

Narrating Cultural Displacement and (Dis)Locating *Beur* Identity in Fouad Laroui's *De Quel Amour Blessé*

Nouzha Baba

LUCAS: Leiden University Centre for the Arts in Society,
Leiden, The Netherlands
nbaba09@gmail.com

Abstract

In this article, I analyse the prominent Moroccan-French author, Fouad Laroui's novella *De quel amour blessé* (What Wounded Love, 1998) which narrates a story of an intercultural love affair in the diaspora, shaped in-between France and Morocco. This tragicomedy romance story, maps migrants' cultural displacement and identity (re)construction. I look into how Maghrebian migrants' French-born youths, known as the *Beur* generation, plot transcendent cultural and national *routes* of belonging. Through the protagonist's case, the son of Moroccan migrants, the novella unfolds how postcolonial Maghrebian migration in France has engendered an intercultural and relational identity that belongs to different cultural subjectivities. It suggests a deconstruction of the idea that migrants' identity are inextricably linked to a fixed culture, time and place, and instead, stresses identity as a process of becoming. Laroui's narrative is a productive literary form of self-representation, of contesting homeland roots, (re)deconstructing identity and mapping intercultural attachments of belongings.

Keywords

cultural displacement – *Beur* identity – relationality – diasporic literature – *De quel amour blessé*

Résumé

Dans cet article, j'analyse le roman de l'auteur franco-marocain de renom Fouad Laroui, intitulé *De quel amour blessé* (1998) qui raconte une histoire d'amour interculturelle de la diaspora, constituée entre la France et le Maroc. Cette histoire d'amour tragico-comique, suit les déplacements culturels et la (re)compositions identitaires de migrants maghrébins. Grâce à ce roman, j'examine comment les jeunes nés en France de parent immigrés maghrébins, désignés sous le nom de "génération *Beur*", portent des itinéraires d'appartenance culturelle et nationales qui transcendent les notions de racines et, de patrie. En suivant le personnage principal, fils de migrants marocains, l'histoire dévoile comment la migration maghrébine postcoloniale en France a donné naissance à une identité interculturelle et relationnelle qui appartient à différentes subjectivités culturelles. Le texte propose donc de déconstruire l'idée que l'identité des migrants est inextricablement liée à une culture, un temps et un lieu fixes, et met plutôt l'accent sur l'identité comme une forme de devenir. Par conséquent, nous pouvons voir dans le récit de Laroui une forme littéraire productive d'auto-représentation, de contestation des racines de la patrie, de (re)déconstruction de l'identité et une cartographie des appartenances interculturelles.

Mots-clés

déplacement culturel – identité *Beur* – relationnalité – littérature diasporique
– De quel amour blessé

1 Introduction

The¹ prominent Moroccan-French author, Fouad Laroui is an economist, essayist and novelist. Born in Morocco in 1958, Laroui studied engineering in Paris, followed by a PhD in economics in the United Kingdom, and later moved to Amsterdam where he started his career as a writer. The author has published many novels, collections of short stories, non-fiction books and articles. He won the 2013 Prix Goncourt de la Nouvelle for his fiction work *L'étrange affaire du pantalon de Dassoukine*, translated as *The Curious Case of Dassoukine's Trousers*. In an interview "Alle macht aan de personages: Fouad Laroui over

1 This article is based on only one section of a doctoral thesis chapter in which I analyse Fouad Laroui's novella *De quel amour blessé* (What Wounded Love).

De quel amour blessé,” published in *NRC Boeken*, Laroui described himself as follows: “Born in Morocco, French-speaking, intellectual nomad with a Dutch passport”² (Laroui 1998b). His hybrid cultural formation enabled him to meticulously investigate themes of cultural displacement and identity politics in his novel *De quel amour blessé* (What Wounded Love). The novel constitutes the second part of Laroui’s thematic trilogy. In his article “Le Maroc comme fiction” (Morocco as Fiction), he describes this trilogy as follows: the debut *Les dents du topographe* (The Topographer’s Teeth, 1996) about “identity,” *De quel amour blessé* (What Wounded Love, 1998) about “tolerance,” and *Méfiez-vous des parachutistes* (Beware of Parachutists, 1999) about Western “individuality”.

Recipient of the Mediterranean Prize of Colleges and Radio-Beur FM Prize, *De quel amour blessé* (Laroui 1998a) narrates cultural displacement and the crisis of tolerance towards other cultures and religions, which creates a multi-dimensional conflict in the narration process. Even though cultures are seen to be intermingled and identities as blurred due to migration and multiculturalism, Laroui’s narrative imagination underlines that cultural differences are rigorously contested between ethnic groups, as well as between those groups and mainstream White society. Discourses of xenophobia and hostility exclude different cultural and ethnic populations from the homogenous perception of the French national community. These discourses are often thrived on the dichotomies of Self and Other, migrant and native French, the Orient and the Occident. As Jonathan Rutherford puts it in his article “A Place Called Home: Identity and the Cultural Politics of Difference”, “[o]ur struggles for identity and a sense of personal coherence and intelligibility are centred on this threshold between interior and exterior, between Self and Other” (1990, 24). Laroui’s novel negotiates a politics of polarity, of the Self and the Other, in a way that displays the tendency for cultural and racial purity. It demonstrates that cultural, ethnic and religious markers of identities are often intersected with politics that have ideological ends.

Furthermore, the novel involves oppositional voices that undermine politics of exclusion which instil intolerance in a French multicultural environment. The novel traces a move towards acceptance of cultural and ethnic difference in the diaspora and its inclusion in French nationalism. As such, the novel can be perceived as what Edward Said labels in *Culture and Imperialism* the “authorizing story of the intellectual” as a “direct experience, or reflection of the world” (1994, 176). This implies the engagement of the intellectual as a nomadic character in the world through travel. In his article “Secularism, Elitism, Progress,

2 All translations from Dutch to English are my own.

and Other Transgressions: On Edward Said's Voyage In," Robbins Bruce comments on Said's concept of "the voyage in" as the "movement of Third World writers, intellectuals, and texts into the metropolis and their successful integration there" (1994, 30). According to him, "the voyage in" of these migrant intellectuals stretches the lines of demarcation between the "West" and the "Rest" across a disruptive liminal zone of diaspora. Through his "voyage in" France as a migrant intellectual, Laroui endeavours in his literary text to shed light on the hostile interaction of different cultural and ethnic groups. Laroui's narrator incarnates this movement of "the voyage in:" he is like the author, a migrant intellectual who came from Morocco to pursue higher studies in Paris and who is also a writer. His "voyage in" marks an intellectual intervention in and negotiation of identity politics, contesting its essentialism.

With regards to postcolonial conception of identity, in his influential article "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," Stuart Hall contends that identity is a matter of *becoming* as well as of *being*. He points out that "cultural identities are the points of identifications, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made within the discourses of history. Not an essence but a *positioning*" (1998, 224). According to his theory, the trajectory of identity is sustained by multiple variables: histories, cultures and locations. It is not a fundamental essence of the past but is *positioning* itself through constant transformation within history. Hall elaborates his argument as follows:

Cultural identity is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. [...] But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power.

HALL 1998, 225

Hall's argument enunciates that identity is not something fixed, transcendental and essentialized, but it is in an ongoing process of construction. He suggests a deconstruction of the idea that identity is inextricably linked with a fixed culture, shared history and place. Rather, Hall contends that "[w]e should think, instead, of identity as 'production,' which is never complete, always in process" (1998, 222). In this respect, the space or location of the migrant questions the rigidity of identity and its cultural topography, mapping new geographies and new attachments of belonging in times of migration and globalization. In his article "New Ethnicities," Hall explores the dialectics of multiple belongings and hybrid identities, which he calls "new ethnicities: identities that are

somewhere-in-between" (1987, 442). Hall's theory and his "in-between" positioning of identity squares with Homi Bhabha's concepts of hybridity and "third space" as a site of productive interaction, as well as of indeterminacy (1994). Like Bhabha's theory, Hall suggests that identity is fluid, in flux and always in a process of transformation.

From a different postcolonial perspective, in his book *Poetics of Relation*, Edward Glissant coined different terms to debate the transformation of postcolonial identity in times of globalization. The French Caribbean poet, novelist and theorist, Glissant argues for the "relationality" of identity that transcends fixed roots, culture and space. In contrast to essentialism, relationality captures the world as "rhizomatic" networks of relations and considers identity as being shaped by cross-cultural and transnational relations. Glissant draws on the history of Caribbean subjectivity and appropriates Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of the "rhizome" to define what he calls "the Poetics of Relation." As he claims: "The notion of rhizome maintains, therefore, the idea of rootedness but challenges that of a totalitarian root. Rhizomatic thought is the principle behind what I call the Poetics of Relation, in which each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other" (Glissant 1997, 11). Like hybridity, "poetics of relation" attempts to think the subject without fixity, without single roots in history, memory, culture and place, but always in relationship with the Other. Hence, rather than emphasizing a return to the same past, "la relation" would entail cultural and linguistic translation. Here, new sorts of identity, "relation-identities" or "rhizome-identities", are formed in connection with other cultural subjectivities. Such identities do not depend on the downward-reaching root, but extend outward, through multiple branching networks of roots (141–157). Therefore, the concept of "relation" thrives in a site of ongoing translation, where ordinary boundaries are often blurred and re-mapped.

As a matter of fact, Glissant's concept of "la relation" has been received with due attention in different disciplines and is used as a key approach in reading migrant literature. Nevertheless, the concept has received criticism, too. In her essay "Between Relation and Bare Facts: The migratory Imagination and Relationality," Isabel Hoving poses the following question: "Could 'relationality' be considered the decisive characteristic of a migratory aesthetics?" (2007, 180). While considering that migrant writers join in the imagination of the world as interconnected, Hoving claims that "in this imagination, which captures the migrant experience of the world as a series of transnational networks so well, relationality [...] is a key word" (180–185). Yet, while comparing ecologists' theories to Glissant's theory, Hoving criticizes Glissant's 'poetics of relation' as being characterised by "ambivalence." She contends that "Glissant's extreme articu-

lation of relationality as a singular force does not seem to address the migrants who are grappling with the specificities of their complex environment” (187). This might be true for some writers, but of course not for others who might write on the specific intercultural situation they find themselves in, as migrants with a background of other specific cultures. Hoving acknowledges this idea, too, when she claims that: “a migratory aesthetics should be seen as shaped by the tensions between the desire to know the world-wide movements of migration and creolization, and the desire to renounce all knowledge altogether, and start anew with the bare materiality of an isolated, nameless yellow flower” (189).³ Drawing upon these theoretical insights in my close-reading of Laroui’s novella, I argue that *De quel amour blessé* narrates cultural displacement, as well as explores complex figures of difference and “Beur” identity which are products of the subjective dimensions of postcolonial migration and cultural relationality.

The term Beur is the name popularly applied to the sons and daughters of Maghrebian immigrants in France since the 1980s when this generation came of age politically and culturally. Alec Hargreaves explains in his article “Beur Fiction: Voices from the Immigrant Community in France” that Beur is a term of *verlan* (of slang) derived from the word *Arabe* (1989, 661). Similarly, in her article ““Ni Français, ni Arabe”: Literature, Exile and Identity in Beur Fiction in France”, Monika Wadman claims that initially “the term referred to youth of Maghrebian origin living in suburbs but soon became, as Azouz Begag puts it, the most popular “unregistered trademark” used to describe a generation that came into being at a junction of two national as well as cultural identities (French and Arab) but was not containable by either of them” (1997, 85). The term Beur is then a compromise between inclusion (French) and exclusion (Arab). The popularization of the term seems to indicate the will to integrate the young sons of immigrants, but actually it presupposes a segre-

3 Hoving’s critique of Glissant is based on Peter Hallward’s arguments in *Absolutely Postcolonial* that the ethical dimension of Glissant’s work as a postcolonial project which aims at a deconstruction of a liberation from (neo)colonialist discourses is much weaker. In the book’s second chapter “Edward Glissant: From Nation to Relation,” Hallward contends that Glissant abandons the nation in favour of a kind of self-asserting, self-continuing singular immediacy on the Deleuzian or Spinozist model – what Glissant calls ‘La Relation’ (2002, 67). According to Hallward, “[r]elation is the name for self-differentiating reality as such, it is not a ‘relationship’ between things” (122). Thus, according to Hoving and Hallward, Glissant fails in his attempt to oppose universalism and to theorize a different postcolonial deconstructionist discourse. Even though this critique has its solid argumentations, Glissant marked a deep engagement with poststructuralist thought and postcolonial theory from his Caribbean position.

gating destination, a way to affirm their non-French identity. This bi-cultural condition and the uncertain sense of identity characterize Beur generation (non-)belonging. Within the same line of thinking, in “Living in Between: Cultural Conflict and Déchirée Identity in Beur Writers,” Angela Landolfi writes: “As children of migrants, the Beurs are heirs to a dual cultural heritage: at home, their parents transmit them the language and religion of North Africa, but outside the home, they are immersed, through school and mass media, in French culture and education” (2020, 2). North Africa stands here for past, family, roots and Islam, whereas Europe represents the West, the present and the future.

I raise, then, the following questions: How does a Beur subject reconcile these opposite worlds and unify their conflicting identities? How does a Beur subject bridge the gap between France and Maghreb and construct a third place independent of both of them? The aim of this paper is to answer these questions through analyzing Laroui’s novella as a narrative on the Beur generation. Laroui’s narrative testifies to the modern epoch of postcolonial migration as a time of growing cultural interconnections and an increasing awareness of the importance of identity as fluid, multiple and rhizomatic. As such, the choice of *De quel amour blessé* to be a subject of analysis in this article is determined by its remarkable approach of cultural and identity relationality to contest essentialist identity politics in times of migration and globalization. As migratory narrative, Laroui’s novel conforms to this imagination of cultural relationality, regardless of this concept’s received criticism from postcolonial critics. The novel supports what Glissant argues as “La Relation” of difference which “sets us free from the absolute’s intolerances” (1997, 27) As such, the focus of this analysis concerns how the novel inscribes relationality of culture and identity in diaspora, particularly Beur identity. I will show, thus, how Laroui’s novel represents Beur identity as being discursively constructed, fragmented, rhizomatic and ultimately relational.

2 Crossing Borders: Narrating Cultural Displacement

De quel amour blessé belongs to an innovative genre of tragicomedy romance story: a narrated comic, romantic but also tragic love story of Jamal, a young Beur of Moroccan origin, and Judith, a Jewish girl of Algerian origin. Since the main plot in the novella is about love affair, the text belongs to the romance genre. But the narrator unfolds Jamal’s and Judith’s engagement, while facing hostility, aversion and hatred from their families, tragically separated at the end. The sad ending of the love story makes the novella transgress the con-

ventions of a romantic comedy genre. In his ironic and humorous tone, the narrator invites the reader either to laugh or to cry about Jamal's and Judith's uneasy love experience owing to their parents' misunderstanding and cultural conflict. The opening of the novel in media res describes the setting of the story under the heading "this story happened in Paris," and precisely in *La Rue de Charron*, one of the most popular and multicultural neighbourhoods in France. Laroui's nomadic narrator tells the story of the protagonist, the son of Moroccan migrants who belongs to Beur generation, and his stereotyped ethnic-image as an Arab and Muslim migrant. In discussing Jamal as a Beur subject who grows up straddling two cultures, I explore his intercultural formation which brings to the fore the relational aspects of migrant children's identity. The novel traces the protagonist attempting to plot cultural and national routes, instead of roots, but facing extreme hostility from his migrant family and racism from the French society.

With regards to the comical and humorous dimension of the novel, the irony and humour employed as narrative strategies that fit its socio-cultural themes. Having subversive effects, humour seems to mock a coherent, fixed identity in a postcolonial age of migration. The protagonist's search for certainties and roots is devalued and mocked now and then, here and there, etc. The narrator's pathetic delusion invites laughter rather than pity through the distancing effect of searching for a rooted identity in the disillusionment. Even though irony and humour are not similar techniques, but the narrator's humorous tone is muddled with irony and its effects. As pointed out by Linda Hutcheon in her book *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony*, humour depends on immediacy and brevity for its effect, whereas irony is more reflective: "irony is an interpretative and intentional move, – it is the making or inferring of meaning in addition to what is stated, together with an attitude" (1994, 11). Humour's aim is to enlighten, awakening understanding, addressing warning and even compassion (11). In Laroui's text, humour is a liberating force conducive to psychological feelings of well-being, the release of tension by the ironic laughter. In Laroui's novella incongruity is the key element in humour, and a confrontational element underlines every humorous situation.

Cultural displacement is an essential theme in Laroui's novella and is narrated as both a migration and a sense of being socially and culturally "out of place". If first-generation migrants' act of crossing borders brought them into an alien culture and society, second-generation Beurs feel a kind of cultural ambivalence and identity conflict owing to their in-between belonging. As Hargreaves puts it in his article "Language and Identity in Beur Culture:" "As the sons and daughters of North African immigrants, the Beurs stand astride two cultures: that which their Muslim parents seek to sustain within the family

home and that of the secular world which surrounds them in the streets and schoolrooms in France" (2016, 47). Language along with the contrast between the Islamic traditions of their parents and the secular values predominant in France are key marks of the Beurs' multicultural formation. The conflict between cultures, the tensions of national exclusion, the need to reconcile one's sense of belonging signal the consequent hybrid notion of the self. In Laroui's novella, Beurs' parents are usually not inclined to see their children renounce Islam as an important aspect of their culture. Weaving between the religious norms of family home, and the secular values of France, the novella pictures young Beurs' cultural ambivalence and identity crisis.

Jamal's conflict with his father about his love affair with Judith attracts the reader's attention to consider the question of his identity in relation to his father's cultural displacement. As a French-born person, the young Beur aspires for developing personal attachment with the place where he was born and raised, regardless of difference in culture, religion and ethnicity; whereas his father is represented as a vehement advocate of homeland culture and traditions. This juxtaposition between the son and the father reflects on the theme of misunderstanding between first-generation migrants and their young Beurs owing to migration, displacement and cultural expatriation. When Abal-Khail endeavours to maintain cultural links with the homeland, Jamal is found struggling for self-assertion and self-identification in France as a country of birth and growing up. In a dramatic scene, when Abal-Khail learned that Judith is pregnant he expelled his son crying out: "I don't want any more to see Jamal, he is no longer my son!"⁴ (*J'veux plus voir Jamal, c'est plus mon fils!*) [Laroui 1998, 122]. Abal-Khail strongly opposes Jamal's relationship with Judith because she is Jewish whereas his son belongs to a conservative Muslim family. The father shows hostility to the Jewish community, their culture and their identity. Likewise, Judith's father shows similar opposition and even hatred to Jamal's Muslim family. Because of this mutual aversion, Jamal and Judith end their relationship with a sudden separation. Consequently, both the father and his son are defeated in the played battle to end with wounded feelings toward each other.

The narrator, who is Jamal's cousin, feels sympathy with Abal-Khail who is defeated in this story of an intercultural love affair. The narrator considers the father as the most victimized character in the text, wounded by the rebellion of his son in an alien country and a secular culture. As he states: "He has worked hard all his life. Why? For his children. Gratitude? ... Now this son has killed

4 All quotes from French to English are my translation unless stated otherwise.

him upright in downfall, one day, to ignore him, as simple as that. He sometimes changes the street so that his friends would not see him with this migrant who is his father." ("Il a travaillé dur tout sa vie. Pourquoi? Pour ses enfants. Gratitude?... Or ce fils l'a tué debout en déchéance, un jour, de l'ignorer, tout simplement. Il change parfois de trottoir pour que ses amis ne le voient pas avec ce migri qui est son père.") [Laroui, *De quel amour blessé*, 96].

This shows that young Beurs' existence is marked by a split between two different parts of the self: home representing the traditional family and society associated with secular values. In each of these locations, young Beurs are engaged in a struggle, finding themselves at a crossroads between two ways of life, in relation to which they must define themselves and reconcile the conflicting sides of their cultural belonging. Even though the title's poetic language "What wounded love" conforms to the tragic end of Jamal's and Judith's separation due to their fathers' hostility and aversion, the wounded love is attributed in the text, particularly, to the relation between the migrant father and his estranged Beur son.

In the beginning of the novel, the narrator foregrounds that Jamal's love affair is a wound to Abal-Khail, as he states: "Eventually, I caught a glimpse, but only a glimpse, the wound of a father cheated by life, the rebellion of his son and the misunderstanding named Judith which was, paradoxically, their only common ground, because the battlefield is won over, played, lost ..." (En fin de compte j'aurai entrevu, mais seulement entrevu, la blessure d'un père floué par la vie, la rébellion de son fils et le malentendu prénommé Judith qui fut, paradoxalement, leur seul terrain d'entente, parce que terrain de bataille, conquis, disputé, perdu...) [Laroui, *De quel amour blessé*, 9–10]. Similarly, in his interview with the editor, Laroui himself claims that "the wounded love to which the title refers is especially the one linking the father to his son: a love that cannot be even expressed, since the father and the son do not speak the same language" (l'amour blessé auquel le titre fait référence est surtout celui qui lie le père à son fils: un amour qui ne peut même pas s'exprimer, puisque père et fils ne parlent pas la même langue) [Laroui, *De quel amour blessé*, 186]. As a migrant worker, the father spent thirty years in Paris but remains unable to master the French language in order to communicate with his children. In the following quote, the narrator charts Abal-Khail's unexpressed love of his son:

Abal-Khail loved his son, and he didn't know to say it. He was worried about him in this country which he understood so little. I tried to track down the son's feeling of guilt. Waste of time, it's the father who feels guilty. It is because of him that Jamal grew up in this country of unbelievers. He wanted to protect him against dangers, temptations and pitfalls.

Abal-Khail aimait son fils, et il ne savait pas le dire. Il avait peur pour lui, dans ce pays qu'il comprenait si peu. J'ai cherché à traquer chez le fils le sentiment de culpabilité. Peine perdue, c'est le père qui se sent coupable. C'est à cause de lui que Jamal grandit dans ce pays de mécréants. Il aurait voulu le protéger contre les dangers, les tentations, les chausse-trapes.

LAROUÏ, *De quel amour blessé*, 94

The narrator, who tries to reveal Jamal's feeling of guilt, finds that it is Abal-Khail who feels guilty towards his Beur son in a country which he understands so little. He expresses that the father attempts to protect his son from dangers, temptations and pitfalls which are related to matters of insecurity and uncertainty. This worry about his son represents Abal-Khail as a labour migrant who had to bear what Nikos Papastergiadis (2000) calls "the turbulence of migration", ending with feeling of anxiety and estrangement. He is represented as living on the margins of French modernity, unable to integrate in the liberal society he served for thirty years. This captured image represents first labour migrants in a dramatic and sympathetic tone, as being so devoted to their duties, but never felt able to communicate in this society, not even with their children. As a consequence of the turbulence of migration, the dual forces of movement and bridging, displacement and connection are not operating together, and there is a consciousness of the oscillation between the different positions and perspectives.

In her letter to the editor, the mother of Judith's friend reveals that "[the narrator] does not want to talk, basically, but of one thing, The Father." [Le narrateur] ne vouloir parler, au fond, que d'une chose: Le Père. [Laroui, *De quel amour blessé*, 141]. Such emphasis on the figure of the father also shapes the last letters of the novel; in the narrator's words: "[six] letters that seem to contain suddenly all the misfortune of the world: FATHER." (Quatre lettres qui me semblent soudain contenir tout le malheur du monde: PÈRE.) [Laroui, *De quel amour blessé*, 146]. This representation reinforces the narrator's sympathy with Abal-Khail as a victimised migrant father, who crossed the Mediterranean in aspiration to provide better living conditions for his family but becomes frustrated and disappointed due to his son's rebellion. In "Alle macht aan de personages: Fouad Laroui over 'De quel amour blessé,'" Laroui describes the character of the father as follows:

People like Abal-Khail I have often seen [...] Lost all contact with [their children], because they have no common language. Their whole world view, all values are miles apart. These elderly are all lost. That makes their

tragic situation. Just imagine that your son is in puberty, he only speaks Chinese and morally also come from another planet!

LAROUÏ 1998b

With regard to his hostility towards Jamal's engagement with Judith, it becomes clear that Abal-Khail's worry and anxiety derive from his son's transgression of his parents' religion, culture and traditions. The juxtaposition between the father's religious morals and his traditional values and his son's different lifestyle and inclination for liberal culture characterizes the relationship between the first- and second-generation. The father endeavours to maintain cultural ties and connections with the homeland identity and to pass on his cultural heritage to his son; while Jamal seeks constructing his identity within the space where he was born, raised and lives. This analogy demonstrates the changing contours of Beur youths' cultural belonging due to displacement and migrancy.

Interestingly, this intergenerational conflict of a migrant father and his son in Laroui's text is similar to that in Ismail Ferroukhi's 2004 film *Le Grand Voyage* (Great Travel). In this film, a Moroccan migrant father in France takes a journey for pilgrimage to Mecca accompanied by his son, Reda, born and raised in Paris, too. This journey exposes cultural discrepancy between the father and his Beur son who are not "on the same wavelength" (*sur la même longueur d'ondes*), as Reda said to his father. During their journey, Reda speaks in French and his father speaks in Arabic, which stresses the cultural gap between migrant fathers and their young Beurs. The journey brings to the fore that Reda lacks knowledge about his father's religiosity as he continuously expresses signs of misunderstanding and bewilderment which upset his father. The film's meeting point with Laroui's text is that the presence of the father figure symbolizes his son's uprootedness and detachment from the homeland culture and past memory. The fathers maintain affinity with their homeland by retaining ties with their cultural heritage. Their cultural identity is represented a source of conflict with their second-generation youths' in-between culture and fragmented, relational identity.

Further, Jamal's intergenerational conflict represents him as an estranged son to his parents. While considering whether what is between Jamal and Judith is a true love, the narrator claims: "Besides, he is the son as we imagine another (for his father), or my son (for Mina – but what does she know about his desires?)" (*Par ailleurs c'est le fils tel qu'on l'imagine autre (pour son père), ou mon fils (pour Mina – mais que sait-elle de ses désirs?)*). [Laroui, *De quel amour blessé* 103–104]. This conflicting relationship – including his mother Mina – emanates from the gap in the young Beurs' cultural formation. The narrative stages scenes in which the protagonist and his parents show differences

in their cultural mindset. Their difference seems unbridgeable, and it is well illustrated by Jamal's liberal thinking and the father's patriarchal thinking. This juxtaposition between Jamal and his parents illustrates cultural displacement, fragments of difference and the transformation of identity construction in diaspora. Thus, the implication is that postcolonial migration deconstructs the idea of totalitarian roots, and instead, reinforces the logic of relationality of Beur culture and identity – as I discuss further in the following section.

3 Feeling Out of Place: A Disappointing Journey to the Homeland

Laroui's narrative represents Jamal's Beur identity as a product of postcolonial migration characterized by hybrid hyphenations, fragmentation and incompleteness, in Bhabha's theoretical terms. It is relational that has ties and connection with different places and cultures, as far as Glissant's theory is concerned. In fact, through Jamal's case, the novella articulates how Maghrebian migration has given birth to a relational Beur identity that belongs to different cultural narratives. The protagonist Jamal is defined as neither pure Arab nor pure French; he is "almost the same, but not quite:" as Arab "but not quite," just as French, "but not quite," in Bhabha's terms (1994, 86). This hyphenated and relational belonging deconstructs the idea of totalitarian roots for Beur subjects, charting instead routes of belonging. The structure of Beur identity as an offspring of postcolonial migration thwarts the possibility of fixedness and totalitarian rootedness. In other words, the text explores the cultural topography of the belonging of a Beur generation as being shuttling between past and present, homeland culture and host culture, the West and the East, etc.

In a state of psychological bewilderment, Jamal becomes exhausted of his problems with his father who refuses his love affair with Judith. Trying to find a resolution for his father's hostility towards his engagement, Jamal goes on a journey to Ahssen, his parents' place of origin, to see whether he can settle there with Judith. The narrator comments on Jamal's purpose in this way: "Jamal came to seek advice. Should he stay in France, or should he "return"? He lived with the image of his eldest brother who stood up to the French Republic, who fought the law." (Jamal est venu chercher conseil. Faut-il rester en France, faut-il "rentrer"? Il a vécu avec l'image de ce frère aîné qui a tenu tête à la République Française, qui a combattu la Loi.) [Laroui, *De quel amour blessé*, 25]. In a literal sense, the concept of "return" presupposes going back to a place one has left in the past; but Jamal's "return" to Ahssen is his first visit to his parents' village of birth. Born in Paris, Jamal's brother also escaped from prison to Ahssen because

he was guilty of delinquency. Jamal's visit discovers that his brother's "return" is an uneasy experience as he could not get adapted to the new environment, to its local traditions and cultural contours.

Indeed, the journey makes Jamal realize the difficulty of a "return" to an environment where he had no memories and no experiences. He becomes conscious that he can never settle in Ahssen with Judith because "home" means a sense of place where one feels belonging, where one feels at ease and has comfort. Jamal's following reaction demonstrates how he feels out of place during his visit: "You're right. Ahssen, policemen, bird cages without birds, all that, it's the honest truth. It is in Paris where I should manage it. Here I am, here I stay. And if it's the war between the old [father] and me, well, to civic arms!" (Tu as raison. Ahssen, les gendarmes, les cages d'oiseau sans oiseau, tout ça, c'est du bidon. C'est à Paris que je dois me démerder. J'y suis, j'y reste. Et si c'est la guerre entre le vieux et moi, eh bien, aux armes citoyens!) [Laroui, *De quel amour blessé*, 33–34]. Jamal expresses the strangeness of Ahssen by considering the toughness of the policemen, as well as the emptiness of the "bird cages" as a metaphor of the hollowness of this environment. His journey, which is deemed to provide a resolution for the conflict with his father, ended with feelings of shock, disappointment and frustration. Rethinking how to grapple with his situation, Jamal's determination is to confront his father, as he insists to stay in Paris where he could manage his life. This decision expresses the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of "return" for young Beurs to their parents' homeland.

In a conversation with the narrator, Jamal reinforces his reaction in a nutshell: "You see, until then I told myself: if things go badly [with his father about his affair with Judith], Morocco will always remain to me. But there, I realized it was an illusion." (Tu vois, jusque-là je me disais: si ça va mal, il me restera toujours le Maroc. Mais là-bas, j'ai compris que c'était une illusion.) [Laroui, *De quel amour blessé*, 80]. As such, Jamal becomes aware that his identity is quite complex, one that defies any purity or unity and that transcends the traditional conception of "home." In *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*, Avtar Brah is right when he writes that "home" is "a mythic place of no-return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of "origin" (1997, 192). Thus, "home" is indeed a mythic place for Jamal, a strange place of non-belonging. At the end of his journey, Jamal comes to terms with the fact that even if "return" is possible in his imagination and in physical terms, it is impossible to settle with Judith at his parents' homeland. In this sense, Laroui narrates the bewilderment that Beur generation suffers from when one defines their identity in essentialist terms. His narrative is an attempt at deconstructing the traditional perception of migrants' identity as bounded with a certain

culture, place and community. In diaspora, identity develops ties, connections and relations with different cultures and places.

As a matter of fact, Laroui's perception of Beur identity conforms to post-colonial scholars, including Hall, Bhabha and Glissant's theorization; or rather, both Laroui as a novelist and these theoreticians come to the same conclusion: the complexity of migrants' identity. Beur identity transcends the cultural and national borders of the nation-state, belonging to multiple cultures and places, as well as belonging to neither. This hyphenated, hybrid belonging deconstructs the idea of totalitarian roots for young Beurs, and, instead, ascribes relationality to their rootedness and their identity. Laroui's narrative about Beur generation is, then, similar to the way Roger Bromley describes such narratives in his book *Narratives for a New Belonging: Diasporic Cultural Fictions*:

Constructed around figures who look in from the outside while looking out from the inside, to the extent that both inside and outside lose the defining contours. They are figures with hyphenated identities, living hybrid realities which pose problems for classification and control, as well as raising questions about notions of essential difference. The in-between zones are shifting grounds, threshold spaces, and displacement and migration have led to a struggle for spaces where identity is endlessly constructed and deconstructed, across difference and against set inside/outside oppositions.

BROMLEY 2000, 5

Bromley's argument clarifies how diasporic identity is constructed in a dynamic, postcolonial hybrid zone as border identity located between cultures and nations, caught between inside and outside. The Beur character of Jamal is similar to Bromley's description of the diasporic figure who *looks in* from the outside while *looking out* from the inside. In Paris, Jamal imagines that Morocco is his second home, but his journey makes him realize that he can never "return" to his parents' homeland. His decision to stay in Paris is itself a significant gesture in the sense that it signals the change and transformation of one's identity. This signifies that postcolonial migration has led to the emergence of new attachments and relational belongings in the case of Beur generation. Throughout the narrative, the narrator defends Jamal's Frenchness in a way that broadens the national contours of Frenchness. He opposes the French nationalist character of Guard, who is representing extreme-right nationalism, excluding migrants from the French imagined community. Against such racist rhetoric of exclusion, the narrator opens up a space for different ethnic and cultural groups to be embraced by the French national identity.

In this respect, Beurs can be considered “deterritorialized” subjects as their culture cannot be conceived as reflecting a coherent and distinct identity in a precisely defined territory. They try to develop a dynamic relationship between past and present, familiar and unfamiliar, here and there, and offer more fluid and open interpretations of the notion of identity and belonging. As Hargreaves points out, “the fresh departures with which so many Beur protagonists bow out are a measure of their inability to find a settled sense of belonging” (1997, 165). This impossibility of a settled sense of belonging is what Papastergiadis labels as “cultural deterritorialization” owing to the turbulence of migration and displacement (2000, 100). During his journey, Laroui’s Beur protagonist remarks a feeling of belonging nowhere, of being neither Moroccan nor a “true” French, but a culturally “deterritorialized subject.” The incapacity to belong leads to a desire to dig for his roots and cultural purity, as I discuss further in the following section.

4 (Dis)Locating Cultural Topography: Toward Relationality of Beur Identity

It is noticeable that Laroui’s narrator constitutes a parallel with the author’s biography. Like Laroui, the narrator was born in Morocco and speaks Arabic, came to pursue his studies in Economics in Paris and is also a writer. He is qualified in the novel as “intello,” knowledgeable about literary figures such as Edgar Allan Poe, Leconte de Lisle and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. The narrative presents the narrator as an antithesis to Jamal who has not reached an advanced level in his education and who speaks in slang in the way people in the *banlieue* (Parisian suburbs) speak. The narrator’s intervention throughout the novel is replete with a subversive effect of his strategic humour. He assumes the position of a nomadic critic whose humorous tone, replete with an ironic distance, negotiates the parameters of postcolonial Beur identity. In contrast, the narrative depicts Jamal as a caricature of a Beur subject, “a young French of Maghrebian origin, as we say in the press” (Jamal, jeune Français d’origine maghrébine, comme on dit dans la presse) [Laroui, *De quel amour blessé*, 6]. Throughout the text, Jamal engages in dialogues with the narrator, as a nomadic intellectual whose subversive satiric comments dislocate Jamal’s identity from both dichotomies of Arabness and Frenchness.

Jamal’s journey to his parents’ homeland brings to the fore the hidden traps of bewilderment and psychological confusion about his identity and his belonging. Even though perceived as the “Arab” by Judith’s family, the narrator problematizes Jamal’s sense of Arabness in that Beur generation lacks

knowledge about their parents' language and their homeland's cultural traditions, identity and history. In his humorous tone, the narrator compares Jamal's Arabness to his Dutchness, which underlines relational aspects of Beur identity. Jamal's identity is, thus, positioned in oscillation between being an Arab and a Muslim, as a son of migrant parents, and being French, born and raised in Paris. The following dialogue ascribes relationality to Jamal's identity:

It's not we who invented the couscous? (Jamal)

Who are we? Who are you, you, first of all? (narrator)

Well, I'm an Arab, right? (Jam)

Bullshit. Do you know the history of Arabs? Do you know Imrul Qays?

Antar? Youssef ben Tachfine? Do you know the meaning of words

Qawm, Watan, Oumma? You're Arab as much as I'm Dutch. (narrator)

[...] now, you don't speak Arabic, so you're not an Arab. This is my point of view, I won't move from here.

You have the gift of complicating simple things. Now I don't know even who I am. I'm even though Muslim, right? (Jamal)

Don't make me laugh; you won't survive a quarter of an hour in Tehran.

There is only one thing that connects you to Islam or to Arabs, it's

your name. But still, it's windy. Nothing prevents you to change your

name. There is a French law made deliberately for this purpose. (narrator)

C'est pas nous qu'on a inventé le couscous?

Nous qui? T'es quoi, toi, d'abord?

Ben, chuis un rebeu, non?

Foutaises. Connais-tu l'histoire des Arabes? Connais-tu Imrul Qays?

Antar? Youssef ben Tachafine? Connais-tu le sens des mots *Qawm,*

Watan, Oumma?

T'es autant rebeu que moi hollandaise.

[...] Or toi, tu ne parles pas arabe, donc tu n'es pas un Arabe. C'est mon point de vue, je ne bouge pas de là.

T'as le don de compliquer les choses simples. Voilà que je ne sais même plus qui je suis. Je suis quand même musulman, non?

Ne me fais pas rire, tu ne survivrais pas un quart d'heure à Téhéran. Il

n'y a qu'une chose qui te relie à l'Ialam ou aux Arabes, c'est ton nom.

Mais même ça, c'est du vent. Rien ne t'empêche de changer de nom, il y a une loi française faite exprès pour ça.

LAROUÏ, *De quel amour blessé*, 80–81

According to this dialogue, Jamal's identity is discursively constructed, fragmented, hybrid and ultimately relational. It is hyphenated as neither one nor the other: not that *pure* Arab, because he lacks knowledge about Arab history and culture, and not that *pure* French, because he has no roots in France. In this sense, Jamal's identity characterizes a slide from, in Aijaz Ahmed's words, "the myth of ontological unbelonging" to the "myth of *excess* of belongings" (1992, 127). Jamal belongs everywhere, but at the same time nowhere: France considers him a migrant, a false-national according to Gluard's politics of extreme-right nationalism; his parents' homeland is an illusion to him, a place of no "return." Thus, Jamal's identity resists any binary opposition and transcends the polling forces of any pure culture and single homeland. Rather, it is located between cultures and nations which defy the assumption of a fixed, pure identity in the case of young Beurs. Within Glissant's theoretical understanding, this identity has already developed ties and association with different cultural subjectivities and different locations.

Often in a humorous tone, the narrator attempts to chart the cultural topography of Beur identity and its attachments. Yet, the narrative highlights moments of dialogue that normally get neither translated nor interpreted because they fall into the category of silence. Many conversations end with the expression "say no more." This preference for silence is a form of interpretation and criticism from the part of the narrator. As a nomadic intellectual, the narrator reflects on situations which instil in young Beurs a state of uncertainty and psychological bewilderment about their identity. Jamal's multifaceted self evokes uncertain feelings about his roots as the most fundamental factor of one's identity and belonging. His preoccupation with the question of belonging and his search for roots suggest that Beur identity is constructed in a complex sense. As Angela Landolfi puts it, "young Beurs express a feeling of "déchirement", a tearing they try to heal through different solutions and compromises" (2020, 10). As he negotiates further with the narrator, Jamal expresses indeed a sense of loss and identity crisis as a Beur character:

But hell, where are my roots? (Jamal)
 You're not a tree, you have no roots. And even if you have them: where were you born?
 Paris. (narrator)
 Primary school?
 Alain-Fournier, at the end of the street Léon-Frot.
 Middle School?
 Alexander-Dumas.
 Who are your best friends?

David, Martial, Pedro ...
 So, where are they, your roots?
Say no more.

Mais bordel, elles sont où mes racines?
 Tu n'es pas un arbre, tu n'as pas de racines. Et même si t'en avais: t'es né
 où?
 Paris.
 École élémentaire?
 Alain-Fournier, au bout de la rue Léon-Frot.
 Collège?
 Alexandre-Dumas.
 C'est qui, tes meilleurs copains?
 David, Martial, Pedro ...
 Alors, elles sont où, tes racines?
Say no more.

LAROUÏ, *De quel amour blessé*, 83

In response to Jamal's search for roots, the narrator encapsulates that he is not a "tree" because he has no roots. The symbol of the tree signifies stability, past and fixed or rooted identity which Jamal appears to lack. Instead of a tree-rooted identity, Jamal's identity is thus a *rhizomatic* identity. Glissant views that the idea of the rhizome presupposes detachment, uprooting and deterritorialization. As first conceptualized by Deleuze and Guattari: "A rhizome does not begin and does not end up, it is always in the middle, between things, inter-being, intermezzo. The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, only alliance." (Un rhizome ne commence pas et n'aboutit pas, il est toujours au milieu, entre les choses, un inter-être, intermezzo. L'arbre est filiation, mais le rhizome est alliance, uniquement d'alliance) [Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 141]. To read it within this theoretical framework, lacking roots symbolized by "tree" as filiation, Jamal's identity is rather a rhizome as alliance. This concept of rhizome as alliance signifies a sense of subjectivity which might lead to a loss of one's language or culture, but also opens to a future liberated from nostalgia on one's roots and past. For the idea of the rhizome does not thrive on fixity and permanence, but on mapped routes towards the future.

We can infer here that Jamal's rhizomatic identity defines the relational aspect of Beur identity as discursively constructed and ultimately relational. It is incomplete, in a process of becoming, transcending *roots* while inscribing *routes* of belonging. This analysis conforms to Glissant's concept of "Poetics of Relation" in the sense that one's subjectivity is never absolute and totalitar-

ian. Glissant thinks the subject without fixity, without a single root in history, memory and place, but open to change and transformation. As he draws on Deleuze and Guattari's use of the term, Glissant writes as follows: "The notion of rhizome maintains, therefore, the idea of rootedness but challenges that of a totalitarian root. Rhizomatic thought is the principle behind what I call the Poetics of Relation, in which each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other" (1997, 11). Laroui's narrative conception of Beur identity squares with Glissant's poetics of relation in challenging totalitarian roots through rhizomatic belonging. As an offspring of postcolonial migration, Beur identity suggests a sense of relational rootedness against essentialism. This defines Jamal's identity within the parameters of "rooted errantry" (49), another phrase which Glissant uses to describe the poetics of relation. If Glissant lays emphasis on the interconnectedness of our relationships and on the relational aspects of our identities, similarly, Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* insists on hybrid formation of identity and belonging, which thwarts the possibility of fixedness and totalitarian roots in the age of migration and globalization (1993, 15–16).

Likewise, Laroui's narrative positions Beur identity beyond the confines of single national and cultural belongings and territorial boundaries. Since Jamal does not have *roots* which fix him in a single cultural and historical place or homeland, he is plotting for himself *routes* of multiple belongings. He acknowledges the impossibility of return to his parents' homeland and announces his decision to live in France, where he has memories (of the past) and imagination (of the future). Even though he defended Jamal as being as French as Guard, the narrator rethinks Jamal's Frenchness in a sarcastic way, too. He associates Jamal's love affair with Judith with an identity quest and an appeal for nationalist recognition. As he wonders whether what is between Jamal and Judith is true love, the narrator questions in the following passage Jamal's perceived stereotyped ethnic identity:

Love, identity, Jamal assures of being ... being what? Jamal is at least Jamal in Judith's eyes – and vice versa. Others forget his name, or they never knew it. He is the Arab of the eighth floor, or this young man in a black leather jacket who just entered the shop and the seller follows him with an anxious eye. Besides, he is the son as we imagine another (for his father), or my son (for Mina – but what does she know about his desires?). Fragments of a fluctuating identity, all that gathers in these green eyes slightly surprised by the field of freckles, all that crystallizes in Judith's way to pronounce his name: Ja-maaal, as if she modulates a melisma on the evil.

Amour, identité. Jamal assure d'être... d'être quoi? Jamal est au moins Jamal dans le regard de Judith – et vice versa. D'autres oublient son nom, ou ne l'ont jamais su. Il est l'Arabe du huitième étage, ou bien ce jeune homme en blouson de cuir noir qui vient d'entrer dans la boutique et que la vendeuse suit d'un œil inquiet. Par ailleurs c'est le fils tel qu'on l'imagine autre (pour son père), ou mon fils (pour Mina – mais que sait-elle de ses désirs?). Fragments d'une identité labile, tout cela se ramasse dans ces yeux verts légèrement étonnés sur champ de rousseur, tout cela se cristallise dans la façon qu'a Judith de prononcer son nom: Ja-maaal, comme si elle modulait un mélisme sur le -mal.

LAROUÏ, *De quel amour blessé*, 103–104

The narrator's wondering questions suggest that Jamal's love affair is a quest for self-assertion within the contours of French identity and culture. He seeks recognition and acceptance as "French" within the perception of the mainstream Frenchness. Nevertheless, the narrator points out that Jamal is that exotic "Arab" in Judith's eyes, as well as a subject of ethnic stereotype for the mainstream French society. This assumes the delicate relationship between Jamal's Frenchness and the society's stereotypical conception of the Beur generation's ethnic identity. Even though he is not accused of delinquency, Jamal is also suspicious and mistrusted person as a son of migrant parents. The statement identifies him within the parameters of a stereotypical representation of young Beurs, as often delinquents living on the margin of the society. In this sense, the novella's imaginative intervention addresses precaution about the abuse of young Beurs' ethnic images and their confinement within such stereotypical ethnic representation.

Nevertheless, as Mireille Rosello considers in *Declining the Stereotype*, "it is never simple, even in a fictional discourse, to oppose the stereotyper and the stereotyped, nor to distribute good and bad moral points when it comes to the use and abuse of ethnic images" (1998, 85). Jamal's brother, Momo, embodies this abuse of ethnic image in the text as a caricature of a Maghrebien delinquent, guilty of theft of moped and drug trafficking. Thus, Jamal is perceived within the confines of this blurring up of Beur identity with delinquency-related ethnic stereotypes. Still, the epilogue unfolds Jamal is also sent to "remand centre of Paris area" (une maison d'arrêt de la région parisienne) [Laroui, *De quel amour blessé*, 146], which means the narrative fails to decline such stereotypical representation of migrants' young Beurs accused of delinquency in an over-generalized manner. Yet, the narrative might address a message, too, about Beur generation's loss, their marginalization and segregation in a country of birth which led to their failure, and therefore, to the abuse of their ethnic images.

Besides, the narrator states that Jamal's identity quest through his love affair constitutes "fragments of a fluctuating identity." This last phrase reinforces that his rhizomatic identity is fragmented and incomplete, and hence, is in a process of becoming and constant construction. Humorously, the narrator claims that the fragments of Jamal's fluctuating identity are crystallized in the way Judith pronounces his name "as if she modulates a melisma on the evil." This presupposes Judith's suspicion of Jamal's abused ethnic image which she attempts to modulate. This might suggest that she is conscious of his conception as the stereotyped, delinquent "Arab" as a young Beur of Maghrebian origin. But the narrator's claim that "Jamal is at least Jamal in Judith's eyes – and *vice versa*" implies that if Jamal is that stereotyped "Arab" whose image is blurred with delinquency, Judith is that stereotyped "Jew" in Jamal's eyes and his family, too. This mutual suspicion about their stereotyped identities is the ground on which the narrator criticises their love affair.

As a product of Maghrebian migration, Jamal's relational identity conforms to Hall's notion of diasporic identity as "production". In "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," Hall contends that "[w]e should think, instead, of identity as 'production', which is never complete, always in process" (1998, 222). Laroui's text is positioned within this line of thought, suggesting a deconstruction of the idea that identity is inextricably linked with a fixed culture, time and place. Rather, it stresses identity as a process of becoming, not an essentialised being as a tree-rooted identity. The character of Jamal articulates the relationality of Beur identity as rhizomatic identity, defined in juxtaposition to the father's rooted sense of identity. Jamal's Arab-French cultural formation is discursively constructed, fragmented, hybrid and ultimately relational. As an offspring of post-colonial migration, Beur identity does not thrive on totalitarian *roots*, but plots cultural and national *routes*, mapping new geographies and new attachments of belongings. Nevertheless, in light of the xenophobic nationalist discourses of exclusion, migrants and their young Beurs' French identity is rigorously negotiated and strongly contested. As Michel Laronde suggests in "Autour du roman beur: Immigration et identité," the dialectics of double exclusion (neither French nor Arab) and of double belonging (both French and Arab) produces an ambiguous identity (1993, 56). Therefore, even though Beur identity is relational, its recognition within the French imagined community remains politically controversial, defined within the parameters of "true nationals" versus "false nationals".

5 Conclusion

De quel amour blessé narrates the turbulence of migration, cultural displacement and inter-generational conflict. The text pays due attention to the character of the father's and Jamal's wounded relation as an outcome of their dispute over the love affair with Judith. Jamal's engagement with a French, Jewish girl means for him developing personal attachment where he was born, regardless of difference in culture, religion and ethnicity; while it means cultural and racial transgression for his father, as an advocate of homeland culture and traditions. This juxtaposition between Jamal, as a young Beur, and his father, as a first-generation migrant, defines the relational aspects of Beur identity characterized by fragmentation, incompleteness and relationality. If Abal-Khail endeavours to maintain cultural links with his homeland and to pass on its cultural heritage to his son, Jamal is positioned struggling for self-assertion and a sense of belonging in the society of birth. Nevertheless, the narrator claims that Jamal is neither pure Arab nor pure French, but somebody who occupies a space "between" cultures and nations. This position identifies his identity as discursively constructed, fragmented and ultimately relational.

At issue is that this hyphenated belonging deconstructs the idea of totalitarian roots for young Beurs, and instead, ascribes relationality to their rootedness and their identity. The Beur character of Jamal articulates how postcolonial migration has given birth to this relational identity, defined in oscillation between past and present, memory and imagination, Arabness and Frenchness. This discursive situation defines Jamal's identity as rhizomatic, instead of tree-rooted identity, because totalitarian roots are changed through relational routes. Thus, the text enunciates that Beur identity is in a process of becoming as it undergoes transformation and change in culture and history. This perception and construction of Beur identity goes beyond essentializing roots which are changed with cultural and national *routes*. This reading conforms, then, to Glissant's poetics of relation, his idea of culture and identity's associations to different subjectivities, histories and locations. This negotiated politics of Beur identity as a product of migration makes Laroui's novel contribute to contemporary socio-political rhetoric and theoretical controversy about migrants' identity.

In brief, this article demonstrates how Laroui's different genre of a tragicomedy romance story marks a critical postcolonial intervention in narrating and contesting the issue of Beur identity in an intercultural environment. Through its humorous tone and playful style, the novel engages a counter discourse as an effective means of negotiation, and thereby the narrator subversively

challenges essentialized perception of identities and cultures. My analysis of Laroui's novel illustrates, then, its literary intervention in, and negotiation of the contemporary debate of 'identity politics' and interculturality in diaspora; it maps the narrator's relational perception of subjectivity which challenges the shackles of essentialism and totalitarianism. Laroui's narrative strategies, particularly humor and irony, make the text a vibrant narrative that could address strong messages with a rich level of literariness. As such, this article will help in broadening the scope of postcolonial literature through considering the paradigm of relationality of Beur identity which breaks away from essentialist and totalitarian roots. Importantly, both Laroui as a novelist and the discussed postcolonial theoreticians come to the same conclusions: challenging totalitarian thinking and suggesting cultural relationality, but through different ways, and using different genres.

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