interests.”¹⁹

The “event + dialogue” motif also illustrated “(...) a complex process of adjustment and readjustment (...) each changes and develops while interacting with the other (...) each creates himself in part as a reaction to the other. The anthropologist (...) and the people he confronts, and the societal interests that each represents, are engaging each other *creatively*, producing the *new* phenomenon of Self and Other becoming interdependent, of Self and Other sometimes challenging, sometimes accommodating one another.”²⁰

As I reflected on these key notions that the “event + dialogue” motif suggested, I remembered how, during my university years and my two years in France, I had become immersed in the work of Pascal and, later, Lucien Goldmann’s study of Pascal, *Le dieu caché*,²¹ and the key role played in both by the notion of the wager.²²

17. Dwyer, *Moroccan Dialogues*, xvi.

18. *Ibid.*, xvii.

19. *Ibid.*, xvii.

20. *Ibid.*, xviii.

21. Lucien Goldmann, *The Hidden God* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1964).

22. Before the publication of *Moroccan Dialogues* I had written about the importance of Pascal’s notion of the wager and Goldmann’s interpretation of it (my article followed Goldmann’s in paying particular attention to the work of Georg Lukacs) (Kevin Dwyer, “The Dialogic of Ethnology,”

The wager, as articulated by Goldmann, is characteristic of all human action in that its constituent elements are, “ ‘risk, the possibility of failure, hope of success and the synthesis of these three in the form of a faith which is a wager.’”²³ And, as ‘a wager on the success of his own action and, consequently, on the existence of a force which transcends the individual,’²⁴ it is a wager that destroys the notion of an isolated and independent Self.”²⁵

For me, *Moroccan Dialogues* was a wager of a particular kind, “To the extent that the Self’s conceit may be here more visible, the Self’s defenses less hidden and more easily probed, the individual’s ties to the interests of his own society more obvious and clearly exposed: to that extent should this book point the way toward a critique of interpretations of the Other where the immunity of the Self is more subtly promoted and, also, toward a critique of itself.”²⁶ *Moroccan Dialogues* was, thus, essentially “meant to be vulnerable to criticism.”²⁷ But the notion of “vulnerability” was broader than that, for anthropology itself was “rooted in a vulnerability of the most fundamental sort, because to expose the Self and to open it to question means not merely to question the individual anthropologist or anthropology’s specific theoretical hypotheses. Rather, it is to question the Self in its extended sense: that is, the anthropological effort itself and the interests and social system that give that effort its force.”²⁸ I felt that anthropology had, on the whole, “turned away from this vulnerability (...) [and] projected, deliberately or not, a false impression of strength (...) [forgoing] the chance to question itself and its own society.”²⁹

While I had already come to value highly the words people spoke to me as I was doing my initial research and writing my dissertation, the experience of the summer of 1975 led me to an even greater appreciation of the importance of listening to the other’s voices and pushed me to articulate why presenting these voices was an essential element in my writing. The “event + dialogue” motif that I employed in *Moroccan Dialogues* was an illustration of this approach but was not meant as a model. Rather, I saw it as “a metaphor, the

Dialectical Anthropology 4, 3 (1979): 205-24; and much later I wrote about the influence Pascal had on my work. See Kevin Dwyer, “Les pensées ‘sauvages’ – Die wilden ‘Gedanken,’” in *Wegmarken: eine Bibliothek des ethnologischen Imagination*, eds. R. Kapfer et al. (Wuppertal, Germany: Trickster Editions Peter Hammer Verlag, 1999).

23. Goldmann, *The Hidden God*, 301.

24. *Ibid.*, 301.

25. Dwyer, *Moroccan Dialogues*, 273.

26. *Ibid.*, xxii-xxiii.

27. *Ibid.*, xxii.

28. *Ibid.*, 257.

29. *Ibid.*

interest of which lies in its capacity (...) to convey the integrity of the Other; to push for a critical examination of anthropology (...); and to demonstrate the need to seek new forms of the Western project that recognize their wayer aspect and their inherent vulnerability.”³⁰

Recording, transcribing, and conveying the actual words of people I was speaking with became an approach I used in much of my future research and writing although, as we shall see, in different ways and to different purposes.

3. *Arab Voices: Risks and Challenges*

By the time *Moroccan Dialogues* was published in 1982, my wife and I had divorced and I had moved to London and was working at Amnesty International’s London headquarters. As head of Amnesty’s Middle East Research Department from 1978-1984, I led a team of researchers and assistants working on human rights violations in the MENA region, I participated in research visits and high-level missions to countries of the region (including Morocco), wrote individual country reports and annual reports, and so on.

My research visits to Morocco took place during “*les années de plomb*” (the lead years, referring to the period of heavy repression under King Hassan II’s rule) and I was able to meet and interview a number of lawyers, members of human rights associations, opposition political figures and activists, among others. The high-level mission, where I accompanied Amnesty’s Secretary-General, included meetings with Prime Minister Maati Bouabid and with officials in the Ministry of Justice.³¹ It also involved interviews with several prisoners at the Kenitra Prison, a very awkward experience because the interviews took place in the presence of prison officers and it was clear that the prisoners were very uncomfortable, to say the least. Members of our delegation agreed, afterwards, that it would have been better not to have had these interviews.

As stimulating as the position at Amnesty was, by the mid-1980s I realized I didn’t wish to continue. One of the main reasons for this was that working for Amnesty made it impossible for me to return as a private citizen to countries like Morocco and, particularly, to Taroudannt and Ouled Filali.

In addition, I had become critical of the way the issue of human rights was being instrumentalized and manipulated by world powers, most egregiously by the US. I found myself more interested in how human rights notions were

30. Ibid., 286.

31. During a meeting with the Prime Minister some members of the Prime Minister’s staff made negative remarks to one another regarding Amnesty’s mission, and from this it was clear that they didn’t know that one member of our delegation had more than a passing knowledge of *darija*.

being articulated, formulated, and struggled over in the MENA region. While preparing to leave Amnesty I began to conceive of a research project that would reflect this problematic, one that certainly had a main source in my anthropological training as well as in my early research in Morocco and in the writing of *Moroccan Dialogues* – that Western views and perspectives that seemed to dominate globally needed to be approached critically, and that the voices of those from outside the West needed to be heard in any attempt to explore important domains of human activity. I formulated the research proposal as a comparative anthropological one involving the three countries of Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt.³²

As the research and writing proceeded, the project was frequently challenged by people I interviewed with regard to its focus, details, and my deeper purposes. This was not surprising for I was now meeting intellectuals and activists who were well acquainted with academic research, who had well-developed views on the subjects I wished to discuss, and who were often wary and at times suspicious of a Western researcher's motivations and prejudices. I very much welcomed their challenges and questioning since this gave me a deeper insight into their views, often enriched my own, and frequently led to more lively conversations and better rapport.³³

In addition, as I proceeded with the research and tried to put it into written form while attempting, as in *Moroccan Dialogues*, to remain relatively faithful to people's words, other challenges arose, one of which I described in the following way, "(...) if I wanted to stay close to the actual words spoken to me, how would I avoid a book that might be crippled by phrases such as 'in Morocco Muhammad said this, but in Tunisia Ahmed said that; on the other hand Gamal in Egypt disagreed with both of them; but back in Morocco, Abdelkabir had taken another approach entirely.'"³⁴

Wrestling with this difficulty I remembered what Muhammad Guessous, whom I interviewed at length during this project and who was a well-known sociologist, public intellectual and also a long-time friend, had said to me at the outset, in February 1985: "Whatever problems may appear to be most acute on the surface here and in the Middle East, the fundamental problem is that there are three great areas of unexamined, even forbidden territory in our society, in our culture, in our psyche. These three great areas – they are so vast

32. See Kevin Dwyer, *Arab Voices: the Human Rights Debate in the Middle East*. London and New York: Routledge, 2016 [1991], 7-8 for a discussion of why these three countries were chosen.

33. See Dwyer, *Arab Voices*, 3 for an example of such questioning, in this case coming from an Egyptian religious scholar.

34. *Ibid.*, 12-13.

that I call them continents – are the continents of power, of religion, and of sex. And it is practically taboo for us to really explore them.”³⁵

In writing *Arab Voices* I fundamentally re-imagined Guessous’s three “continents,” but they nonetheless provided me with the starting points for what became the book’s three main themes, each adapted and applied to the country where it received the greatest emphasis. In the first place, “religion” was transformed into “a broad territory of key concepts a community uses to articulate a notion of itself (...);”³⁶ “sex” became “(...) ideas about ‘the individual’ and the role of liberty;”³⁷ and “power” shifted to civil society, that is how people “come together in groups and seek to engage in public activity and influence public life,”³⁸ with a special focus on the struggle for women’s rights. These themes were applied, respectively, to Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia.

There was nothing predetermined about these themes nor about their application to each country, for “The particular issues in each country emerged gradually, as different speakers gave different emphases to the problems and developments in their societies. Other researchers would probably have encountered other individuals with quite different points of view; even had they met the same people, they most likely would have encouraged different emphases to come out in their discussions.”³⁹

4. *Beyond Casablanca: Shifting Focus; one Filmmaker in a Dynamic Cultural Field*

I remarried in 1990 and moved from London to join my wife in Tunis. I continued to write about human rights but these writings were mostly from a theoretical perspective, since it would have been hazardous to write on concrete human rights violations while living under the Ben Ali regime. I had been reading widely on matters related to the production of culture and after some time I wrote a research proposal that would address social justice issues in the cinema and theater in Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt.

In the course of this project, which began in the late 1990s and led to the book *Beyond Casablanca*⁴⁰ and a number of articles, I progressively narrowed the topic, first eliminating the theater to focus only on cinema in the

35. Ibid., 13.

36. Dwyer, *Arab Voices*, 13.

37. Ibid., 13.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid., 14.

40. Kevin Dwyer, *Beyond Casablanca: M. A. Tazi and the Adventure of Moroccan Cinema* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2004).

three countries; then dropping Tunisia and Egypt to focus only on Morocco; and then, finally, in Morocco, focusing on one filmmaker, Muhammad Abderrahman Tazi. And, as the project went on, the issue of social justice appeared only peripherally.

There were several reasons why I came to concentrate on Moroccan cinema and on one of its most important filmmakers. I was fortunate to find myself engaging with Moroccan cinema in the late 1990s and early 2000s, at a very dynamic period in its development when it was meeting growing success, increasing its output and its share of the national box office – something I had not been aware of as I began my research. I was also fortunate in meeting Tazi – a filmmaker who had been a central figure in the early decades of Moroccan cinema, who was still very active (and who continues to be active today, as I write this), and who had directed the most successful film in the history of Moroccan cinema. Tazi turned out to be very generous with his time and he quickly provided me with copies of his films and other documentary material that opened up the field for me.⁴¹

In *Beyond Casablanca*, as in both *Moroccan Dialogues* and *Arab Voices*, the anthropologist and interlocutor are seen in their encounter with one another. Here, the filmmaker, “comes to the reader (...) discussing his films, his career, and the circumstances within which these were carried forward, in answers to questions posed by an anthropologist with a particular life path – someone whose questions inevitably reflect his own concerns. The focus on the economic, historical, institutional, and cultural context within which Tazi works, and the particular motifs highlighted in our discussions of his films, are just some of the obvious signs of these concerns (...) [as are] the position of women; the colonial experience and the relationship between Morocco and “the West” (...) and so on.”⁴²

C. Three Books in Perspective: Similar Orientation, but Different Forms to Different Purposes

Looking back over these three books and the research that went into them, I see that I have been adapting, according to changing circumstances, an approach that my first research experiences in Morocco led me to, where I felt the importance of conveying the words of people I met as well as showing the interaction between anthropologist and interlocutor as an aspect of a broader societal and cultural encounter, and all of this as part of an effort to open these encounters to a critical perspective.

41. Tazi’s very generous initial welcome was perhaps related to the fact that I was introduced to him by Fatema Mernissi, his close friend. More of this introduction later.

42. Dwyer, *Beyond Casablanca*, 305-6.

Each book applied this general orientation in a different way. For example, contrasting my second book to my first, I noted that, “Unlike *Moroccan Dialogues*, where reproducing conversations word-for-word and a strict chronological ordering were aided by the unity of time, place, and character, in *Arab Voices* fully maintaining chronology and striving for dialogic comprehensiveness would have made for an extremely unwieldy text (...). Therefore in *Arab Voices*, I edited the spoken word more actively, trying to blend its advantages (spontaneity and sensitivity to human interaction) with those of the written word (coherence of presentation and stylistic control) (...) trying to remain as faithful to the manner and content of expression as I could (...).”⁴³

In *Beyond Casablanca* my purpose was quite different in that I wanted to provide an understanding of a major creative domain as seen through the eyes of a key figure in it. Here, as in *Arab Voices* but unlike in *Moroccan Dialogues*, the interviews were re-ordered and recomposed. This was, in part, my response to a challenge that Tazi had phrased at one of our initial meetings: after I had suggested that we take a chronological approach and also address what I thought were some of the main themes in his films, he responded, “I have a different idea. I’ll tell you stories about my experiences on my own films, on foreign films, and so on, sort of a ‘behind-the-scenes’ approach. This will be much more interesting than simply going through my career and the themes of my films. The best way to do this is just to have a freewheeling conversation. Of course, after that you’ll have to do a restructuring, a reworking.”⁴⁴

Thus, neither the “event + dialogue” motif of *Moroccan Dialogues*, nor the re-ordering and recomposing of dialogue as in *Arab Voices* and *Beyond Casablanca* are meant to provide recipes or models, but the particular manner of presenting dialogue “(...) needs to be related to the text’s larger purpose as well as to the importance of providing readers with the explanatory and contextual material necessary for them to reach meaningful interpretations.”⁴⁵

All three books can be seen as “wagers” in the sense discussed earlier, although the nature of the wager is different in each. In *Moroccan Dialogues* the wager is on a kind of anthropology that seeks to show how a given project and the individuals involved in it are constructed in the course of their encounter, and how this allows the participants to be seen as individualized

43. Kevin Dwyer, “The purpose(s) of transcription: transcription practice in three books,” *Interval(le)s* II, 2- III, 1 (Fall 2008/Winter 2009): 208-9.

44. Dwyer, *Beyond Casablanca*, 15.

45. Dwyer, “The purpose(s) of transcription,” 213.

expressions of their own society's interests – as the encounter proceeds, these interests and individuals engage creatively with one another, aspects of each are challenged, and a somewhat new and mutually created reality emerges. In *Arab Voices* the anthropologist's wager challenges the hegemony of a dominant human rights discourse, and we see how the voices of others involved in the human rights domain introduce new elements into this discourse and push for a re-examination of received views. In *Beyond Casablanca*, we see a domain of creative activity from the point of view of one of its main actors, as he articulates his views in response to questions coming from an individual with his own particular concerns; and we also see the risks involved and the significant, if fragile, successes that have been achieved in a field dominated by large film producing countries.

Other readers might see different wagers in these books, and this was brought home to me with respect to *Moroccan Dialogues* when, a little more than two decades after it was first published, I was approached regarding a possible Moroccan translation of this book into Arabic. This initiative raised a number of thorny issues but, before we turn to these, let's return again to Ouled Filali and Taroudannt.

III. Returns, Changes, and Repatriating *Moroccan Dialogues*.

A. Early Returns

I returned to Taroudannt and Ouled Filali many times after my main research there took place over the period 1969 to 1975, most recently in the spring of 2018, in part to attend Taroudannt's first film festival, of which more later. These relatively brief returns did not provide the opportunity to do serious research although during a short spell in Ouled Filali in the winter of 1978-9, I updated my manuscript for *Moroccan Dialogues*, which would be published several years later; and, during the mid-1980s I recorded several more conversations with the Faqir but, regrettably, I never transcribed or wrote about them.

The return to Ouled Filali for a couple of weeks in 1978-9 took place shortly after I had joined Amnesty International and I did not return again while holding that position, fearing that anyone I visited might be placed in jeopardy. After I left Amnesty in 1984 I returned to Ouled Filali and Taroudannt some half dozen times during the rest of 1980s, and children I had known since 1970 had become adults, married, and had children of their own. And, of course, many people I knew as adults passed away over the years – when I came in early 1985 I was very sorry to learn that the Faqir's

younger brother, with whom I had spent much time, had died recently, at about the age of 65.

When I returned in 1985, I was able to give a copy of *Moroccan Dialogues* to the Faqir, a first step in repatriating a book that, some two decades later, was to be repatriated quite differently. Upon receiving the book he turned it towards Mecca. Then we went through the pictures together, some of the people he recognized, some he didn't. And finally he said, "So this is it, the story of you and me together. Now you can't lie about it and I can't lie about it." He picked the book up again later in the day, looked at it with what I imagined was some fondness, and then said, "But it would be better if your picture were on the cover, my picture isn't important to me."⁴⁶

Several years later the inevitable occurred. In early 1989 I arrived in Taroudannt and, as usual, first went to the textile shop of the Faqir's sister's son. After our greetings I asked him how the Faqir and his family were doing and he answered, "*L-Faqir māt, Allah irehmu.*" I was stunned. The Faqir and I had exchanged very rare letters over the years – letters that were formulaic and written or read to him by others – so outside of my visits I had no real sense of what was happening. The Faqir had died some five months earlier, in late 1988, from what sounded like a prostate condition, at the age of approximately 78, just about my age as I write this.

After the 1980s I was absent from Ouled Filali and Taroudannt for almost 20 years, until 2008. As the 1990s and then the 2000s progressed, I was often regretting not going to Ouled Filali and Taroudannt, despite being in Morocco many times for my research on cinema. No doubt the sadness related to the passing of the Faqir had something to do with this. Also, working at the American University in Cairo from 2001-2008 was time consuming and added to the difficulties of such a visit. But this long absence was finally about to end, in a way that I never could have anticipated.

B. Repatriating *Moroccan Dialogues*

In 2005 I was approached regarding a possible Moroccan translation of *Moroccan Dialogues* into Arabic. This posed a number of problems and dilemmas that occupied me intermittently over the next few years.

I wrote about this initiative in an article I published recently in Morocco: "Sometime in 2005 I received an email from a Moroccan academic I knew by name only, who proposed having *Moroccan Dialogues* translated into Arabic. Over the following two years he and I communicated sporadically, at times on

46. Fieldnotes, 1985.

the question of obtaining permission from the original U.S. publisher, at times regarding two sections of the book he felt raised problems.”⁴⁷

The US publisher had some requirements regarding payments and reporting that would have been difficult for the Moroccans to meet. Fortunately, we were able to resolve the difficulties and the publisher loosened its conditions and gave permission for the book to be translated and published in Morocco.⁴⁸

However, the problems raised by the two sections in question were not so easily solved. The first problem “(...) concerned a chapter in which several women were spoken of negatively. Although I had changed names and many of the people mentioned in these incidents had died (...) a number of their descendants and other family members were still alive and a careful reader who knew the community first-hand could probably reconstruct the identities (...) Negative statements about these women, I was told, risked harming their reputations and that of their families”⁴⁹ – a risk that was still felt to exist some 30 years after the research and the events in question had taken place.

The second problem “(...) concerned coarse and bawdy behavior some village men engaged in during an evening of partying (*zerda*) in the presence of several women singers/dancers (*sheikhat*) (...) [where] the party-goers, in high spirits, employ rough language, make sexual remarks, and drink wine (...). [There is] no overtly erotic contact between the men and women, no ugly descent into drunkenness (...) no threats of violence, etc.... I was told that the image of the region where the event took place might be sullied in the eyes of a broader Moroccan audience and, potentially, that Morocco’s image might be harmed among Arab readers in other countries.”⁵⁰

I was asked whether I would be willing to amend these sections. I summarized my quandary in the following way, “I realized I was being pushed to make difficult choices between the value I placed upon the Faqir’s words and what I might infer were his deeper views; between his views and those of the women involved in this event and their families; between what I myself thought of various Moroccan practices and what other members of

47. Kevin Dwyer, “Who Owns? On Repatriating an Anthropological Text,” in *Alliance des cultures et des religions pour la paix*, ed. Moha Ennaji (Fes, Morocco: Centre Sud Nord, 2017), 57.

48. For a recent discussion of some problems relating to translating and what I am calling “repatriating” anthropological texts, see the series of articles curated by Virginia R. Dominguez, “World Anthropologies: Translation, Its Inequalities, and Its Difficulties,” *American Anthropologist* 121, 1 (2019): 205-19 and in particular the article by Michael Chibnik, “Publishing Translations,” *American Anthropologist* 121, 1 (2019): 206-10.

49. Dwyer, “Who Owns? On Repatriating an Anthropological Text,” 58.

50. *Ibid.*, 58.

those communities, as well as what audiences from elsewhere in the Arab world, might think of them.”⁵¹ This posed a seemingly insoluble conundrum, for “Who could possibly claim, with any confidence, to have the kind of knowledge and sensitivity that would lead to clear, unambivalent choices in this situation?”⁵²

These problems are instances of a basic issue that has generated controversy in anthropology over recent years, “(...) where conflicts arise over what we might call “ownership” of the research material (...) [and relate to] the control that various participants in such a study are able to exercise over the study’s process, as well as over its results and distribution.”⁵³ And by participants we also mean people who are mentioned during the research although they may not have been spoken to directly.

In some respects, these problems were similar to ones that had arisen in *Moroccan Dialogues*, *Arab Voices*, and *Beyond Casablanca*, reflecting general ethical issues that anthropologists often face, relating to the control participants in research exercise over their published words. In *Moroccan Dialogues* I wanted the Faqir to have the final say in deciding what should or should not be included in the book so in 1979, with my manuscript in hand, I asked the Faqir about this and I put our exchange in *Moroccan Dialogues*’ preface. His answer, in brief, was, “Well, the matter is clear. Words that have to do with the government shouldn’t be in it (...). But the things that happened – the events in Morocco that we talked about, and our ways of living, and our habits – all that is all right.”⁵⁴ I then went through the various incidents we had discussed that summer and he agreed to their inclusion in each case. In the end, I kept everything related to the government out of the book although, for me, these were some of the most compelling parts of our conversations.

Unlike in *Moroccan Dialogues*, in both *Arab Voices* and *Beyond Casablanca* most of the individuals I interviewed were public figures used to engaging in discussions meant for public consumption. In *Arab Voices*, “[the] research project was structured in a way that would not put my interlocutors in difficult positions on what was, potentially, a subject entailing significant risk. Here, questions regarding specific human rights violations were not posed, nor were opinions sought on contemporary governmental figures or other persons of authority. In the course of this research only one person preferred

51. Ibid., 61.

52. Ibid.

53. Dwyer, “Who Owns? On Repatriating an Anthropological Text,” 49.

54. Dwyer, *Moroccan Dialogues*, xix-xx.

to remain unidentified; another, when he became a member of government, preferred to keep his distance from me.”⁵⁵

The situation with regard to *Beyond Casablanca* was rather similar: “Tazi (...) was a public figure, well-practiced in giving interviews (...). When I gave him copies of transcribed sections to review, the only changes he made involved correcting specific details and, occasionally, eliminating a name we both felt better left unmentioned. When the book was published and I presented him with a copy, he asked whether I had written anything in it that might be taken as insulting the monarchy and was relieved when I assured him I hadn’t.”⁵⁶

However, when we turn to the translation of *Moroccan Dialogues*, the complications regarding the two disputed sections were of a different nature altogether. I saw my options as 1) refusing to make any changes, 2) rewording the disputed sections so as not to cause offense, 3) eliminating the disputed sections.

I rejected the first option for, “I had argued, throughout *Moroccan Dialogues*, that the choices an anthropologist makes in presenting, emphasizing, and excluding material inevitably challenge any simple notion of ‘realism,’ so I was not wedded to the view that an ‘objective reality’ had to be preserved in the text.”⁵⁷ The second option, rewording and altering the text so that it would not be offensive, seemed unacceptable, for I felt this was a form of dishonesty, very different from being selective.

I finally chose the third option, that of eliminating the offending sections. I reasoned that disparaging remarks about individuals were not essential and could be eliminated, and that the presentation of the all-night party need not include all its aspects.

To sum up, I believe that “Eliminating the offending sections had ... the advantage of making it clear that, rather than neglecting the preferences of interested parties in favor of those of an “abstract” readership, I valued those preferences highly and was trying to take them into account while continuing to be faithful to what I took to be both the Faqir’s and my deeper purposes.”⁵⁸ But I still wonder, as I have written, “(...) what *Moroccan Dialogues*’ various audiences – those that read the book in its original language or in its Arabic translation – think of these options and whether they see any others.”⁵⁹

55. Dwyer “Who Owns? On Repatriating an Anthropological Text,” 213-4.

56. *Ibid.*, 214.

57. *Ibid.*, 61.

58. *Ibid.*, 62-63.

59. *Ibid.*, 61.

Among the many lessons I would draw from this experience I will mention here just two. First, that “The discomforts of the translation, both in subject and process, (...) [are] something of an occupational hazard, a provocative and beneficial one similar to other aspects of the anthropological effort that often upset one’s comfortable acceptance of the given.”⁶⁰

Second, “I believe all these aspects push us to question the notion of “ownership” regarding the process of anthropological research and the production of anthropological representations. “Ownership” implies a clear attribution of rights and obligations to the different parties to an interaction and the complexities of anthropological research do not allow such a clear attribution. I would prefer to apply a notion (...) like that of an “ongoing dialogue” among the various parties involved, where they engage in a process of continual communication, negotiation, openness, self-criticism, and compromise, at each of the many stages of the research. And that the final product, or representation, include some form of accounting for the decisions taken in these regards.”⁶¹

Following this complicated process, the book was finally published in Morocco in 2008. Those involved in the translation never directly informed me of this and I learned about it when I came to Morocco in December 2008 to attend a film festival. When I arrived in Rabat I contacted the Moroccan academic whom I had been corresponding with about the translation, he told me that the book had already been published, and I was able to find it displayed on several newsstands and bookstalls in Rabat.

When I met the Moroccan academic for the first time several days later, he wondered whether I would be interested in going to Taroudannt for a cultural *zerda*, a gathering that would bring together some important local cultural figures, *Moroccan Dialogues*’ main translator, some members of families that appeared in the book, and perhaps also the Faqir’s eldest son. He suggested that sections of the book would be read aloud at the gathering and I would sign any copies sold.

The *zerda* took place several weeks later, and was attended by some 20 people, all men. For me this was an unforgettable experience. In addition to the short readings, a singer from Marrakech performed a number of songs (with some guests joining in and many clapping to the songs’ rhythms),

60. Ibid., 63.

61. I might add that even in this paper I have faced problems of the same general sort, with my wife suggesting that her role in it be more limited than I would have liked it to be. I hope, in reaching the final text, that I have mostly adhered to these principles of an “ongoing dialogue.” Dwyer, “Who Owns? On Repatriating an Anthropological Text,” 65.

and the *zerda* lasted past midnight. I signed quite a few copies of *Ḥiwārāt Maghribiyya*, as did the main translator. And the difficult aspects of the translation were, for the moment, set aside, if not forgotten.

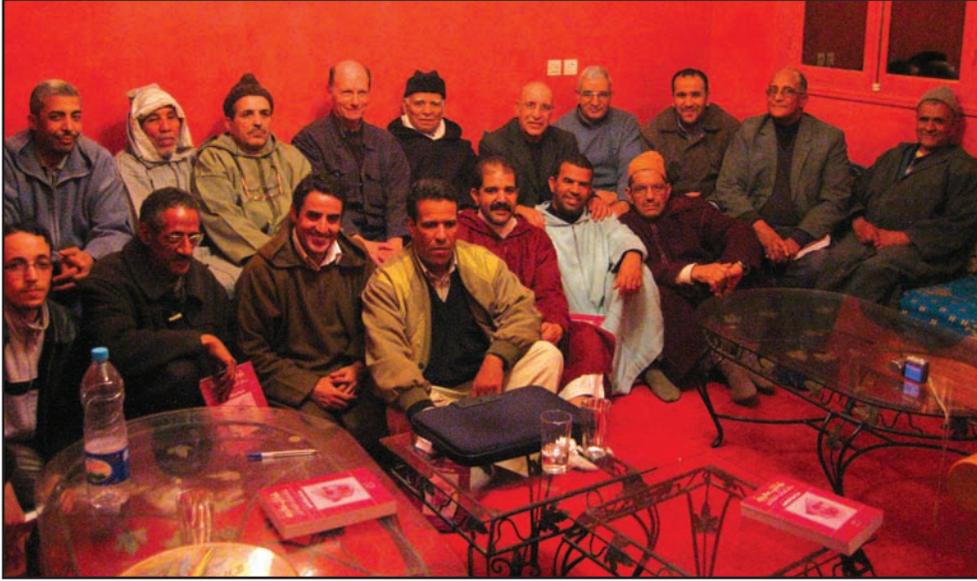


Fig. 1: Zerda in Taroudannt, 2008

On the whole, the experience of *Moroccan Dialogues*' translation has been a very rewarding one for me. As I wrote, "As *Moroccan Dialogues* continues to challenge me more than 30 years after its first publication and almost 50 years since my first research in Morocco, I am thankful for the reception the book has received, both in Morocco and beyond, and I am deeply thankful to the people who welcomed me, and even those who kept their distance from me or attempted to obstruct my work (although of course I am not thankful to all of them in the same way) – all of them helped construct the experience that led to *Moroccan Dialogues* and, some 25 years later, to *Ḥiwārāt Maghribiyya*."⁶²

C. Changes and Recent Returns

1. Changes Over the Decades

As I returned again and again to Ouled Filali and Taroudannt over five decades I noticed significant changes. Not only were there many fewer argan trees – a tree characteristic of the region – but the rural landscape had been transformed: in the late 1960s and early 1970s I gazed over open countryside with rolling hills appearing in the far distance, and boundaries between plots of land were marked by shrubbery, hedges, and bamboo stalks. A decade or

62. Dwyer, "Who Owns? On Repatriating an Anthropological Text," 66.

so later these fields were covered in many places with greenhouse structures. And then, in the past decade, more impressive greenhouse structures appeared, with large motors irrigating expansive terrains of bananas and other crops. I now heard that few people were cultivating barley and they did this only after good rains, whereas the crop had been an agricultural and food staple when I first did my research. I was also told that households now raised livestock only in small numbers because it cost more to feed the animals than they could be sold for, yet decades earlier livestock had been referred to as the farmer's "bank" – whenever farmers needed money they sold livestock to obtain it.

In addition, the underground water table had been receding – water that had been 30 meters below the surface in the late 1960s was now more than 150 meters distant and perhaps even deeper than that, according to what some people were saying. With this water now more difficult to access, bigger irrigation motors were required and large sections of land that, in the past, had been owned and farmed by families were now rented to major agricultural companies, with the family members employed as wage labor. I heard persistent complaints about the amount of money that had to be spent on *mazout*, both for irrigation motors and for the motorized vehicles that people increasingly relied on – one rarely saw bicycles traveling between Taroudannt and its outlying villages, and there were more and more petrol stations on secondary roads.

By the mid-1980s village youth had become football enthusiasts, whereas in the late 1960s very few were interested in the game. They avidly followed the World Cup competition in Mexico in 1986, in which Morocco was participating, and there were three or four teams in Ouled Filali alone, with football tournaments organized throughout the region. Interest in the game was no doubt related to the spread of television sets which began to appear in the village in the 1970s, first in the main store near the mosque, then in the houses. By the mid-1980s there were more than 20 television sets in homes, in a village that had no more than 100 households, and the number of sets then continued to increase. At the outset the televisions had been powered by individual generators but now electric power lines above-ground were providing villages with electricity. And by 2018 some houses were cement structures and had interior toilets, with residents no longer obliged to find an isolated spot in the bush to perform bodily functions.

2. Taroudannt and its First Film Festival

When I returned to the region in April 2018, I came initially to Taroudannt for its first ever film festival, and I was intrigued that this city, where I had begun my research in Morocco had, in an odd coincidence, moved in a direction similar to my own, in hosting a festival in a field I had been doing research on for two decades.

The film festival was but one sign that Taroudannt had grown in size and importance. During the festival there was an exhibit of crafts outside the city's walls, hosted by the municipality, and one could see the emergence of a community of artists, an art gallery, artisanry, and a women's association working on environmental issues. Taroudannt was showing many more organized and public cultural activities, becoming an even more diverse and varied city than it had been five decades earlier.

There was also great expansion outside the city walls, both in terms of residences and official buildings. Among the new constructions was a Multi-Disciplinary University (with its official title written on its walls in Arabic, Tamazight, and French) that had been opened in 2010. It was situated a few kilometers outside Taroudannt and was built in the traditional style of the low earthen structures that characterize the countryside. The *Kulliya* provided a venue for many of the film festival's lectures and discussions and although it seemed quite empty of students at that time, I was told it had 2,300 registered students and this number was increasing.



Fig. 2: Kulliya outside Taroudannt, 2018

As the festival began I met several filmmakers and film critics with whom I had been in contact over the years. One, a documentary filmmaker, asked about an article I had written in which he was mentioned and I told him it was now with the editors and publisher.⁶³ He also told me he had seen my book, *Hiwārāt Maghribiyya*, in a bookstall here in Taroudannt, that he had bought a copy and was finding it very interesting reading. I visited Muhammad Nejmi, who had been the main translator of *Moroccan Dialogues*, and I was greeted several times in the streets by men who had attended the *zerda* 10 years earlier. And I also spent time with the son of the vegetable marketer who had first taken me to Ouled Filali and to the Faqir almost 50 years ago – the son was now the director of a higher education institution and had authored several books.⁶⁴

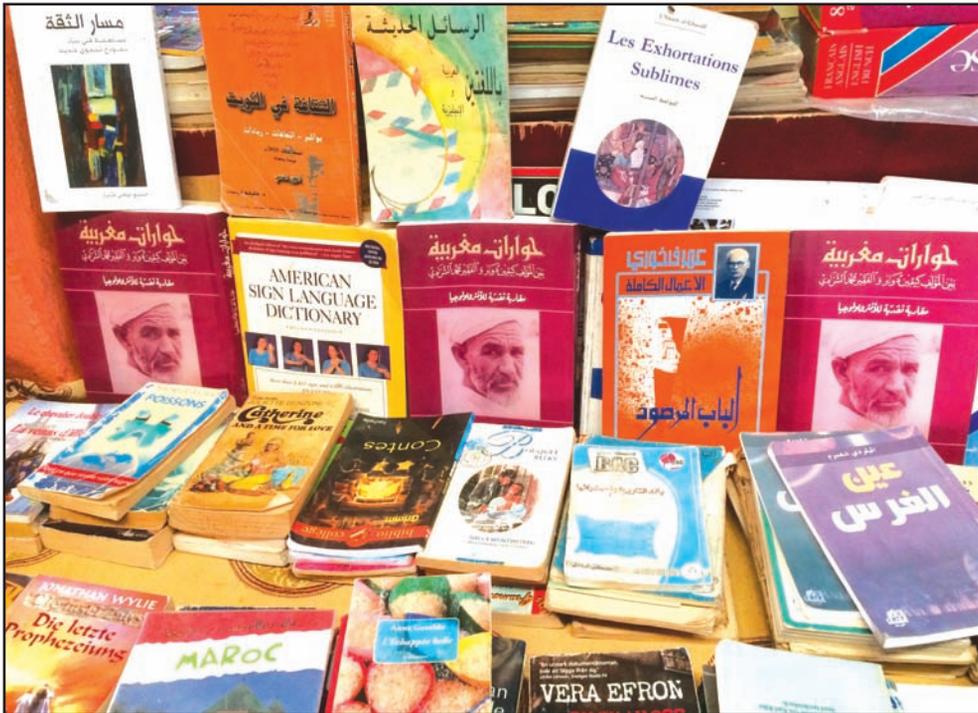


Fig. 3: Bookstall in Taroudannt, 2018

63. Where it still is, as of this writing. And so it often goes with academic articles.

64. As the festival was ending I heard a woman calling to me in the street, “Kevin, Kevin!” I turned toward her and she said, “I’m Touria.” I answered, in some wonder, “Touria, daughter of Fatima?” “Yes, yes!” Touria now seemed to be around 40 years old (but I found some of my early notes indicating she was closer to 50), and the last time I had seen her was in the mid-1980s. I gave her the sad news that my first wife, whom Touria remembered well from decades earlier, had died just a few years ago. Touria, having graduated from university in Marrakesh, was now working in an office in Taroudannt.



Fig. 4: Filmmaker Hakim BelAbbes and author at Taroudannt Film Festival, 2018

The day after the festival opened I planned to go to Ouled Filali to surprise the Faqir's son and family. But at the opening I was interviewed by a journalist and several hours later, while attending one of the early festival presentations, I was approached by a man from one of Ouled Filali's neighboring villages and was told that the Faqir's son had already learned of my presence, since one of his sons had seen the journalist's interview with me on Facebook. I certainly had not foreseen this but I recalled how, decades earlier, I would go from Taroudannt to distant marketplaces and, upon returning to Taroudannt, people who I thought had no knowledge of my excursion would often greet me saying, for example, "so how was the market in Ouled Berrehil?" News traveled fast, even then.

3. Returning to Ouled Filali

The following day I went to Ouled Filali. The Faqir's son, now about 65 years old, and his family were all in good health and our meeting after a 10-year absence was filled with good cheer. After spending only a few hours in Ouled Filali, spread over two days, it is impossible for me to say much about changing practices on the social and cultural level. But as the men gathered, including the Faqir's sons and some of his friends as well as some younger men, all the elders showed nostalgia for the way gender relations had been decades earlier, saying that men had more power then and that women have more power now. And one of the elders added that, when a man is looking for a wife now, the prospective bride might ask, "do you have a house? do you

have a car? do you have your parents living with you?” with the implication of this last question being, if the answer was yes she wouldn’t agree to marry.

Some of the younger men present were not yet married although they were definitely of marriageable age. One of them – he had done technical studies beyond the secondary school baccalaureate – said he didn’t want to marry a traditional woman, but a woman “who has something in her head and who is about 24 years old.” Another wanted to marry but hadn’t been able to find a woman – perhaps, he said, “because the women don’t want to marry a simple farmer.” And these young unmarried men felt under pressure to marry, because the elders were unhappy not seeing their families expanding.

My wife, who had been sitting with the women in another section of the house, came back with other insights. One of the older women had been taking reading courses in order to be able to read the Qur’an. She was among a group of women taking these lessons and they met five days a week, in a room adjacent to the village mosque, with the lessons given by a young woman who had discontinued her secondary school studies. This provided a new occasion for women to meet and to discuss issues that were not necessarily domestic – for example those of a spiritual nature and matters of general interest. Several of the women sitting with my wife had portable telephones. And one of the elder women described how her two daughters were still living at home, with the eldest already 35 years old and not wanting to marry. Apparently the father agreed and would not force her, as she said she wouldn’t want to marry someone who lived far from her parents.

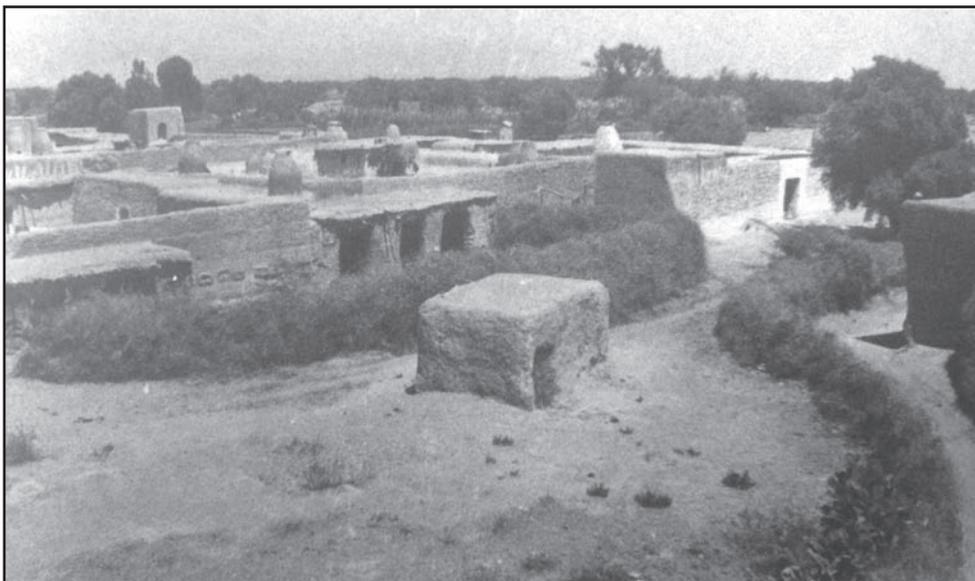


Fig. 5: A view of Ouled Filali, early 1970s



Fig. 6: A road outside Ouled Filali showing greenhouse structures, 2018

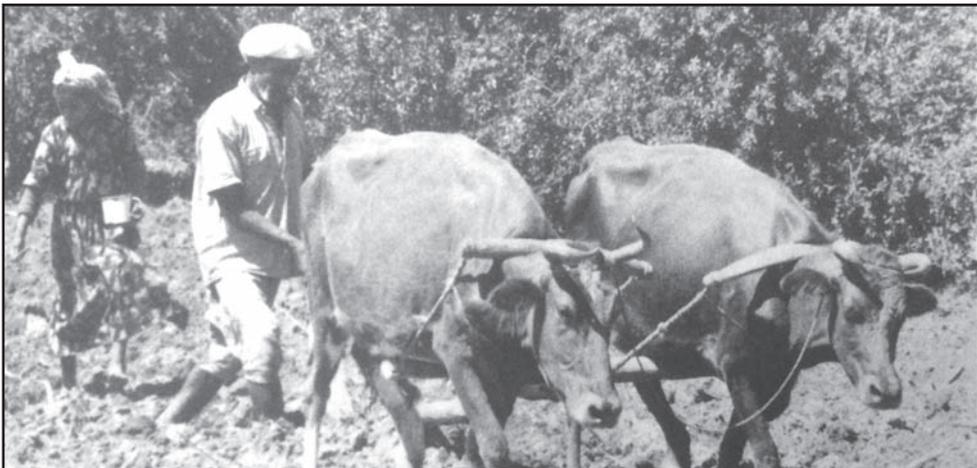


Fig. 7: Farming in Ouled Filali, early 1970s



Fig. 8: Ouled Filali, banana cultivation, 2018



Fig. 9: New cement home in Ouled Filali, 2018

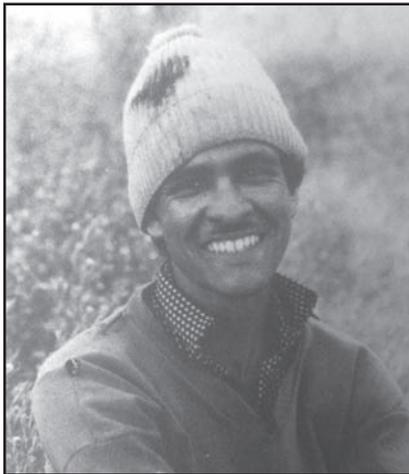


Fig. 10: Faqir's eldest son, early 1970s

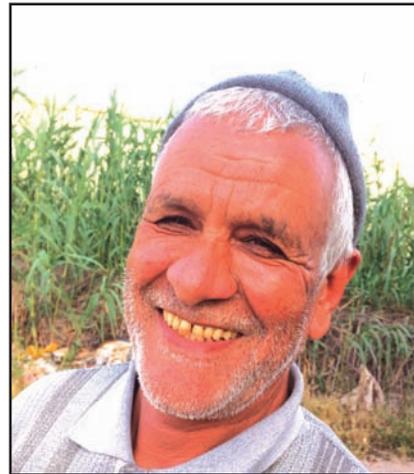


Fig. 11: Faqir's eldest son, 2018



Fig. 12: Faqir's eldest son and author, 2018

Conclusion: Personal and Professional; and Still More Questions

Looking back over my half-century relationship with Morocco – and it would be misleading to limit this by saying “my work on Morocco” since this relationship has many aspects that go beyond “work” or “research” – I am somewhat astonished at how entangled the personal and professional have been in this relationship.

At the outset, my initial research experiences in Morocco from 1969 through the mid-1970s were carried out in the company of my first wife, also an anthropologist, as we both pursued our individual research projects. This gave a unique character to our marriage, grounded as it was in similar studies and in more than two years of fieldwork in Morocco; and on a lighter note, this enabled us, when back in New York, to speak *darija* with one another when we wanted no one around us to understand.

My turn towards human rights in Morocco also had its personal side and happened in a very fortuitous manner. In the late 1970s I was spending some months in Berlin, mainly to learn German. While in Berlin I received a letter from a friend in London whom I had stayed in touch with since first meeting her in Lyon, France, some 15 years earlier. Her letter contained a clipping from the International Herald Tribune announcing that Amnesty International’s London headquarters was looking for a researcher specializing in the Middle East – she had found the clipping in a most improbable way, when she picked up the newspaper left by a departing passenger on the London Underground. I applied for the position, flew to London for an interview, and was hired.

And then in the mid-1980s, my relationship to Morocco pushed my personal life onto a new plane. I was still living in London and had begun my research on human rights discourse in the Arab world. While in Tunis for this research, I heard a radio interview with a Tunisian anthropologist who had just published a book on oral history, a subject of interest to me since *Moroccan Dialogues* was a form of oral history. The author’s name remained in my memory and when I met her for the first time a couple of years later at a conference in Tangiers – Morocco again! – I couldn’t help but engage her in conversations that led, after some time and much air travel, to our marriage that is now celebrating its 30th year.

In fact it was my wife who later turned my interest in Morocco toward cinema when, at one point during the mid-1990s, she said something along the lines of, “You’ve always loved cinema so much, why don’t you think

about doing some research on cinema in the Arab world?" And so I did, and this then occupied me for much of the next two decades.

And even within my project on cinema the focus on one particular Moroccan filmmaker came from another improbable and serendipitous personal coincidence. Over the years I had become friendly with Fatema Mernissi, the internationally recognized Moroccan feminist and public intellectual – I had known her for some two decades, had seen her on many of my visits to Morocco, had interviewed her at length for *Arab Voices*, and had several times stayed in an apartment she had in Rabat. When I came to Rabat in the late 1990s and spoke to Fatima about my project she offered to introduce me to Muhammad Abderrahman Tazi, who was her longtime friend. Also, she had acted in an important role in his most famous film, *Looking for My Wife's Husband* (*al-Baḥth 'an zawj imra'ati, A la recherche du mari de ma femme* (1993)). Years before in New York I had already seen one of Tazi's previous films, *Badis* (1989), I had liked it very much, so I seized the opportunity Fatima presented.⁶⁵

With my relationship with Morocco continuing, new questions arise. In early 2019 I was returning to New York City from Tunisia, having been invited to participate in the New York Forum of Amazigh Film (NYFAF), being held at LaGuardia Community College, in the borough of Queens. Taking place over two days and showing a number of films from Morocco, as well as a few from Libya and Tunisia, the festival brought together filmmakers from the region (among them the well-known Hakim Belabbes whom I had seen a year earlier at the Taroudannt festival), film students, academics, and commentators, and provided us all with the opportunity to see and discuss films made in the Amazigh language. A final plenary session was held at Columbia University where I and other participants gave short presentations.⁶⁶

At this festival I met students and faculty who were either of the Amazigh diaspora or who had had significant experience in Amazigh society, and it was apparent that the traditional notion of national boundaries was no longer applicable, if it ever had been: just as US researchers had been finding their way to Morocco, so had Moroccans been finding their way to the US. And I recalled what I had written in my first published article on Morocco, that in

65. I last saw Fatima when I spent several hours with her in her home in Rabat, at the end of the summer of 2015. She seemed a bit unwell but gave no hint of the seriousness of her condition. She died of cancer some months later, in November 2015, at the age of 75. Tazi is now working on a film dramatization of Fatima's life.

66. This very successful event, in terms of attendance, enthusiasm, and intellectual commitment, was organized by Professors Habiba Boumlik and Lucy McNair of LaGuardia Community College, and Professor Yahya Laayouni of Bloomsburg University.

the anthropological project “the solipsistic identity of the self (...) has been destroyed: we have both left ourselves afield, and returned with the other.”⁶⁷

As the festival continued I began to see aspects of my experience in Morocco from a different perspective. While preparing to write this paper I had already been reflecting on a number of projects I had begun but never brought to conclusion – the many sides of life in Ouled Filali that I had not written about, the hours of recorded conversations I had with the Faqir in the 1980s that I had not transcribed, the long interviews with Muhammad Guessous (and some others) that did not go into *Arab Voices*, the many interviews I’d had with film and theater figures in Morocco (as well as in Egypt and Tunisia) that I had not processed, and so on.

In the context of the festival, I began to think about why, over the five decades of my relationship with Morocco, I had so little experience with Amazigh communities (including, of course, communities speaking *Tashelhit*). Certainly this had to do with the fact that, given the accidents of studies, research, and life that I have referred to earlier, I happened to land in a village in the Souss plains that constructed its identity as “Arab” (even though, of its approximately 100 households, some two-fifths traced their ascendance within the past five generations to Amazigh communities in the neighboring mountains). Also, working within my own physical and intellectual limits, I could never hope to do more than partially explore and understand a society as complex as Morocco, and many areas would inevitably be left more or less untouched. And, no doubt, it also had something to do with how Amazigh communities and language had been marginalized in the Moroccan national imaginary during the period of the 1960s through the 1990s, in part as a reaction to French colonial rule. Fortunately, this marginalization has been diminishing in recent decades.

Now, as I look back over my experiences in Morocco, I am left with an awareness of many areas that I touched upon but didn’t pursue, or that I never approached at all – among them, Amazigh communities, women’s perspectives, groups south of the Anti-Atlas (...) one could go on and on. And with the experiences recounted in this paper linked so often to the realm of the improbable, let me imagine one more improbability – desirable certainly, but also delusional – that I had another five decades ahead of me for new experiences in Morocco and that I would remain alive to these unexplored areas as I confronted the inevitable, never-ending questions and challenges they would pose.

67. Kevin Dwyer, “The Dialogic of Fieldwork,” *Dialectical Anthropology* 2, 2 (1977): 150.

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عالم أنثروبولوجي في محاوراة الآخرين: العيش مع أهل البادية ومناقشة قضايا حقوق الإنسان والنظر إلى ما وراء الدار البيضاء.

ملخص: يسرد المؤلف علاقته بالمغرب على مدى خمسة عقود، مروراً باتصاله للمرة الأولى مع المغرب، ثم العمل على تحرير أطروحة الدكتوراه وكتبه الثلاثة التي تتناول فيها جوانب مختلفة من المجتمع المغربي. ويتحدث عن الكيفية التي تطورت بها الأمور مع تقدمه في كل مشروع، وكيف انتقل من مشروع إلى آخر مع ذكره لأسباب ذلك. وكيف سعى، بعد أن استشعر تفرد لقاءاته مع محاوريه المغاربة، إلى دمج كلماتهم

في كتاباته. وباختياره لأشكال مختلفة من "الحوار"، استجابة للمواقف والأهداف المختلفة لكل كتاب من كتبه، ومن خلال العمل على ربطها بموضوع "الرهان"، يشجع المؤلف علماء الأنثروبولوجيا على استكشاف نقط ضعفهم وهشاشة تخصصهم ومجتمعهم. وبذلك يعزز النهج النقدي لعمله وللعلاقات بين المجتمعات وبين الأفراد والمجتمع. وبعد عودته بشكل متكرر إلى المغرب على مدى خمسة عقود، يعرض المؤلف بعض التشابكات العديدة بين تجاربه المغربية وحياته الشخصية، ويناقش التحديات الجديدة التي ما فتئت أن ظهرت بعد صدور الترجمة العربية لكتابه الأول بعنوان: حوارات مغربية، وأيضاً مع تواصل علاقاته القائمة واستمرارها مع بلاد المغرب وسكانها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تارودانت وسهول سوس، الحوار، الرهان والضعف، حقوق الإنسان، السينما، ترجمة النصوص وإعادةتها إلى الأصل.

Un anthropologue en dialogue: Vivre avec des villageois, discuter des droits de l'homme et regarder au-delà de Casablanca.

Résumé: L'auteur raconte sa relation avec le Maroc sur cinq décennies – son premier contact avec le Maroc, puis son travail sur sa thèse de doctorat et ses trois livres traitant de différents aspects de la société marocaine – et raconte comment chaque projet a évolué au fil de son développement, comment et pourquoi il est allé d'un projet à l'autre et comment, sentant le caractère unique de ses rencontres avec des Marocains, il a cherché à intégrer leurs paroles dans ses écrits. En choisissant différentes formes de "dialogue" en réponse aux différentes situations et aux objectifs de chacun de ses livres, et en les reliant au thème du "pari," l'auteur encourage les anthropologues à reconnaître leur propre vulnérabilité et celle de leur discipline et leur société et promeut une approche critique de son propre travail, des relations entre les sociétés et des relations entre les individus et la société. Revenant fréquemment au Maroc pendant cinq décennies, l'auteur présente des nombreux enchevêtrements entre ses expériences marocaines et sa vie personnelle, et évoque les nouveaux défis qui se posent alors que son premier livre, *Moroccan Dialogues*, est traduit en arabe et que sa relation avec le Maroc continue.

Mots-clés: Taroudant et la plaine du Souss, dialogue, pari et vulnérabilité, droits de l'homme, cinéma, traduction et rapatriement de textes.