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Laura Menin

'Men do not get scared! (rjjala mā tāy-khāfūsh)*': Luck, destiny and the gendered vocabularies of clandestine migration in Central Morocco*

This paper explores the social worlds and vocabularies that surround 'illegal' migration by inhabitants of the Tadla Plain, a rural region of Central Morocco with transnational connections with Italy and Spain. Since the mid-1980s, transnational migration has become an important dimension of the social, economic and intimate worlds of the inhabitants of the Tadla. Even though an increasing number of women emigrate – both following their male relatives and alone – (Harrami, Zmou 2010), migration is mainly construed as a 'male business'. From being, formerly, simply an essential livelihood strategy for young people and their families, migration has taken on a 'bigger meaning': it is now a central dimension of the imagination of a 'better life' (Vacchiano 2010, 2012; Elliot 2016a). Above all, migration is often depicted by my young male interlocutors as fundamental to the 'building of one's future' in a context where conventional trajectories of upward social mobility are increasingly inaccessible and new ideas of 'success' are taking shape.

In the aftermath, however, of restrictive migration policies in southern Europe and Morocco, reaching Italy and Spain has become increasingly difficult for young men lacking reliable connections to the 'outside world' (*brrā, l-kharīj*)[1] or material resources to support the costs of migration. For those people who cannot afford to buy job contracts, tourist visas or fake papers, clandestine migration is the only way of reaching a world they imagine is laden with social and economic opportunities. The Moroccan vernacular Arabic term *l-ḥrig* (or *ḥarg*), used to refer to 'illegal' border crossing, evokes 'the burning of the borders'. In public debate in Morocco, as well as in the international press and humanitarian discourse, 'the burner' (the border crosser) is often depicted as the social marginal or/and the naive person ready to risk his life for the illusory dream of a better life. The social life of clandestine migration in the Tadla, however, tells a more complex and nuanced story, which takes shape in relation both to the pervasiveness of the 'outside world' and to the country's particular social and gendered demands.

Drawing on extended fieldwork and interviews conducted in the rural villages and the urban centres of the Tadla (2008-2010),[2] this article explores the vocabularies and the cosmological imagination (Da Col 2012: 2) shaping young men's narratives of illegal border crossing. It takes as its ethnographic point of departure the journey of Kamel through the material and social boundaries that separate him from the goal of 'building his future'. In 2002, when he was only 14, Kamel crossed over the Strait of Gibraltar to reach his relatives in Spain. In 2008, he was apprehended by the Spanish police and expelled. When I met him in 2009, Kamel was 21 and was seeking a way to cross over again. Like other young men whom I met in the Tadla, Kamel described l'*ḥrig* as a risky adventure (*mugḥamāra*) that anyone who wants to 'build his future' should be ready to undertake.

'Burning the borders' requires the crossers to expose themselves to the danger of death. As I will show, Kamel's narrative reveals a gendered vocabulary that stresses the unpredictability of clandestine migration and the moral qualities – such as courage, determination, and faith – necessary to face hazardous situations. Telling his migration story, Kamel interweaves three elements: his personal aspiration to build his future and undertake family responsibility, the moral imperative he feels to try his luck and his need to submit himself to the destiny written by God.

Building on recent works that explore the notions of 'luck' and 'fortune' in people's everyday lives (for instance, da Col 2012; da Col, Humphrey 2012a, 2012b; Gaibazzi 2012; Gaibazzi, Gardini 2015, D'Angelo 2014, 2015), I focus on the vocabularies through which Kamel makes sense of clandestine migration and the aspirations, hopes and ethics that sustain it. I show how he mobilizes creatively ideas of 'risk', 'fear', 'gambling', 'adventure', 'luck' and 'destiny' in telling his experience of border-crossing. Dwelling, in particular, on the local semantics of 'luck' and 'destiny' I trace how Kamel reflects upon the constraints and possibilities present in his life. In his words, the folk ideas of 'luck' (*zahr, l-ḥḍ*) propel the individual search for money and adventure in a foreign land of material

possibilities and moral threats. Described as a gendered and moral duty, the 'search for luck' stresses the willingness actively to work for one's future. Conversely, the Islamic notion of 'destiny' (*maktūb*, *qadar*) evokes, in Kamel's narrative, events that go beyond personal control and understanding, and thus points to the limits of human action and intentionality. Through these notions, Kamel explores the limits of his power to change his situation in the face of broader social and transcendental forces.

Tracing how Kamel interweaves different vocabularies in his narrative of clandestine border crossing, this article hopes to capture young men's gendered and existential anxieties about the future in the face of the combined effects of neo-liberal restructuring, rising unemployment, and the increasing 'illegalization' (De Genova 2002) of migration.

1. *The Tadla Plain*

The development of intensive agriculture and the agribusiness industry in the Tadla Plain began in colonial times (1912-1956) and continued after Morocco gained its independence (Prefol 1986; Swearingen 1988; Troin 2002). Against the backdrop of national economic crisis and rising inflation, the population of the urban centres and the rural villages of the irrigated perimeters of the Tadla continued to grow, due to inward migration, until the 1970s. In the following decade, though, the trend changed as a result of the crisis of the non-irrigated agricultural sector (*būr*), economic restructuring (1983-1993), the privatization of the agricultural sector and the disengagement of the state (Harrami & Mahdi 2006). One important consequence of the liberalization of the agricultural sector was the development of agricultural credit and demands for payment being imposed by the *Office Régional de Mise en Valeur Agricole* before the harvest was gathered (Troin 2002: 165). The need for cash, and rising unemployment, led many people, including married men, to emigrate to Italy (Harrami, Mahdi 2006).

Compared to the regions of Morocco with established connections with Europe, therefore, migration from the Tadla is a recent, albeit prominent, phenomenon (Jacquement 1995; Harrami, Mahdi 2006, 2008; de Haas 2007; Harrami, Zmou 2010). Migratory chains from the Tadla to northern Italy developed thanks to the proximity of the Bni Meskin, a group of cattle ranchers originally from the Settat region (dal Lago 1994). Some Bni Meskin returnees, who had migrated to Italy outside any institutional channels since the 1970s, invested money they had saved while in Italy in the Tadla, creating an image of Italy as an 'El Dorado' (Harrami, Mahdi 2006: 39-43). Illiterate peasants left for Italy and returned to the dirt streets of their village with a car (*ṭomobil*) with Italian number plates. Cars embody a powerful token of mobility and success in contexts where the donkey was the usual means of transport. Some others were able to buy agricultural land and invest in modern agricultural machinery, build houses and establish a business. The remittances from migrants and their trading activities, their investments in land and construction, their development of agriculture and local enterprises have all favoured rapid urbanization and economic dynamism in the Tadla. In the urban centres of Beni Mellal, Suq Sebt and Fqih ben Salah, the exotic names of *Cafe Milano* or *Pizzeria Venisia*, and the extravagant villas and the three-store buildings built by successful migrants make palpable the immense possibilities of the 'outside world'. As an interlocutor of mine put it, 'Money has changed people's mentality (*l-flūs tāt-ghyyr l-'aqliya*)'. *Sha'ab l-brrā* (literally 'people of the outside', emigrants) have become preferred candidates for marriage to civil servants and schoolteachers, providing, as they do, social-cum-geographical mobility.

Almost all the people I met in the rural villages and in the urban centres of the Tadla have relatives abroad. In the countryside, there are houses traditionally inhabited by extended families that are now run by a matriarch, with her unmarried daughters and daughters in law; their male relatives either work seasonally abroad and stay in Morocco the rest of the year or return only during summer holidays and religious celebrations. Migration to Italy or Spain does not involve only illiterate people and peasants. Emigrants from the Tadla are typically between 20 and 30 years old, and some of them have a diploma (Harrami, Mahdi 2006; Arab 2008; Zmou, Harrami 2010). Modern education enabled previous generations of *diplômés* to climb the social ladder in an expanding public sector. In contrast, for today's young people, migration is often an alternative to unemployment, and a respectable one in a society perceived as unjust and corrupt.

These dynamics have contributed to the emergence of a 'culture of migration' (*taqāfa l-hijra*), a local expression by which my interlocutors emphasize the everydayness of migration in the social, economic and intimate worlds of the Tadla. The desire for the elsewhere, though, has increasingly collided, especially since the 2000s, with restrictive migration policies in Europe and Morocco. In 1990, Italy introduced visa requirement and, in 1991, Spain ended the right of Moroccan citizens to enter Spain without a visa as a consequence of the 'Schengenization' of the Spanish-African border (Ferrer-Gallardo 2008). European borders have been external-

ized to North Africa and militarized on the basis of bilateral agreements between Spain and Morocco. In particular, Spain has implemented the Integral System of Exterior Surveillance (SIVE), a sophisticated device to fight migrant-smugglers and others on the clandestine routes along the Spanish-Moroccan maritime borders (see Carling 2007a, 2007b; Ferrer-Gallardo 2008). Following the tightening of legal sanctions against undocumented migration and of border control, an increasing number of migrants have died attempting to cross the Straits of Gibraltar (Ferrer-Gallardo 2008: 310). Along with Morocco's partnership with Spain in military border control, in 2003 the government legislated a restrictive migration law (02/2003) in accordance with Moroccan/Spanish bilateral agreements and international anti-terrorist policies (Coslovi, Lahlou 2006). Besides tighter transnational border control, more restrictive immigration policies in southern European countries have tried to reduce migration flows into those territories and the rates of undocumented migrants attempting to stay (Triandafyllidou, Ambrosini 2011).

These developments have not diminished the desire for migration: the desire has persisted but migration to Italy and Spain has been rendered an increasingly risky and unpredictable enterprise. Many aspiring migrants and their families in the Tadla are aware of the perils of clandestine migration but consider it necessary in the endeavour to 'build a future'.

2. *"Anyone wants to build his future"*

"Anyone wants to build his future (*ey waḥed bghrā ybnī l-mustaqbel dyalū*)", said Kamel to explain his motivation to migrate clandestinely. The idea of 'building a future' evokes multifarious existential imaginaries that take shape at the intersection of 'here' (*l-blēd*) and an 'outside world' (*l-brrā, l-kharīj)* that contains specific traits and threats. In his study on the construction of masculinity (*rajulīya*) in a small emigrant town in Northern Morocco, Marko Juntunen (2002) argues that his interlocutors, lower-class young men, have a very concrete idea of the 'future' (*l-mustaqbel*). For them, the future embodies the desire to create *durūf*, namely the socioeconomic conditions they need if they are to fulfil their gendered duties and to participate as adult men in the social and economic worlds. Ideally, this entails being economically independent and accumulating the means to support their families and to marry.

In the Tadla, too, migration to Italy and Spain is intimately intertwined with local ideas of masculinity and manhood.[3] A man is considered responsible (*msūlīy*) for providing for his wife, children, and elderly parents. Marriage is a focal event in men's biographies that socially marks the transition from being a boy (*shabb*) to being a man (*rajul*). Although socioeconomic transformations have contributed to delayed marriage in the past three decades,[4] remaining unmarried continues to be socially penalized. Whereas societal expectations put considerable pressure on young Moroccan men, economic insecurity and the precariousness of their employment situation often put marriage beyond their reach. "There is nothing to do (*mā kēnsh mā-yddīr*)" is how many young people, often educated, often unemployed, talk about Morocco and their condition of social and existential immobility (See also Capello 2008; Vacchiano 2010, 2014). 'Here' (*hnā*) – meaning the village (*dwwār*), the country (*l-blēd*) – is perceived as an obstacle to the achievement of a person's social adulthood because of the difficulty in finding a job without social connections (*wasita*) and, hence, of being able to give their lives the desired direction.

For those of my young interlocutors who experience their future as being 'blocked', migration – in order to emerge from existential and material misery – became a moral duty (Vacchiano 2010; Capello 2008; see also Gaibazzi 2010, 2015 on the Gambia). Particularly painful is the comparison of their situation with young visiting emigrants. In the competitive sociability of men, and in the streets, young migrants affirm themselves through the display of symbols of material success (see also McMurray 2001) and express their 'hyper-sexuality' by 'hunting the girls' (*tāy-seīd l-banāt*) in their cars.

Discussing the sense of discouragement suffusing the everyday lives of lower-class young Moroccans and their daydreams of the 'elsewhere', Francesco Vacchiano (2010: 114) writes: "Seen from the *bled*, 'elsewhere' is a projective place of open possibilities, of the overturning of one's destiny, of the renewal experience produced by a 'cut'." The future, and the material means to build it, are projected 'over there' (*tmma*) in the 'outside world' *(l-brrā, l-kharīj)*. Although the 'outside world' is an intrinsically multifarious site of imagination and projection, many young people in the Tadla would describe it as a 'paradise' (*l-jenna*). Similarly, Carlo Capello (2008) reports that his interlocutors, Moroccan youths in the suburbs of Casablanca and in Khuribga, both areas of emigration to Italy, depict Italy as a 'land of money and rights (*blēd l-flūs w l-ḥuqūq*)', a country where migrants can find economic possibilities and dignity. This image also surfaces in the narrative of Kamel, and I will return to it later, as a critique of Morocco's political culture

and widespread clientelism. He said:

> In Morocco, the state does not give you your rights (*dwla mā-t'atīksh l-ḥūqūq dyālk*). You work and your boss insults you all the day! At the end of the day, he gives you the lowest wage. Bosses do not give you your rights here, do they give you the pay you deserve?

He went on:

> The one who remains here – you know? Living here a long time, a whole life lived here – does not understand what Morocco is. But when you go there [to Spain], it is another story. People have all the rights, the rights are given to the people.

In Kamel's words, cultural dislocation is a formative experience, fundamental to a better understanding of the social and political life of Morocco. Migrants' image of the 'elsewhere', albeit idealized, is not simply a naive projection of unfilled desires onto an imagined paradise of limitless possibilities. The rapid changes obvious to the young people in the economic landscape around them testify to the opportunities that Italy and Spain offer to those who are not afraid of hardship and risks. Most of my interlocutors are aware that migrants are confronted by several difficulties abroad, and that the dangers and temptations of the 'the land of Christians (*nsāra*)' (such as alcohol, drugs, illicit sex and the western lifestyle in general) can make a person 'lost' (*talf*). Yet, aspiring migrants are convinced that *they* will be successful and they rationalize the failure of other migrants in terms of personal inability and lack of determination. Migrants are often expected to face hardship and obstacles in the attempt to get to a position in which they can support their family, help their brothers to emigrate, make long-term investments of their savings in Morocco (land, household and marriage), and possibly set up a local business.

Kamel began to think of migration as a realistic opportunity of providing for his mother and younger siblings, getting away from a difficult relationship with a despotic father, and building his future. As the oldest of five siblings, Kamel was expected to support his family and build his own future, both enterprises that require work and money. As he said: "Spain is the only way to get money (*Spanja, tarīqa l-waḥīda bāsh tdkhkhl l-flūs*)." His search for 'money' interweaves with the desire to travel and 'see the world', as we see in these words, highlighting the role of travelling in opening one's mind in a person's self-becoming:

> The one who remains here, you know? Just work, home, and the countryside…it is better to change, to travel. People who travel a lot, go around, learn a lot, do not remain in the same place where they have always lived.

Far from being just an escape from unemployment and economic uncertainty (Cohen 2004), the sense of stillness[5] that pervades the lives of many young men in rural Tadla takes shape in relation to 'the outside' and its possibilities, which fill the experience of staying with a sense of boredom and despair (see also Schielke 2008; Vacchiano 2010). The desire to 'see the world' urges Kamel to cross the material and imaginative borders of the *bled*.

3. *Un/documented migration*

People in the Tadla Plain distinguish between two main forms of mobility, which are locally expressed in a political-legal vocabulary: 'legal migration' (*hijra qānūniyya*) – which includes all types of documented migration (*b l-wrāq,* literally 'with papers' such as family reunification visa, study and tourist visas and job contracts with both valid and fake documents) – and 'illegal' migration (*mashī qānūniyya* or *bidūn qānūn*). In practice, getting a tourist visa or finding a job contract to migrate legally is very difficult for would-be migrants lacking financial means and solid social connections to their destination country. The decision to migrate, which is carefully negotiated within the family, often involves reliance on wider networks of relatives abroad for arranging various practicalities. Relatives abroad are essential in providing financial and material support, as well as in finding a job contract, which generally entails the payment of compensation to acquiescent employers.

Alessandra Persichetti (2003) highlights the fundamental role that 'agnatic solidarity' (*'asabiyya*) plays in structuring migratory chains to Italy in the emigrant region of Ben Ahmed. 'Agnatic solidarity' entails mutual obligations and moral duties between patrilateral relatives (brothers or paternal cousins) and compels material help and support in migration. An ideal of solidarity among patrilateral relatives was often affirmed by many of my interlocutors. At the margins of public discourse emphasizing the importance of blood ties (*nasāb*), however, they complained that their relatives abroad had failed to help them in the search of documents (*l-wrāq*). They also emphasized that competition between relatives can be an obstacle to the expected solidarity. Some people also relied on broader social networks of neighbours and friends

to get access to the local 'black market' of migration. Developed in the face of restrictive policies in Europe and Morocco, this 'black market' involves middlemen and *passeurs* locally called *ḥarrāga. Harrāga* charge a fee for providing the papers (job contracts, tourist visas, fake papers) and for helping the aspiring migrant to find a passage on a boat or on a truck departing for Spain (Coslovi 2007). People who cannot afford to pay a *passeur* may try to hide themselves in a truck in order to cross the Straits of Gibraltar from Tangier.

When Kamel left in 2002, illegal border-crossing was booming. As he explained, illegal migration was widespread in his village and many of his relatives and friends had already crossed to Europe. He said:

> I knew it was illegal because it is well known. This thing is well known, now people listen to, now people go to the coffee shop, they hear that there is a *ḥrrāg* (*passeur*) here. All the people who have gone illegally went outside the law (*bidūn qānūn*), went through a secret way (*tāy-mshīū b-tarīqa sirriyya*).

In Kamel's village, the local *ḥrrāg* collected people and ensured their crossing through a network of complicity with the police in the cities of northern Morocco. To finance Kamel's journey, his mother borrowed some money from her birth family, his father sold livestock and his paternal uncles abroad sent some money too. In Spain, Kamel could count on the help of his paternal cousins who housed him and helped him find a job. He said that he would have preferred to emigrate legally with a job contract, but did not have a passport or enough money to buy travel documents. A job contract is not always available, nor is it free of risks and uncertainties, because the *ḥarrāg* may abscond with the money without providing the papers or the job contract may turn out to be a seasonal contract that leaves the migrant without papers when it expires. Compared with 'legal' mobilities, though, clandestine border crossing is cheaper but also extremely hazardous. Before going into Kamel's narrative, I will explore the practices of, and the meanings surrounding, *l-ḥrig*.

4. *Burning the borders*

In the aftermath of the closure of southern European borders, the term *ḥrig* has entered the local vocabulary and imagination of migration to indicate a practice that was widespread long before the 1990s. Deriving from the Arabic verb *ḥarāqa* (that means to 'burn'), the term *ḥrig* (or *ḥarg*) is used by extension to indicate the act of 'burning the borders', in other words, to transgress them. It is also connected to the idea of burning one's past and one's identity, by burning identification documents to avoid identification and repatriation (Juntunen 2002: 15; Arab 2008).

Stefania Pandolfo (2007: 333) argues that, among aspiring emigrants in poor neighbourhoods in Rabat, the term *ḥarg* evokes the image of a 'burned life', a life without name and legitimacy, enclosed in an uninhabitable space. For Pandolfo, dispossession, disruption of social ties, exclusion from citizenship and chronic unemployment lead these marginal youths to gamble with their lives in embarking on a crossing to Europe fraught with mortal danger. The perils of clandestine migration are expressed by the use the verbal form *kāy-risk*, "he risks [his life]" and the expression *mghamar b-l-hayatu,* embarks on a mortal journey, 'gambling with his life'. Engaging in conversations on death and life, suicide and endurance, patience and rebellion, Pandolfo describes the ways in which her young interlocutors evoke doctrinal arguments to discuss clandestine migration. For these young interlocutors, clandestine migration is an antidote to despair, but also a religiously forbidden suicide. *Harg* is a struggle, but also a perilous illusion. Her compelling analysis captures the existential anxieties of young Moroccans and the ways a politico-theological imagination and vocabulary conveyed by revivalist Islam allow them to make sense of their predicaments.

Like Pandolfo's interlocutors, young men in the Tadla often evoked ideas of 'risk' and 'gambling', along with a vocabulary that stresses their gendered responsibilities and family ethics as a motivation for embarking on illegal border crossing. They were aware that clandestine migration is a dangerous and unpredictable journey into the 'unknown', a journey that may lead to one's death. Unlike Pandolfo's interlocutors, though, the young men whom I met did not dwell on elaborate doctrinal discussions on migration as suicide. Rather than as suicide, Kamel and the other 'burners' described the exposure of their life in this journey as a 'risky adventure' (*murāmagha*) that anyone who wants to build his future should be prepared to undertake.

The trope of migration as a risky adventure is a central dimension of male narratives in Morocco and in other emigrant areas of Africa. Facing the risk of clandestine migration with courage, and risking one's life for the sake of one's family and one's future, become a masculine performance that ideally turns marginal youths into successful migrants. As Peraldi and Rahmi note, "Le 'harrague' est un soli-

taire, un avventurier heroique" (2008: 75). Despite the uncertainty surrounding clandestine migration, indeed, the idea of 'adventure' includes the notion that the risk is worth taking. As Giovanni da Col and Caroline Humphrey note (2012c, 3), "The imagination of the adventurers, as in all forms of gambling, must be bent towards lucky hits and turns of extraordinarily good chance". Clandestine migration, indeed, is laden with risks, but also with the possibility of radically changing one's life. As Kamel put it, "Clandestine migration is dangerous, but the motivation is strong (*dafi' tāy-kūn qwi*)". Taking the risk and embarking on an adventurous journey give young men who feel deprived of the opportunity of building their future the hope of re-appropriating and working actively for their future. Conversely, 'staying' in the country is often interiorized as a personal failure and a sense of guilt, and lived as family dishonour. This vision contributes to an overemphasis on the youth's personal responsibility and an underemphasis of the broader socio-political dynamics that affect their lives deeply.

Intimately connected with the idea of 'adventure' is that of 'gambling'. For Kamel, clandestine migration is facilitated by the complicity of Moroccan policemen who upon payment look the other way, but he said, "people can never know if they will be able or not to cross the border; they just gamble (*ghīr tāy-qmro*)". The idea of 'gambling' entails openness to the unpredictability of the situation and to the limited possibility of controlling it: no one can anticipate the outcome of his journey. The 'burner' cannot know if the *passeur* is trustworthy, he can lose his money or be stopped at checkpoints, and he risks death during the trip. The radical unpredictability of clandestine migration is not limited to the border crossing. Once in Spain or in Italy, the crosser can be stopped by the police and sent back to Morocco. On the other hand, the act of gambling brings about the promise of spectacular gains that deeply transform a person's existence. For Kamel, facing the unpredictability of clandestine migration requires self-control, determination and faith. In his narrative, a gendered 'vocabulary of contingency' (D'Angelo 2015) is combined with evocations of the Islamic notion of 'destiny' and submission to God's will, to which I turn next.

5. *"It happens what God has written for you"*

Kamel crossed to Spain in 2002, when he was only 14, with the idea of staying there forever. His journey from Morocco to Spain was very long and hazardous. "I crossed by coach, underneath [the coach], in a box next to the wheel (*mshīt ḥarg b l-kār, f l-tḥt, f-sndūqa, hada rwida*)". Kamel hid himself under a coach travelling from Tangier to Spain. From 3 p.m. until 1 a.m. of the next day, he remained tied with a belt above the wheel of the coach. He said: "[The journey] was long. My legs, when I got out…I could not even stand up". During his long and extremely dangerous journey to Europe, Kamel had to face fear and master his emotions, control his body and resist physical pain. Considering his young age, I asked him if he was scared and he replied firmly: "Why should I be scared? Men do not get scared (*rjjala mā tāy-khāfūsh*)." Kamel's words identified the lack of fear as a defining trait of masculinity. His insistence on men's lack of fear illuminates the gendered quality of a masculine performance enacted at the margins of the *blēd*, in the night world, on the sea. He went on,

> Fear, as far as I am concerned, I do not know it (*l-khāwf, b-nisba liya, ānā mā-n'arfosh*). The one who wants to do something should not be afraid (*bnadm, īlā bghā ydīr shī hāja, khass l-khāwf mā-y'arfosh*). If he is afraid he does nothing, he stays here, you know?

In Kamel's words, the lack of fear not only proves that one is not weak (*da'if*), but also reveals a range of gendered virtues – including courage, determination and moral strength – that define his ideal of what a 'real man' is. I pushed the discussion further by emphasizing that he was just a boy when he left. Kamel said:

> Yes, I was very young. Men are not afraid (*rjjala mā-tāy-khāfosh*)! Fear, fear […] why should I be scared? There is no fear because there is nothing to fear. One has to try and that's it (*mā kāynsh, 'alash ghādī ykhāf, l-waḥd khasso yjrrb w sāft*). It is said that it happens what God has written for you (*allah mktāba lik khssha woq'*). The one who has faith in God in his heart is not afraid, he faces his life and that's it (*lly tāy-kūn 'ddū l-'imān dyal allah f l-qlb mā-ykhafsh, l-khof llā, l-waḥd y-wajh l-hayat, wā sāft*).

Kamel goes beyond depicting the mastery of emotions and fears as a trait of manliness and adulthood; he connects the lack of fear with his faith in God. In so doing, he evokes the widespread idea that a person's destiny, 'written' by God since the beginning of time, is neither knowable nor changeable. Dale Eickelman (1976: 125-8, 1981: 178-181) describes the notion of *maktūb*, which literally means 'that which is written', as a vital dimension of religious and social life in Morocco. In everyday life, the idea that a person's destiny is 'written' is

evoked in statements regarding the future, whose knowledge belongs only to God. This understanding of divine destiny is rooted in the Islamic theology of *qadā' wa-l-qadar*, which indicates the absolute divine decree (*qadā'*) and the destiny (*qadar*) written for each person (De Cillis 2014).

The image of a 'written destiny' brings about ideas of immutability and fixity. And yet, as I have argued elsewhere (Menin 2015), in my interlocutors' understanding, which draws on the Islamic theology of destiny, the belief that people get in their lives what God has preordained does not deny, but rather presupposes, free will and individual responsibility. The idea of 'human free will' (*ikhtiyar*) is present in the Quranic passages and in classical Islamic theology and philosophical thought (Watt 1948; Belo 2008; De Cillis 2014). In other words, 'destiny' not only provides a powerful interpretative frame for past and future events, but also entails choice and proactive engagement in everyday worlds.

The paradoxical coexistence of divine destiny and human agency powerfully emerges in Kamel's reflections too. Precisely because, as he said, "it happens what Allah has written for you", the crosser has to put his life in God's hands during this potentially deadly journey. In other words, Kamel's evocation of divine destiny emphasizes that trust in God and submission to His will mean being ready to accept one's destiny with faith and to face it courageously. The image of an inscrutable destiny written since the beginning of times is intertwined with the need to work actively to realize his/her destiny. It is only through a person's action in this world that his or her destiny takes concrete shape. Above all, though, Kamel's words stress that the results of one's actions are not totally in one's own hands. As we will see, he combines the religious vocabulary of 'destiny' with the profane language of 'luck' in discussing the individual, solitary search that each man should undertake in order to 'build his future'.

6. *"We all migrated to try our luck"*

Discussing with me his motivations for migrating, Kamel said that his uncles and cousins migrated to Spain when he was a child and came back to Morocco with cars and money. With the money they had made they were able to replace the traditional houses made of straw and mud with modern brick buildings, to buy land, and invest in local business. Other people in his rural village migrated to Italy and Spain and most of them could change their lives with the savings accumulated abroad. "We all went to Spain to try our luck (*kullna kān-jrrbo l-ḥḍ dyālna*)" he said.

Evocations of 'luck' are widespread among people in Morocco, and in Africa more broadly, to express the existential and material search for better social and economic possibilities. Exploring the 'vocabulary of contingency' in Sierra Leone, Lorenzo D'Angelo (2014, 2015) offers insights into the ways diamond miners mobilize notions of 'luck', 'gambling' and 'blessing" to make sense of their successes and failure and to guide decision-making in complex landscapes where human and non-human beings are economically and ethically linked. Diamond miners in Sierra Leone believe that a person's 'luck' is decreed by God, but can also be accelerated in various ways, including religious and magical rituals. Paolo Gaibazzi (2012, 2015) describes the 'quest for luck' of young men in emigrant rural Gambia as a particular form of mobile livelihood that sustains a specific work ethics of hustling. He argues that his interlocutors' quest for luck reveals a field of unpredictability and potentialities that the youth actively inhabit and navigate. In rural Gambia, 'luck' is conceived as the equivalent of the Islamic notion of *rizq*.

In the mainstream Islamic theology of destiny, *rizq* indicates a person's personal "bounty, sustenance, nourishment"[6] allotted by God as part of his/her individual destiny. Similarly, people in the Tadla believe that a person's *rizq* is decreed by God and thus is not changeable. Far from leading one to fatalism, this belief leads people to engage with the world because, as my interlocutors claim, a person's actual material fortune and provision depends on his/her 'work' (*khddma*). As one interlocutor of mine said, "Your *rizq* is part of your destiny. But there are several ways (*taruq*) to [realize] it". Trying one's luck may indeed be one way to pursue and realize individual *rizq.* In other words, the mainstream Islamic theologies of destiny comprise the idea that fortune, albeit decreed by God, is also based on action.

Kamel, however, does not employ the idea of *rizq* to give reasons for his action, but rather he evokes the notion of destiny to discuss what is *beyond* his action. Unlike the Islamic notion of *rizq*, the meaning conveyed by the phrase 'to try one's luck', by which Kamel referred to his and his relatives' migratory enterprise, is a mundane idea of 'luck' (*l-ḥḍ, zahr*), rooted in folk imagination. My interlocutors[7] in the Tadla believe that certain people and places can bring good luck, whereas others bring misfortune. In other words, a person's luck is linked imaginatively to the hidden relations of places and people. Luck is thought to be contingent and malleable, and so 'trying one's luck' does not only entail being open to an invisible world. It also requires the ability to discern mystical connec-

tions with specific human and geographical landscapes and to discover where one's luck resides. Agency, intentionality and individual qualities are intimately involved in the search for luck. Revivalist-oriented and very religious people consider such understandings of 'luck', which emphasize the agency of places and people, to be incompatible with the Islamic idea of 'destiny'. In their view, indeed, nothing happens by chance and what appears to be 'luck' is in fact part of a divine design which transcends human understanding. On the contrary, in Kamel's words the 'search for luck', which motivates his decision to embark on the adventure of migration, is not interpreted as antithetical to the idea of divine destiny.

In the emigrant Tadla, 'trying one's luck' has increasingly become a masculine performance that materializes itself primarily in the search for 'money' (*l-flūs*) in the 'outside world'. In turn, the encounter with the 'outside world' has prompted specific social and gendered demands. In certain contexts, young men's ability to make money through migration is socially expected as both a moral imperative and a personal quality. As Francesco Vacchiano (2010: 8) insightfully writes, "…money tends to become the measure of individual ability, family loyalty and personal moral value". Unlike his uncles and cousins, though, Kamel neither became rich nor returned with a car on the dirt road leading to his rural village. His narrative, which focuses on the dangerous journey to Spain, revolves around his heroic performance of endurance in a mortal journey into the 'outside'. The narrative of 'what happened' after he arrived in Spain, though, remains fragmented. While Kamel avoids talking of the social consequences of his failure, his reflection below on '*halal*' and '*haram*' money enables him to discuss concrete possibilities in both Morocco and Spain, as well as to affirm his work ethics.

7. *'Halal' and 'haram' money*

Once he arrived in Spain, Kamel called his cousins who picked him up by car and housed him in a crowded dwelling, where he remained for several months. During the years he spent in Spain as an undocumented migrant, Kamel had to learn quickly how to wriggle out of precarious situations and into forced invisibility. He said that he found a job in the agricultural sector and that his boss gave him many responsibilities, but he never regularized him. He also said that he often travelled from Spain to Italy by train, without mentioning the reasons for his trips.

One day, he was stopped by police and returned to Morocco. Kamel recalled that upon arrival, his father asked him: "where is the money?" Kamel made it clear that he never wanted to make '*ḥaram* money', namely money gained through engagement in illicit activities. Some migrants were able to build a house, buy land and then set a business in Morocco through hard work in Italy or Spain. But people in the Tadla are aware that it is not possible to become rich quickly without engaging in illicit activities like selling drugs. Kamel said:

> I, no, I'm a person who wants to live tranquil, who works, withstands suffering and hardship in his body, works and brings halal money, his mind is in peace (*ānā llā, l-waḥd y'ish hani, ykhddm, ytkrfs, ykhddm, w yjib l-flūs ḥlāl, y'ish hani f-dmagh dyālo*).

Discussing the unexpected consequences of his adventure to Spain, Kamel resorts to the terms *haram* and *halal* in order to trace the limits set by divine destiny when searching for luck in clandestine migration. As I discuss above, my interlocutors believe that there are several paths (*ṭaruq*) to the fulfilment of individual destiny. In trying one's luck and seeking money, a person may try to 'accelerate destiny' (Elliot 2016b; D'Angelo 2014) by committing illicit acts. Selling drugs is indeed a short-cut (*ṭriq*, sing. of *ṭaruq*) to money, but it is a religiously forbidden action (*haram*). On the contrary, *halal* money is made, in Kamel's view, through work, hardship and faith. Kamel uses the religious notions of *haram* and *halal* not only to affirm his work ethics, but also to discuss constraints and possibilities both in Spain and in Morocco.

After his return to Morocco, Kamel had to start again, back in the marginal position from which his dream of a better life had taken shape. When I met him in 2009, he was working as a seasonal farm labourer and as a bricklayer at other times of the year. Even though his family owns livestock and a plot of irrigated land, this was not enough to support his younger siblings who were still studying, and to build his future. Kamel explained that agricultural work in Morocco does not provide a full salary and so he works as a bricklayer on construction sites. In construction, however, he said, one works all day, from 8 a.m. until 6 p.m. for only 60 dirham (roughly 6 euro). He concluded by saying:

> If one wants to build his future, he can't. Here you work the whole day and you don't know what to do, you need money to dress, to live, to support your family, to build a house, to save money for your future... Who can get out of it? Who makes a good life? People whose family is rich: only those who have money can live well.

Like other young men in the Tadla, Kamel believes that widespread corruption and social injustice exacerbate the social divide in Morocco. This situation prevents young people from humble origins, like him, from building a better future for themselves and their families. The difficulties in the way of building a future in Morocco led Kamel to think of crossing to Spain again because he believed that only migration could provide people like him with the opportunity to change their lives. Even though he experienced marginality and the threat of being deported abroad, he regarded Spain as a land of better social and economic possibilities for those who are not afraid of risks and hardship.

8. *Conclusion*

Exploring the social worlds and vocabularies that surround clandestine migration, I have tried to shed light on the material and existential anxieties about the future that inhabit the everyday lives of lower-classes young men in a rural region of Central Morocco intimately connected with the 'outside'. Under the combined effects of neo-liberal economic restructuring, rising unemployment and the growing 'illegalization' of migration, young men like Kamel think of clandestine migration as the sole means to 'build their future'. Following Kamel's narrative, I have drawn attention, in particular, to the gendered dimensions of a 'vocabulary of contingency' (D'Angelo 2015) that he creatively mobilizes to make sense of his hazardous border crossing. As I have shown, the future (*l-mustaqbel*) embodies very concrete meanings – land, a house, marriage, a car, clothes, stable livelihoods, and a good life – which take shape in relation to local ideals of masculinity and manhood. 'Illegal' border crossing (*l-ḥarig, l-ḥarg*), as a specific masculine performance laden with risks and possibilities, is widely described as an urgency, a moral duty and an obsession.

Despite its being an everyday occurrence, embarking on a dangerous journey toward the 'outside world' remains fraught with hazards and uncertainties. Clandestine migration, often imagined and practiced as a ritualized passage toward adulthood and as a struggle to build a future, reveals itself in Kamel's lived experience as a dangerous adventure made of winners and losers. His narrative illuminates tensions between on the one hand the imaginative possibilities of the 'outside', which compel one to 'try his luck', and on the other hand the broader socioeconomic and transcendental forces shaping his life. He claims that 'being a man' means to be ready to risk his life in a dangerous adventure instead of sitting still, idly awaiting significant changes in life. As had his kinsmen, he crossed over to Spain to 'try his luck', venturing into a foreign land of material possibilities and moral threats. He risked his life in a journey, putting his life in God's hands. As his words testify, trusting in the destiny written by God does not necessitate waiting for what is unknowable, beyond the horizon, to materialise in the present. Since the predestined future remains unknown and unknowable until a person actively engages with the world, for Kamel, having faith means acting in the world. It is human action that discloses one's destiny. Navigating the creative tensions between 'luck' and 'destiny', in his narrative, Kamel discusses the limits set by destiny on the search for luck. It also reflects on the social and political powers that transcend individual will, moral strength and faith. The ways in which Kamel contextually mobilizes notions of 'luck' and 'destiny' to reckon with uncertainties, powers and possibilities, reveal the fundamental roles of both indigenous epistemologies and 'cosmological imaginations' (Da Col 2012) in the shaping of the experience of clandestine migration in Central Morocco.

Notes

[1] Terms and sentences in Moroccan Arabic are transliterated following the IJMES system. To respect the sounds of Moroccan Arabic words I have transliterated /e/ instead of /a/ for _ˊ/ ا when necessary.

[2] Fieldwork for this article was funded by the doctoral programme in the Anthropology of the Contemporary World, University of Milano Bicocca (2008-11). Previous versions were presented at the International Workshop ABORNE "Fence, networks, people. Exploring the UE/Africa borderland", University of Pavia, 15-17 December 2011, and at the Panel "Ethnographies of mobility in the Arab Middle East and in Italy" (B. Riccio, D. Cantini), SESAMO Conference, University of Venice, 17 January 2015. It was completed thanks to support from the PRIN project 'State, Conflict, Plurality in Africa', and the project 'Shadows of Slavery in West Africa and Beyond' (ERC Grant 313737). I am grateful to Bruno Riccio, Francesco Vacchiano, Alice Elliot and Lorenzo D'Angelo and the two anonymous reviewers for their critical comments on a previous version.

[3] For an insightful analysis of migration, money, and manhood in emigrant Kerala, see also Osella, F. & Osella C. 2000.

[4] In the 1960s, the average age of marriage was 17.5 for women and 24 for men; in 1998 this had risen in urban areas to 27.9 for women and to 32.5 for men respectively. See Royaume du Maroc, Haut-Commissariat au Plan, L'adolescence en question: analyse des résultats de l'enquête sur les adolescents en milieu urbain (1999: 59-62), http://www.hcp.ma/glossary/Enquete-sur-les-adolescents-en-milieu-urbain deCasablanca_gw123.html 1999. In the urban centers of the Tadla-Azilal region, the average age of marriage in 2004 was 28 (31.7 for men and 25.8 for women), see Recensement Général de la Population et de l'Habitat, 13 http://www.hcp.ma/downloads/Demographie-Caracteristiques-demographiques-et-socio-economiques-RGPH 2004_t13063.html.

[5] On the experience of stillness, see also Ghassan Hage (2009), "Waiting: Introduction", e "Waiting out the crisis: on stuckedness and governmentality", in Hage (ed.), *On Waiting*, Melbourne University Press.

[6] Bosworth C.E., McAuliffe J. D., "Rizḳ", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, edited by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs, Brill Online, 2015. On the notion of *rizq*, C. Turner writes (2006: 552) «Provision for all things necessary to live on earth is from God alone: creature themselves do not 'carry their own sustenance (29.60-63)».

[7] They may also try to catalyze their luck and orient their actions by relying on various specialists and magical-religious practices, whose analysis is beyond the scope of this paper.

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