The Women's Movement: History and Theory

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11 Stepmothers and motherless girls in narratives from Kabylia, Algeria: Oral and written productions

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The analysis presented in this article was carried out within the framework of a study on literary models of women[1] in oral and written narratives from Kabylia.[2] Three literary models are examined here - the motherless girl, the father's new wife, and their relationship. This analysis is based on a new approach to the study of gender and literature: an interdisciplinary approach using methodologies developed in both anthropology and narratology. The work of the narratologist Bal (1985) has provided useful interpretative tools, especially for revealing views on women.

Introduction

Until the beginning of this century, Kabyle literature was composed orally. Subsequently, a written production both (in both Kabyle-Berber and French) grew up along side the oral tradition. In fact, a specific Kabylian literary production can be identified within Algerian literature, even when written in French, because of particular attention to the home region and mother-tongue (Chaker 1989: 23). The numbers of Algerian authors writing in French can definitely be attributed to the colonization period when school curricula were in that language exclusively. The fact that the majority of Kabyle authors write in French today appears to be the result of their position as an oppressed linguistic minority, a position shared by the other Berberophones in North Africa. However, the publication of five

novels in the Kabyle-Berber language between 1980 and 1990 indicates a change in this trend and, together with the growing production of songs and poems, shows an awareness of identity.[3] The authors' personal preferences, and the extensive French-language market should also be taken into account here. Of the novels written in Kabyle-Berber, only the latest was published in Algeria. In 1990, the Algerian Parliament passed a law imposing the use of Arabic in all public affairs, documents, and publications, and even prohibited the import of keyboards (for computers, typewriters etc.) with Roman script; Kabyle-Berber is usually written in the Roman alphabet.

The material

The material[4] discussed here can be divided into two sections - the 'orally produced' and 'written productions'. However, this differentiation cross-cuts a genre division that recognizes macahu (genre) narratives told in Kabyle, macahu narratives written in Kabyle and in French, and a novel written in French (Touati 1985). The macahu written narratives, composed by authors who belong to the chain of oral transmission can be seen as a combination of oral and written productions.

The macahu written narratives are seen as having lost some of the authenticy and documentary value of the oral narratives,[5] and as being less useful in the analysis of the 'representations made by the group'. However, there is also an alternative point of view. When seen as literary productions describing historical changes and worked out by 'individuals in culture', these written macahu narratives are 'authentic' products within Kabyle literature as a whole, and have an important place in the shift from an exclusively oral production to the co-presence of oral and written productions. Stylistic differences, structural changes, modifications of some elements, and also the use of two languages (Kabyle-Berber and French) are all signs of a lively literary production adapting in response to the pressure of history. This paper suggests a further reflection on the appropriateness of a comparison between oral and written materials produced in the same context. When a study of 'gender in literature' is carried out especially, the comparison between oral and written materials reveals shared, underlying literary patterns, providing an indication of which new models of women are developing in this literature.[6]

Images of women

It is striking that following the shift to written narratives, the characterization of stepmother and stepdaughter, and the narrative structure, have been retained but are annotated with comments from the narrator (eg. that girls should be appreciated within the family). The relationship between stepmother and stepdaughter demonstrates pivotal elements of women's position in the family. As Lacoste-Dujardin (1970: 407) observed, in Kabyle oral narratives 'the introduction of a new wife [of the father] into the family... comes up against contradictions inherent to the position of women in this [patrilineal] social structure'. One fundamental contradiction is the fact that a new wife only truly becomes a member of her new family when she has given birth to a child (especially sons), but 'she is still expected to take on the role of mother to the existing children, without making distinctions between them and her own offspring.' (Lacoste-Dujardin, 1970: 407) An interesting aspect here is that a stepdaughter is usually portrayed positively, and descriptive qualifications are used such as 'young', 'beautiful', 'intelligent' and able to defeat opponents (the stepmother) by forming her own family and producing (beautiful) children. In contrast, the stepmother is given the role of 'negative femininity' from the perspective of patrilineal logic.[7] What is seen in the narration as an 'impossible cohabitation' of the father's new wife and her stepdaughter is linked to fundamental aspects of the domestic role of women in the family, which is primarily to produce and distribute food, and to be a mother. The step-daughter/stepmother opposition focuses on such elements as 'food' (the stepmother refuses to give food to her stepchildren), and on 'the stepmother's children' (the stepmother gives privileges to her natural children).

When different narrative genres are analyzed (macahu narrative and novels), a modification of the narrative structure can be seen. Whereas the qualifications that characterized the literary models in macahu narratives are maintained, one important aspect is completely modified. The stepdaughter in the novel by Touati (1985) is not able to act against her opponents, and the construction of her own family does not vindicate her initial misfortune.

Modifications, permanences, and changes of literary models of women in narratives must be related to different genres, and to the wider social and cultural context in historical development. Nevertheless, it is important to stress that the relationship between text and context is very complex. As many authors have already argued,[8]

texts should not be seen as mirrors, nor as direct representations of society. This relationship will be considered in a more advanced stage of this research. At the this point it is sufficient to remark that there are some similarities between literary models and cultural modelsof the Kabyle people (see the concluding section).

The Macahu genre

a. Oral production

Two stories[9] concerning motherless girls and stepmothers are considered here. The first, an oral narrative was collected and published by Moulieras (1893: 331-340). The second story comprises two oral narratives told respectively by â.A.T. (At Mangellat) [Dallet 1967: 81-95] and by Yamina At Seâdi (At Mangellat) [F.D.B. 1949, repr. 1971, no.11: 26-49]. The following abbreviations are used to refer to the respective narratives:[10] "M331, âAT", "YAS". Due to lack of space, I will concentrate on the oral macahu narratives "M331" and "âAT", but will include the "YAS" narrative in the final comparison and conclusion.

In the first narrative (M.331), an orphaned twin girl and boy are brought up by the wife of their father's brother, who takes the place of stepmother. The actions which bring the orphans and their aunt into opposition are focused on two elements - food and marriage. The orphans receive milk from a cow left to them by their father. They also receive honey and butter from their mother's grave, and couscous with butter (also from their mother) is magically prepared in their father's house.

In contrast to the rich food that the twins receive from their dead parents, their aunt feeds them on bran, and prevents them from receiving the delicious food that will make them grow up healthier than her own children. She threatens to leave her husband's house in order to force him to sell the orphans' milk cown, she destroys their mother's grave, she prevents them from reaching the magic couscous. When their cousins try to drink the cow's milk, they fail and instead of butter and honey, they only suck blood from the grave. When the twin girl ('tagujilt') is married to a rich foreigner, the aunt wants to kill her.

In every sequence, the aunt acts in ways advantageous to her own children - she tries to give them the rich food, and she also attempts to substitute her own daughter as the rich man's bride.

The stepmother's actions show that the stepmother/orphans opposition is based on the contrast between the stepmother's children and the orphans. This is confirmed by the 'vision' mechanism. Whereas the narrative is told mainly by an external narrator (EN), and events and characters are seen by an external focalizor (EF), there are two sequences (Moulieras 1893:332) where the focus shifts to an internal focalizor (CF): the woman looks at the orphans and realizes that they appear better than her own children (for the methodology, see Bal 1985). This 'perception' gives a new impetus to her actions against the orphans and conveys jealousy.

A contrast is created between the motherless girl and the stepmother's daughter by means of qualifications (the former has dark, brilliant eyes, the latter has been blinded in one eye by the cow), and by actions (using subterfuge the stepmother's daughter displaces the motherless girl as wife of the rich foreigner; in the end, he marries the motherless girl and kills her cousin).

In physical terms, the orphans are removed from their family home (their uncle's house) to the orphan girl's husband's house in another village. As Lacoste-Dujardin noted (1970: 310), the motherless girl's marriage transforms her into a 'houri', i.e. very beautiful woman, and a 'mother', i.e. an accomplished woman.[11]

Besides the contrast between the stepmother's children/orphans, in M331 the stepmother's children/orphans opposition is developed around a contrast between abundance/scarcity (see the elements 'food' and 'marriage'). This opposition leads to the killing of the aunt and her daughter. The initial 'lack' of mother and father is solved in two ways:

1) the marriage of the orphan girl, who gives birth to two sons;
2) the killing of the aunt and her daughter.

This solution is activated by the orphan girl, who reveals the substitution to her husband, thus causing his to kill the daughter and feed her to her mother, and also to the mutilation and death of the mother herself.

The second story concerns seven motherless girls whose father marries again.[12]

In the narrative told by àAT, the opposition between stepmother and motherless girls is based on the presence of the daughters in their father's house, and on

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food. The contrast between orphan girl and stepmother's daughter is hinted at in the 're-construction' of the initial situation. By threatening to leave her husband's house, the stepmother causes the father to remove the motherless girls from the home. When the initial situation is reconstructed (motherless girls, father and stepmother in the same house), the stepmother refuses them good food and only gives them a few acorns. There is an opposition especially between the stepmother and the youngest motherless girl, who surpasses both stepmother and father in intelligence, and who knows how to gain access to the character Mummuc's house,[13] and how to act with her stepmother and her stepmother's daughter. The initial lack of a mother through her death is resolved by means of:

1) the acquisition of the house, food and wealth of Mummuc;

2) killing of the stepmother and her daughter, and the death of the father.

This solution results from the youngest orphan's actions.

b. Written production

The M331, âAT and YAS oral narratives can be compared to versions of the same stories writtenin Kabyle and in French respectively by B. Ait Ali (Dallet and Degezelle, 1964) and T. Amrouche (1966). Both authors originally heard the stories as oral narratives. There are numerous differences in style between oral macahu narratives and written macahu narratives. In general terms, one can say that the written narratives make more extensive use of description than their oral counterparts, and they contain more generalizations and comments. One striking difference between oral macahu narratives and the macahu narratives written in Kabyle by B. Ait Ali is the use in the latter of long digressions initiated by a question, or a description given in general terms. Differences in style are more prominent when French is used. In Amrouche's French narratives, for example, indirect speech and subordinate clauses are employed frequently in the same way they are used in French literature.[14]

Oral narratives style is sober. The story progresses by means of a succession of linked actions and dialogues which mark events and characters. For example, in the oral narrative of âAT (Dallet 1967: 87) the youngest motherless girl is introduced as follows: "ma tamejtuht-enni tenna-yas" [as to the youngest girl she said to him]; then there is the dialogue that presents the the youngest orphan girl's counter-deception: "I, I am shy before you, father. He told her: No, daughter,

undress yourself. She told him: -No! (I swear) on your head, go to that little hill".
In the text written by Amrouche (1966: 163), the introduction of the heroine and
the dialogue are rendered as follows: "Restait Aïcha, menue, gracieuse et douce.
Elle était sa préférée, il lui en coûtait de la sacrifier aussi. Il s'approcha d'elle,
mais elle lui dit, baissant les yeux:
-Mon père, éloigne-toi un instant je te prie, car je n'ose me dévêtir devant toi".

Another example of the differences between written and oral macahu narratives
is the written narratives' 'motivation' for the father's new marriager, which is
explained by his incapacity to bring up the children, and by the difficulty of this
task (see T159: 159): "The father, at the beginning, tried to take care of them,
but he was awkward, and the task was heavy".

A similar description is also given in the macahu narrative written in Kabyle
by Ait Ali (1963: 115): "Ali At Hemmu... pondered, addressed himself: Now,
these children of mine, a woman is necessary to them: the task is too much for
me to [be able to] raise them and rest them [= to take care of them]".

In the oral narrative told in Kabyle by âAT, the father's new marriage is
presented as follows: "tamettut-enni tamezwarut temmut, iâawed ta-nn-idnin"
[the first wife died, he married this other (woman)].

At the end of the 1940s, Belaïd Ait Ali wrote a number of narratives, descripti-
ons, and poems, which were first published in theF.D.B. review, and subsequently
collected in a book entitled "Les Cahiers de Belaïd", edited by Dallet and Degezelle
in 1964. He is thought to be the first author of a literary production written in
Kabyle (Chaker, 1990: 64; Kleiber and Ould-Braham, 1987: 117-127).

The narrative examined here (Dallet and Degezelle, 1964: 109-139) is another
version of the first story about stepmothers/orphans analyzed above (see oral
narrative M331). In this narrative (abbreviation: B109) the opposition is between
the orphans and their father's new wife.

As in M331, the succession of actions constructs this opposition on the basis
of a contrast between motherless children and stepmother's children (qualifications
of the orphans: little, white and red, blue/green eyes, yellow hair), that makes
the stepmother jealous (B109: 117): "because she knew... she could not give him
children who would reach their [the orphans] foot". The relationship stepmother/orp-
hans is generalized (B109: 116) by a comment from the external narrator (see
p. 14).

Again, this contrast is expressed in terms of food and marriage, and the solution to the initial lack is provided by

1) the marriage of the orphan girl;
2) the killing of the stepmother's daughter, followed by the death of the stepmother.

In this narrative, the difference in gender of the two orphans, a girl and a boy, gives rise to an interesting digression on bearing a male or female child.[15] The external narrator, describing the education and care received by the orphans when their mother was still alive ('internal retroversion'), noted that special care for the boy was understandable, and reports a first general statement on wishing male children on a newly married couple (B109: 111). Then a glossed statement on female children is introduced. The statement is (B109: 111): "a girl, if she lives, will be useful, if she dies, the graveyard is large", followed by the narrator's comment that: "who knows if what he said is what he thought, he who uttered these words, or [if he was] just stupid?".[16]

When the narration resumes, the external narrator specifies that (in spite of the general statement) the orphan girl, Fadma, was valued by her parents (B109: 111): "in short, Fadma was not held cheap by her father and mother".

A version of the first story (see oral narrative M331) and a version of the second story (see oral narratives âAT and YAS) were written in French by Taos Amrouche (1966: 55-62, 159-169) who explains that she got all the Kabyle material from her mother Fatma Ait Mansour Amrouche (Amrouche, 1966: 9). The analysis of these versions (abbreviations used when referring to them are T55 and T159) is not described here, but is considered in the comparison and in the conclusion.

In all these macahu narratives concerning motherless girls, be they oral or written, the female character who, as a 'mother', takes charge of the children of another woman assumes the role of 'antagonist' (or 'villain' in Proppian terminology).[17] In five out of the six narratives, the 'new wife of the father' character plays this role.[18] In all the six narratives, the breakdown of the initial family also leads the characters, father/father's brother, to act as 'stepfathers', enacting the banishment, or breaking the interdiction, requested by the antagonist.

In the demarcation of roles, the husband plays the role of 'object' - to be acquired - and that of 'helper' respectively: the character Mummuc/Muc/Moche plays the role of 'donor'; and the character Lion that of 'helper'. The 'twin-girl' and 'the youngest sister' are the 'heroines' whose actions solve the problems caused

by the initial lack. An opposition between stepmother and motherless girl is presented in all six narratives.

The narrative of the second story considered here (âAT, YAS, T159) presents this opposition as being founded on the orphans' permanent position in their father's house. And in all the narratives the opposition stepmother/orphans leads to a displacement of the heroine from the family home, and the stepmother's 'weapon' against the orphans is always her threat to leave her husband's house.

In the narratives relating the first story considered here (M331, B109, T55) and in the âAT narrative (second story), the stepmother/orphans opposition is based on the contrasts between motherless children and stepmother's children, while this contrast is hinted at in T159 (second story). In these five narratives, the stepmother/motherless girl opposition pivots on food. In M331 an B109, this opposition is also articulated on the marriage of the orphan girl. The stepmother is killed in three narratives, while in T159 she and the father separate, and the father rejoins his children.

Explicit reasons for the opposition between stepmother and orphans are given only in the written narratives. In T55, the reason is the birth of the stepmothert's child; in T156 the reason is given by way of a general statement: the stepmother "as all the stepmothers" hates her husband's children by a previous marriage.

A general statement is also used in B109 (Dallet and Degezelle 1964: 116): "your stepmother is (always) your stepmother, and the children of a co-wife are (always) the children of a co-wife even when their mother is dead."

In general, the 'heroine' is characterized by knowing how to act towards antagonists, donors, and helpers, and by being young and beautiful. A further qualification is given in the narrative B109, where, in contrast with general statements about female children, the heroine is appreciated by her family,.
The two versions of the first story considered here (narratives M331 and T55) qualify the heroine to bear children while, in the second story, only the YAS narrative refers to her 'motherly function'.

In five narratives (M331, YAS, B109, T55, T159) the heroine resolves her situation by reconstructing the 'family situation': four times in a new village, three times by marriage, and once by living again with the father, and in the YAS narrative, by living with the helper who plays the role of the 'father'. In the âAT narrative, the heroine obtains a house far away from any village context, and does not reconstruct a family situation.

Written production as novel

The novel considered here, "Le Printemps Désespéré", was written in French by Fettouma Touati, who was born in Kabylia. The novel is set in a Kabyle context (in Kabylia obviously, but also in Algiers, and among immigrants in France), and Kabyle women and men are the characters.[19]

The explicit linguistic references concern Kabyle-Berber, and the French spoken by girls who, educated at school, use it as a 'private' language which the other women are unable to understand (Touati 1980: 157; 159).

The theme of the relationship between a motherless girl and her stepmother is treated within a significant sequence: the character Djohra has not found a wife for her son because he is violent and unemployed, and the families in her village refuse to give their daughters in marriage to him. The stepmother of a motherless girl does agree to make this very bad match for her stepdaughter (Touati 1980: 31-32).

This expresses the difference between natural parents, who care for their daughters, and the stepmother, who does not care for her stepdaughters.

Actions and qualifications which characterize the stepmother are initially given by an internal focalizor, the character Yasmina. The qualifications are: jealousy, and the desire to get rid of the orphan girl. The actions are, in sequence, sending the motherless girl to a boarding school so that the stepmother's daughter can find a husband more easily, beating of the orphan girl, accepting any husband whatsoever for the orphan.

This characterization of the stepmother is confirmed by the external focalizor, who presents the stepmother as being very happy to get rid of her stepdaughter, and as giving her a poor and unacceptable trousseau. The coincidence of views between internal focalizor, Yasmina, and the external focalizor leads to the strengthening of the (negative) characterization of the stepmother.

The qualifications of the motherless girl are also initially given by the character Yasmina, who describes the orphan as gentle, young, blond with green eyes, more beautiful than the stepmother's daughter. The orphan's beauty is contrasted with her step-sister's appearance, and this is the element on which, initially, the opposition motherless girl/stepmother is built. The latter is explicitly qualified as being 'jealous'. The beauty of the orphan is a negative element in the relationship

between her and her stepmother. On the other hand, this characteristic is important for the relationship between the orphan and her mother-in-law, Djohra.

The 'motherless girl' character always complains and attributes all her troubles to her being an orphan, an interpretation that is confirmed by the external narrator (147/130):[20] "Louisa [the orphan] was condemned to live with a man who no longer even considered her his wife...If she left she would be entirely to blame. Besides, where would she go?" [she cannot go back to her stepmother's house]. See also (143/127), the orphan who complains: "If I had brothers, or a father, he [her husband] wouldn't dare lay a finger on me. If I had a mother, she would have come today with a necklace or a dress. But I haven't got anybody, only God."

Moreover, the condition of being a motherless girl overrides the particular situation of a specific character. In fact, it is presented immediately as a generative condition in some of the statements made by the characters Djohra and Yasmina:

> Djohra (to Yasmina): (31/23) "Thank the Lord that you still have your mother. Despite her beauty, look what she has to put up with because she's an orphan." (32/23): "It's true, said Yasmina, that Kabyle stepmothers are mercilessly cruel."

A further confirmation of these general statements is given in the novel when the orphan, already married, is ridiculed by a woman because of the inadequate food given to the guests at her marriage (in comparison with the abundance at the marriage of another character, Fatma):

> (53/44) "Fatma has a mother! was all Louisa replied. She hurried out to hide her tears. An old woman [said]...: A girl who has no mother has nothing but her eyes to cry with...."

Here, in the contrast abundance/poverty, food becomes an element around which the stepmother/orphan opposition is worked out, while the use of a paraphrased Kabyle proverb also stresses the generality of an orphan girl's (difficult) position.

Conclusion

The comparison between the theme of stepmothers and motherless girls in macahu narratives, and this 'theme' as treated in the novel of Touati, shows a number of similarities, but also a basic difference.

The similarities of elements which characterize the relationship motherless girl/ stepmother are striking: both in macahu narratives and in the novel, the opposition between stepmother and motherless girl clearly expresses that the 'cohabitation' is impossible, and this is articulated on 'food' and 'marriage', as well as on the contrast motherless girl/stepmother's daughter (see the jealousy of the stepmother).

Moreover, both in macahu narratives and in the novel, the motherless girl is characterized by such qualifications as 'beauty, youth, and fertility'; in particular, in the written macahu narrative B109 and in the novel, qualifications of the girl's beauty are 'yellow hair and blue/green eyes'.

These qualifications constitute a fairly constant model of beauty in women. The difference is the 'response' given to the problem (lack of mother/parents), and the characterization, through actions, of the 'motherless girl'. As regards the actions, in the macahu narratives the orphan girl is characterized by 'knowing how to act', while in the novel the 'orphan girl' character does not.
The motherless girl in the macahu narratives moves from her father's house to another house, and this shift leads to the solution of the stepmother/ motherless girl opposition, a solution that is provided by the girl's actions:

1) acquisition of a new house;
2) marriage, or re-construction of a 'father-daughter' unity;
3) the killing of the stepmother, or a division of stepmother/father. Furthermore, in the novel, the orphan girl moves from her father's house to her husband's house, but here there is a change in the narrative structure: the orphan girl does not (and could not) act to resolve the given problem. This character is placed in a 'vicious circle': her being motherless leads to her bad marriage, from which she cannot escape as there is no family home she can go to because she is an orphan.

In the novel, there is no solution for this initial lack. Nevertheless, when the character Yasmina begins her work as a doctor, she is able to mediate between the 'orphan girl' (Louisa) and 'husband of the orphan' characters. The change

in the narrative structure (as well as the discourse about "women's work outside the house") is a significant aspect of new views in fiction about women and their lives, an aspect that can be related to social and cultural modifications in contemporary Algeria.

The analysis of the oral and written macahu narratives and of the novel by Touati shows that the models of the stepmother, the stepdaughter, and their relationship constitute a very constant literary pattern whose structure in the sequences of actions is, nevertheless, deeply changed in the novel. Here, a 'misfortune' is not rectified, but a 'vicious circle' is created, where being orphaned is the precursor and lasting cause of the troubled life of the 'motherless girl' character.

As stated above, there are some correspondences between the literary models considered here and models of women shared by people in Kabyle society. For example, the relationship between stepmothers and motherless girls is also treated in an 'ethnographic' description by Yamina At Seâdi (F.D.B. 1957: 1-9). On the death of parents, Y. At Aït reports what 'people say' : it is worse to be bereft of mother than of father (her comment is that in any case it is terrible, the parents are like the eyes, we do not want to lose either one of them, p.7). The general statement is explained because of the father's new marriage: "Ixiṛ si-ljiha-s, d elxiṛ kan!" = 'good from the step-mother, but it is good!' (=it couldn't be good). The stepmother is in fact seen as willing to separate the father from the orphans, and even if the stepmother were a good person, she could not help but prefer her own children to the orphans. The elements already seen in the literary narratives correspond here to a 'model' of the stepmother/orphan relationship as conceptualized in society.

A difficulty is that because of their paradigmatic form, models represent an 'interpretation' of the very nuanced individual experience in social relations: as to the 'negativity' of the stepmother, stressed in all the narratives, a lonely countervoice from a stepmother is reported in the comment on a proverb told by Yamina At Seâdi (F.D.B. 1955, 48: 6). For once the other side is shown when a stepmother complains of the ingratitude of her stepdaughter 'brought up as a daughter': "A woman has got a stepdaughter. It was this woman who had brought up her [stepdaughter]. She considered her as her own daughter: when [the stepdaughter] grew up she detested her [stepmother]: she acted against her

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The analysis of the oral and written macahu narratives and of the novel by Touati shows that the models of the stepmother, the stepdaughter, and their relationship constitute a very constant literary pattern whose structure in the sequences of actions is, nevertheless, deeply changed in the novel. Here, a 'misfortune' is not rectified, but a 'vicious circle' is created, where being orphaned is the precursor and lasting cause of the troubled life of the 'motherless girl' character.

As stated above, there are some correspondences between the literary models considered here and models of women shared by people in Kabyle society. For example, the relationship between stepmothers and motherless girls is also treated in an 'ethnographic' description by a Kabyle woman (F.D.B. 1957: 1-9). On the death of parents,) she t reports what 'people say' : it is worse to be bereft of mother than of father (her comment is that in any case it is terrible, the parents are like the eyes, we do not want to lose either one of them, p.7). The general statement is explained because of the father's new marriage: "Ixiṛ si-ljiha-s, d elxiṛ kan!" = 'good from the[step-mother] but it is good!' (= it couldn't be good). The stepmother is in fact seen as willing to separate the father from the orphans, and even if the stepmother were a good person, she could not help but prefer her own children to the orphans. The elements already seen in the literary narratives correspond here to a 'model' of the stepmother/orphan relationship as conceptualized in society.

A difficulty is that because of their paradigmatic form, models represent an 'interpretation' of the very nuanced individual experience in social relations: as to the 'negativity' of the stepmother, stressed in all the narratives, a lonely countervoice from a stepmother is reported in the comment on a proverb told by a Kabyle woman (F.D.B. 1955, 48: 6). For once the other side is shown when a stepmother complains of the ingratitude of her stepdaughter 'brought up as a daughter': "A woman has got a stepdaughter. It was this woman who had brought up her [stepdaughter]. She considered her as her own daughter: when [the stepdaughter] grew up she detested her [stepmother]: she acted against her

[stepmother] as much as was possible. She said to her [stepdaughter]: All I have done for good is returned with evil."

Notes

1. It forms part of research for my thesis 'Models of women in literary narratives from Kabylia: oral and written production' at the Free University of Amsterdam thanks to a scholarship granted by the Italian Ministry for Universities and Scientific and Technical Research.

2. Kabylia is a mountainous area in Northern Algeria where people speak *Taqbaylit*, a specific form of the Berber language *(Tamazight)*, which is spoken by about 15 million people in North Africa.

3. For an analysis of three of these novels which give little space to female characters, see: Abrous, 1989. On identity, songs and poems, cf. Banfour, 1984; Chaker, 1989; Ferhat, 1983; Redjala, 1979; Zoulef and Dernouny.

4. The narratives were chosen on the basis of two elements (lack of mother and orphan girl). As to *macahu* narratives, the selection was made from a corpus comprising the collections of Moulieras (1983), Dallet (1963;1967;1970), F.D.B./F.P. (1946-1973), Amrouche (1964); as to novels, from a corpus of 15 novels written by Algerian authors born in Kabylia with explicit reference to their region of origin. The term *macahu* ('story') is used in the formulas at the beginning and end of this narrative genre. Analogous formulas are also used in *macahu* narratives written in Kabyle by B. Ait Ali, and in French by T. Amrouche.

5. In Lacoste-Dujardin 1970: 12, 38-39.

6. The comparison proposed here of oral materials and written materials not only attempts to look at literature as no longer ideologically divided between orality and literacy (cf. Finnegan, 1973), although the numerous differences in ways of production have to be considered, but seeks to acknowledge literary and socio-cultural changes, and in the case of Kabyle literature, projects and elaborations created by the people involved.

7. Lacoste-Dujardin 1970: 405-412.

8. Cf. Bachtin 1976: 179-221; Levi Strauss 1960: 351-362.

9. I refer to the definition given by Bal (1985: 5): *fabula, story, narration*; where several narrations can be 'variants' of the same story; and a story is a fabula worked in words (the same fabula can be expressed in words and in pictures, for examples).

10. Only those aspects related to the motherless girl/stepmother are pointed out, without presenting a complete analysis of the narratives, which are much richer than was possible to show here. For a wider framework, see Lacoste-Dujardin, 1970.

11. In Lacoste-Dujardin's analysis (1970), beauty and motherhood are pointed out as basic virtues of female characters in Kabyle oral narratives that have a rural context as framework (293-298; 321-331).

12. In Kabyle oral narratives, there are often seven children in a family, see Lacoste-Dujardin 1970: 91-92; 404.

13. The stress is on cooking activities, with a contrast made between cooked food and ashes; see Lacoste-Dujardin 1970: 235-241.

14. Cf. Lacoste-Dujardin 1970: 38.

15. Other very interesting digressions concern the relationship between husband and wife, the moral characteristics needed by women, and the discussion of the opposition "being Kabyle"/"being roumi" (French/European).

16. Here the external narrator introduces a criticism of women "who are the first persons to complain when they bear a daughter".

17. See Propp, 1958.

18. Other female characters who, in successive moves, play the role of antagonist are the co-wife, and the ogress.

19. F. Touati, *Le Printemps Désespéré*, Paris, 1980. This novel is concerned with several aspects of women's lives in Kabylia and in Algeria. For an outline of the analysis of this narrative, see: Merolla, 'Storie di donne. "Le Printemps Désespéré" di Fettouma Touati, *Plural*, special issue on women (in print).

20. The first number corresponds to the page of the French text; the second to the English translation.

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