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BETWEEN ENDURING HARDSHIPS AND FLEETING IDEALS

Q. What have been some of the most formative moments in your own education? Here you can also tell readers about the individuals, movements, organisations, etc that were most influential in shaping your development as an educator/scholar/citizen

Strangely enough, it is a life full of antagonisms and ambiguities (the environment's, the people's, even my own), of lacks and shortages (in the Algerian society, and in my family), of difficulties and tensions (in my own educational and professional trajectory as a young man in the making, as a citizen and as a university teacher) that gave meaning to my personal development. Having experienced injustice in its most extreme form, namely that of colonialism, it would also be unjust on my part not to acknowledge certain feelings and emotions that are supposedly incompatible with the plight of the 'colonised', so-well depicted by Franz Fanon, a psychiatrist born in the West Indies, Martinique, who defended the cause for an independent Algeria, and who wrote *The Wretched of the Earth*, and *Black Skin, White Masks*. In a world of violence, there was also tolerance (advocated by the three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) in which I bathed because of the neighbours around us. The French, the Spaniards and the Algerian Jews were part of my world, a world of an open Sunni Islam that did not build borders but bridges towards the Others who were not that alien. In a world of paradoxes, it seemed to me that I learnt more with my parents, as much as with the neighbours (Chamika, the Perez family, El Ghalmia, the Guttierrez) than with the primary schoolteachers I had at *l'École Bastrana* then *l'École Paul Doumer*. But it was my mother who stated to me the very equation that allowed me to understand the stakes for a free, young, timid Algerian: '*Learn at school and you'll be successful in life*'. Was she not rueing the fact that she did not go to school? Or, did she realise that school was the key to total independence?

Language-wise, multilingualism was a reality my parents, as many other 'indigenous' people, handled with some expertise. My mother is illiterate, while my late father had some years of schooling that allowed him to write in French. Both mastered three languages: Arabic, French and Spanish. In comparison, today's generations suffer from a deep semilingualism: neither good in Arabic nor in French. It is through my parents that I developed a liking for languages. But, it was school that helped me increase my French

and introduced me to the English language from the age of 11. At three, I went to a religious school led by *les Sœurs Blanches* where I started learning French. As a way to balance my education, my parents sent me to the Koranic School of our district: *Sidi Lahouari*, named after the saint of the city. Belonging to that district helped me get on the map of my country with some pride. I had an identity, rather complex, as it was an addition of cultural elements which later in my life enlarged my identity: I am a Mediterranean, well beyond the limits of political borders, or religious entities, rich with different educations (informal, formal and even non-formal). It is true that, part of my social upbringing was my membership to the scouting movement where I learnt while playing: another way of enriching my personality and my ideas on how education could help individuals free themselves from a stronger enemy: illiteracy. But it was the military service that gave me the sense of belongingness and responsibility.

When I furthered my studies in Britain, thanks to the financial backing of the State and the moral support of my wife, I experienced other feelings which I hoped to make mine in the future: the sense of punctuality (something, we, Mediterraneans, seem not to be friends with!) and the sense of conciseness (something my Arab and French cultures did not give me). Going abroad has been a blessing built on a linguistic and cultural bedrock I owe to so many people, and at the forefront an illiterate old lady, still full of energy, who taught me self-reliance, and a very kind man (may God bless his soul) who transmitted to me his open-mindedness and his tolerance.

Q. Tell us a little about who you are, about some of the most significant milestones in your personal/professional life and your most noteworthy achievements as an educator/scholar/citizen. Locate and position yourself within the socio-political and historical movements that define who and what you are, and where you 'stand'.

Well, the first part of your query is quite a thorny question. In my early twenties, I would have elaborated on who I was, and that would have shown how self-centred I was, while at the same time feeling part of that 'Woodstock Generation' that granted me a universal membership well beyond the political borders, and a feeling of freedom (crystallised in the motto: *make love not war*) in a country that was known for its highly-centralised policies where the individual was considered secondary to the community. Quite a dilemma! In my late twenties, my feelings changed because of the ideals that sprung up in me, which I developed while entering the realm of education. Becoming a teacher was to achieve what my mother advocated, while at the same time positioning myself on the social ladder. That of course gave me a big head. However, when I took charge of the English department in the mid-1980s, I put everything into perspective and understood how relative things are. Being responsible introduced me to the idea of accountability, which had been generated when I got married and became father (two daughters and a son). My nominations as director of the institute of foreign languages, then vice-rector for pedagogy, increased my sense of isolation from my colleagues and students. That feeling was the price to pay because of some misunderstandings developed despite my personal unwavering commitment, but also people's sheer personal interests.

My area of intervention widened when in 2000 I became head of the department of research and postgraduate studies at the University Academy of Western Algeria (there were 3 academies representing the Ministry of higher education and scientific research on a regional scale). This position came while I was presiding over different pedagogical and scientific committees or commissions: among them that of the literature and language degrees equivalencies, and those of research in ‘student assessment’, ‘curricula evaluation’, ‘error analysis’, etc. In the midst of all the meetings, colloquia and seminars I attended, there stood my wife (Mrs. Courage), the Lady who understood without my insistence how important these were for my personal advancement and ‘notoriety’(sic!), and who sacrificed so many things for my own visibility.

The highest achievement in my career took place when I was appointed by the Minister, member of the committee for the reform of Higher Education in 2002, then President of the domain of Foreign Languages in the LMD (Licence-Maîtrise-Doctorat) Reform. That gave my career a national scope. Oddly enough, that reminded me of Alan Sillitoe’s title of his collection of short stories: *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner*: Treading on forward, becoming more and more isolated in our crusade towards quality education. That took place in a spate of criticisms from politicians, teachers, as well as students. Many people may have doubted my genuine commitment. In a world of challenges, I thought that university teachers had to be part of the changes they are supposed to bring about. It was also my way of paying my dues to my country’s important financial contribution to pursue my studies, but also to voice from within the system my stand as an intellectual and mostly as a citizen. And that was unquestionably important during the 1990s ‘Black Decade’ Algeria went through.

Maybe the most rewarding position has been and still is my career as teacher at graduate and postgraduate levels. Teaching American literature, didactics, educational psychology, research methodology has helped me establish durable links with my students—many of whom are colleagues now—which is quite different from the cold universe decision-makers enter, and where there is always a missing piece in the puzzle of reforms, the one between the hands of the politicians. That is why I chose to adopt Sartre’s words: ‘*contester le système de l’intérieur*’ and not flee the country for serene skies. This attitude has been my late father’s. Allow me to thank him for doing so much for me and not knowing how much I owe him.

Q. What are some of the key educational ‘problematics’ that currently preoccupy you? How are these linked to the broader preoccupations you may have about society? What is your response to these problematics and preoccupations, as a scholar and as a citizen?

Before any attempt at answering the first question, one would have to mention some ‘problematics’ that are the concern of the political and educational authorities. Of course, their approach is more selective, not to say out of touch, and their priorities not what lay people, in particular, parents believe they are. The different ministries (National Education and Higher Education and Research) are mostly intent on

managing numbers (8.5 million pupils between Primary, Middle and Secondary schools, and 1,300,000 students). If this seems worth finding an answer to, I believe that additional and more crucial problematics at both levels are legion. Amongst them: the sensitive question of the curricula seems not clear enough to the teachers. Content in the primary and secondary cycles is geared towards competence-getting, while matters in the Licence-Master-Doctorat (LMD) Reform are still hazy, but should be a logical follow-up of the previous cycle. The other neglected issue is time management. At school level, sciences have always the favour of the authorities who downgrade systematically social sciences and languages. Mornings are given to the 'hard' sciences while afternoons are left for the 'remaining'. Because of such discrimination, quality education will remain just a trendy term. However, 'quality' is simply word of mouth among the decision-makers, and not reality on the field in the classrooms.

As I see it, it is the problematics that are at the heart of democracy that are worth investigating, but they are the ones the political sphere does not want to hear about: the systematic teaching of Berber; the teaching and development of multilinguism with the tangible inclusion of foreign languages, in particular French; the participation of civil society into educational matters; the reduction of the dropout level (around half a million kids leave school each year, at primary, middle and secondary schools). But surely the most worrying element is the low level in all the education system. If it is the talk of the town, very few people seem intent on improving things. But this has to be linked to the lack of concern of parents that approximates the abandonment of their own progeny to the hazards of the bleak future of the country still clinging to its unique source of wealth: oil. School that was once the key to social success is differently viewed today. I believe this goes also hand in hand with the disappearance of values that were once our parents'. Quick money and '*piston*' (contacts and clientalism) have plagued the whole society and driven the population to look for expedients. It is also true that the welfare-state has progressively given in whole sections of the aid towards the needy.

On a social plane, I believe I have done very little. My only outside activity has been directed towards the blind to help some of them to find jobs. That is why, as a citizen, what I think is that an organised civil society would do more and better. But society has become increasingly selfish. At university level, I have created since 1989 a library for blind students through my contacts. But this again could not be developed because of counter-productive choices of some decision-makers. Inside the university, one has met total lethargy when tackling the problematics of quality education mentioned here and there, but not dealt with energetically. I believe the university has come to a point where professionalism will be sheer utopia. My idea is that what we are suffering from is a dual economic system made up with remnants of the socialist era and on the other hand, a free-market economy imposed on us. This boils down to saying that everything is economic and at the end, it is the badly-paid teachers who are footing the bill, torn between their ideals and the crude reality of their day-to-day survival. Despite that, there are still individual initiatives that square down the ins and outs of the problematics they believe to be central to the plight of

the educational system. Teacher-training has been a personal challenge I have been facing for decades now. Of course, this has been possible with the help of a handful of believers despite the ingratitude of the administration.

Q. What are your reflections about the major forces that are shaping educational practice in your country/region? What are the dynamics and interests that underpin these forces, and what kinds of challenges do they represent for the articulation of an education project in your country/region?

Well, there is nothing new under the sun. In the absence of a strong, courageous, productive intelligentsia (Harbi, 1980), politics is still the name of the game in educational matters. Ever since independence in 1962, in the political sphere, a real Hydra, the parties, old (FLN) and new (RND, the centre, MSP, the Islamists, PT the leftists), the old Mujahedeen (who have a Ministry of their own), the army, the state-led trade union (UGTA: *Union Générale des Travailleurs Algériens*) have had their way in educational matters, leaving aside the intellectuals. Voices of dissent have rarely been invited to utter their criticism or their disagreement with the state of affairs. Indeed, Addi (1995) speaks of a schism among the élite. The self-centred members of that sphere have even named themselves: ‘*la Famille Révolutionnaire*’, a recurrent leitmotiv in the State’s sloganeering, more than 48 years after Independence! But a real highjacking of the people’s revolution. This is why free voices are systematically ostracised or are left with a despairing alternative, stay and keep away from politics and become bureaucrats or leave the country. On the other hand, if politics has been, up till now, the master of the game, religion since the early 1990s has invited itself to all debates (Rouadjia, 1991), and in particular those of education. The trendy overbid of religiosity (Addi, 1990) in schools has been a constant feature in the recent school reforms. Secularism has been fought back by enlightened self-proclaimed educationists at all levels. The way has thus been cleared up for these counter-productive endeavours by the decision-takers’ lack of discernment, to the point that all parties concerned are competing to exhibit their extreme religiousness.

Under such counter-productive conditions, the challenges to build a real educational project, one that is more in line with the world around us, are totally ignored. However, all political actors throw at each other slogans that are borrowed from up-to-date rhetorics, but which do not make up a coherent whole. They are more like alibis to explain the current reforms in education. Indeed, the various narratives/reports where insignificant details rub shoulders with non-essential matters (Benbouzid, 2009—education minister for over 16 years), seem like verging on the undisclosed *mea culpa*. It is true that quick makeshift reforms are being launched successively, without any tangible impact on classroom practices: the results, about half a million dropouts each school year.

But more than this micropolitics, it is the quasi ‘cultural hara-kiri’ we are witnessing that is most worrying. The political and educational authorities (are they not the same?) have conducted the country from a multilingual state to one where the new generations are showing a fall in their level in all languages ending up with an invading and

frustrating semilinguism (Miliani, 2001). School has gone from being bilingual until the mid-eighties, to a monolingual one thanks to a series of absolutely peculiar decisions. What transpires from these processes, is the uniqueness of the challenges that concern first and foremost the status of Arabic as a privileged language, as if one single language would suffice in the near or far globalised future (Taleb Ibrahim, 1997; Miliani, 2005).

As for the underlying interests, well, it is first to preserve the social and political *status quo* by the strict supervision of the majority of teachers by the State's middlemen (directors, inspectors, head-teachers or even trade-unionists). On the other hand, the biggest challenge the country would have to take up is the over-zealous religious commitment of the state representatives. Besides, the myth of a glorious past seems to last to soothe people's disillusionment with today's plight. This myth is in essence both religious (the mythical Muslim past) and political (around the upheaval against the French yoke in 1954). School textbooks are replete with these references for the building of a nation-state that has been more difficult than predicted due to the predominance of people's individual interests over the collective welfare. Today, there is an increasingly worrying impression of individualism that is replacing the once strong sense of national community: the '*wataniyya*' or national unity (Lacheraf, 1978), but lost in the midst of the '*qawmiyya*' (Arab unity) at the heart of the no less nebulous religious concept of the '*Umma*'. Present day history is showing that the latter notion is not functioning fully, leaving the stage to the more down-to-earth *realpolitik* of the individualistic Arab and Muslim states.

Q. Which recent developments/innovations in the education sector in your country fill you with hope in terms of furthering the agenda of democracy, and of equity? Which recent developments do you feel most critical of, and why?

Talking about democracy in my country sounds less believable than fairy tales. In a land where cooptation is mainstream and genuine elections a utopia, one has doubts about any possible agenda of democracy or even equity. If the former dimension is definitely alien to the education system, apart from free education to all, the latter is a constant concern that has been carried on throughout the last decades despite the state of the educational sector. Equity continues to be a leitmotiv in the politicians' discourse. Having said that, teachers, as inveterate optimists, believe that democracy is unavoidable if only the people's power is re-enacted. However, you give me here an opportunity to express myself on a matter that is close to my heart, namely the university Licence-Master-Doctorat (LMD) reform, which started in 2004. So much has been said by the ill-intentioned adversaries, the poorly-informed public, and the badly-trained supporters. So between the rock and the hard place, this reform cannot develop harmoniously. Indeed, the education system has become 'obsolete in a world that moves, goes fast and with the everlasting innovations and the necessary changes induced by the digital revolution' (R. Harroubia, Minister of Higher Education, 2007). My point is that beyond the eternal confrontation of ideas between intellectuals, the whole undertaking was some kind of expression of democracy at work, and this boosted

my interest in the reform. From 2002 on, it was university teachers themselves who took charge of the technical side of the reform. Nothing was done ‘as usual’. Of course, we were not asked to reinvent the wheel, but we did it the Algerian way. In the domain of foreign languages, which I presided, more than sixty university professors came up with the present ‘licence’ degree architecture. One felt that real freedom was given to the experts and some trust invested in the teachers.

What was even more important in this recent innovation was the fact that some equity was also achieved for all students who chose this system. The old one was very selective allowing those who used the fast-track to find their ways into a system that bred corruption, developed nepotism, and generated dissatisfaction. In the present reform, more possibilities in terms of degree specialities are being offered to students while not discarding any for a supposedly low mark in the baccalaureate examination. The system is still in its infancy, and many of those concerned (students and teachers alike) are not fully informed or rather misinformed. In other words, with more information and training, all partners will feel part of a moving progressive change. My word of caution towards the LMD reform concerns the languages policy: the country must develop a real policy of ‘linguistic diversification by a multilingualism synonymous with survival’ (Miliiani, 2004, p.24) in a globalised environment.

On the other hand, my antagonism is deep when people mention the competency-based approach (CBA) to learning (Miliiani, 2005). What I dispute most is that Algeria uses here another ‘fad’ to turn upside down an education system that needs stability. Besides, I always question any ‘imported’ theory for its ‘implementability’ and lack of concern for its ecological validity, not its own coherence. The CBA created in another cultural area needed some epistemological caution before its implementation in a totally alien context. This new development at school level has generated uneasiness of teachers who are supposed to teach through it but know nearly nothing about it. Furthermore, the textbooks that have been designed along CBA characteristics are posing problems to the teachers who return systematically to their old ways and practices. Teachers who have not been really introduced to CBA have acknowledged the fact that pupils’ level is at a record low, and without the ministry’s handling of the baccalaureate examination, the results would have been catastrophic. That is why the Minister of National Education has been accused of developing ‘*un bac politique*’ to hide the extremely worrying level to which CBA has been of no contribution.

Finally, one is torn between optimism provided by the rare attempts at improving things at a high level by allowing teachers to contribute to the development of school, and deep concern because of the abrupt fall of the learners’ level in all cycles of the education system. What has made the situation all the more cataclysmic is that it is not just pupils need proper attention. Neophyte teachers as well require adequate training because of their amateurish or ill-informed approaches to teaching. I cannot finish answering your question without mentioning the quasi-immovable Minister of National Education, 16 years in office. That is surely bad news to democracy and equity-lovers. If teachers are said to be change-agents, they are given a bad example here. And dictatorship is not that far!

Q. What comments would you care to make about the impact of globalisation and/or regionalisation (e.g. Europeanisation) on educational development in your country/region?

Globalisation is a phenomenon the Algerians have learned to undergo and not live with or in. This is so because most of the time, globalisation is equated with the flood of fashionable goods and techniques/technologies Algeria is importing: internet, cars, the industries, agribusiness, satellite dishes and the like. However, if one takes youth at their word, the global world would be reduced today to two countries: France and Canada, i.e., the old and new Eldorado. This whim has overshadowed all feelings of nationalism. Strangely enough, this sentiment has emerged, as never before, during the World Cup qualifier football match against Egypt in November 2009. On the contrary, because of a number of malfunctionings, a majority of the younger generations have become very critical of their country, which has fed their feeling of estrangement from their native land. The 'Harraga' phenomenon (illegal emigrants) has shown how dissatisfied people are with their social, political, cultural and educational statuses, hence the search for the dreamland, the lost paradise.

It is true that, one of the challenges Globalisation has put to all countries is 'the mobility of the innovative human resources' competences towards more lucrative markets' (Djefflat, 2000, pp.55-56). Two things are thus put into perspective: globalisation and innovation. This goes along with my vision of today's problematic: what do less-developed countries want to be? The Hesiodic Prometheus, i.e., innovators or creators, or the Rabelaisian Panurge, i.e., simple imitators or followers. Along this line, I personally made a contribution to *Mediterranean Journal of Educational Studies* in 1996, entitled 'The circulation of European educational theories and practices: the Algerian experience' (Miliანი, 1996), which has considered the impact of Europeanisation of the educational agenda. My main contention in that paper was that many theories (the east-German polytechnic school and the Canadian competency-based education) have been imported, even paid for, but their results were a far cry from the expectations of the population. Despite that, one hypothesizes the prevalence of a more disconnected and unarticulated set (all cycles of education program reforms without a concern for the others and the possible impacts) that is the result of the borrowed fashionable theories. Maybe using your word 'impact', while I was talking in terms of circulation of ideas and theories, shows better the kind of relationship countries of the underprivileged periphery have with the all-knowing countries of the Centre. What I dispute most here is that Algerians have become only consumers of theories that have shown their inadaptability to our context. One is in no way allergic to the Western world's contribution, but one is keen on having more aggressive, imaginative and creative policies for developing an endogenous educational agenda to reduce the impacts of globalisation because they will be rooted deep in the Algerian culture. Imported reforms work like band-aid over a wooden leg. The latter is an unstable non-system of education that is the result of makeshift policies and blind nationalism.

Particular to the Algerian case and in the face of what globalisation is, politicians display a suspicious attitude towards Otherness. Indeed, around highly religious and

exclusive rhetoric, the political sphere has developed some kind of policy of imprisonment as a way to react to the Globalised world that is accused of being self-centred and even Islamophobic. But, what is paradoxical is the systematic call for the external expertise to the detriment of the local know-how. In addition, social sciences still have a bad name despite the rich corpus developed by researchers in those fields, contrary to the 'élite (i.e. the 'hard sciences'). The President himself made a public address belittling the work of social sciences. One must admit that this has been taken as suspicion of the politicians towards the university community. Or, once again, is it not the eternal question of the struggle for power that is at the heart of the antagonistic nature of the relations between the university community of practice and the politicians in their ivory tower? Indeed, what transpires from the micro-political relationships at university level is a constant bureaucratic power that leads at times to political posts, but does not develop strategies to face the challenges school meets every day in a global world like ours.

Q. Which authors/texts would you single out as being of utmost importance if one wishes to understand educational dynamics in your country/region? How do you use these authors/texts in your own work? Feel free to cite an extended passage, and to comment on it in ways that add further insights into your own thinking.

Today, if you took an X-ray of the educational dynamics in Algeria one would think straightaway of the word anarchy or unprofessionalism. Besides, in all educational matters there is a constant feature: the everlasting references to Islam and the Koran. One has of course to acknowledge the huge contribution religion made at a social level. However, one has doubts about the possibility of developing other domains because of the mental straightjacket put by excessively pious teachers instead of building a vision of tomorrow's world. The 'sacred' has always the upper hand in countries like Algeria. The religious paradigm has not systematically been behind all reforms. Nevertheless, today everything is scrutinized through the lenses of religion. Teachers at all levels seem to mix the scientific and the religious narratives, not always for the better. Since the 1990s in Algeria people have witnessed an exponential development of discourses that consider Islam as a compulsory parameter. But in a globalised world, is it not more sensible to make room for different referents to conduct business with the Other who is not like us?

To understand today's system of education in the whole of the Maghreb, one may single out one author who seems to stand out among all writers: Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) and his *Muqaddimah* (*Prolegomenon*) mostly known through his analyses of North African societies. In more recent times in Algeria, it was Ibn Badis Abdelhamid who founded the Association of Muslim Algerian *Ulema* (a figurehead in educational matters between the 1920's to 1940). But of course reference to him alone would not explain today's dynamics let alone the often quoted President Boudiaf's term of '*école sinistrée*' (*stricken school*): a school fluctuating between pure imitation of foreign schools and illogical innovations. That could be explained by referring to the lasting Minister of National education, Boubekeur Benbouzid's book, or rather self-

congratulating report on his own achievements. Populism is here mixed with total blindness and absence of accountability. Benbouzid does not even make room for the slightest mistake he may have made. Failures, inadequacies or errors are the others'. Any other problem is due to the others' misunderstandings.

As for my personal references in education, they go back to my years of study: Freire, Bandura, Coombs, Beeby, Manzoor. But surely the most positive free-mind has been the late Mostefa Lacheraf who impacted the Algerian school system and even advocated a secular one. I was introduced to this democrat's views in the lectures of philosophy through his book: *Algérie, Nation et Société*. Lacheraf took part in the writing of the National Charter of 1976 and was the only Minister of Education who had advocated a bilingual school. He was also a strong voice against the extremists during the 1990s. Besides, other intellectuals have put forward strong ideas for the building of a modern Algeria and the need for political legitimacy (Addi, 1990), or about the expansion of political Islamism in mosques (Rouadjia, 1991), the politicization of Arabisation (Taleb Ibrahim, 1995), the divide between francophone and arabophone élites (Cheriet, 1983), the linguistic dictatorship that is bound to lead to a growing social anomie and language schizophrénia (Miliani, 2001).

Through this question you allow me to give a fair place to a number of intellectuals who have expressed opposed views to those of the decision-takers. School has always been attacked as the product of some 'misunderstandings' (Greffou, 1989), but the necessity of a real reform is called by several university teachers: '*une nouvelle vision de l'éducation et de la culture dans notre pays est d'une brûlante actualité*' / 'a new vision of education and culture in our region is often of a burning topicality' (Chitour, 2002, p.8). On the other hand, pre-schooling has not been given enough attention despite the increasing numbers of children (Benghabrit-Remaoun *et al.*, 2005). As for the university, it seems that it is in such a bad state that it should be closed down: '*en effet, le système universitaire est arrivé à un stade de déchéance et de déliquescence extrême*' / 'indeed, the new system has reached a stage of decline and extreme deliquescence' (Maïri, 1994, p.11).

But the state of the art of education would be incomplete without a reference to the everlasting problem of languages (national and foreign). Indeed, some university researchers have gone quite far in the criticism of language planning and its impact on education. Thus, and more critical than Granguillaume, Sebaa states that: '*la langue et la parole en Algérie sont encore de l'ordre exclusif de l'institution, c'est-à-dire de l'ordre de l'interdit, de l'obscur et du nébuleux*' / 'language and speech in Algeria are still in the exclusive domain of the institution, that is to say, in the domain of the forbidden, the obscure and the nebulous' (Sebaa, 1996, p.62). To this Elimam responds by accusing the authorities of discarding the mother-tongues (Algerian dialect and Berber) that are tokens of our citizenship: '*l'Etat substitue au langage actuel, actif et créative, une langue extérieure, fétichisée et prétendument supérieure*' / 'the State substitutes to the present active and creative language, an external fetichised and supposedly superior' (Elimam, 2004, p.35). Finally, everything boils down to the question of democracy: '*la reconstruction de l'état est le passage oblige de la*

métamorphose de la démocratie comme expérience politique en projet collectif multidimensionnel / 'the rebuilding of the state is the prerequisite for the metamorphosis of democracy as political experience into a collective and multidimensional project' (El Kenz, 1993, p.vi). One can but agree that in the case of Algeria, the near miss in implanting democracy in 1988 is not a curse but still an overture towards more open, more convincing enterprises in the future if only the State decided to build stability and invested in democracy, and if bureaucratic power ceased to dictate its agenda in the micropolitics of the social, educational and economic institutions.

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