



La revue *Aleph. langues, médias et sociétés* est approuvée par ERIHPLUS. Elle est classée à la catégorie B.

Murmurs of Harmony: Intertextual Explorations in *The Forty Rules of Love*, *The Three Hermits*, and the Maghrebi Tale of *Maymouna*

همسات الانسجام : استكشافات بين النصوص في قواعد العشق الأربيعون والقديسون الثلاثة والحكاية المغاربية عن ميمونة

Murmures d'harmonie: Explorations intertextuelles dans *Les Quarante Règles de l'amour*, *Les Trois Ermites* et le conte maghrébin de *Maymounas*

Abdelkader Babkar - University of Tamanghasset

ASJP Algerian Scientific Journal Platform	Soumission	Publication numérique	Publication Asjp
	19-12-2023	24-07-2024	16-04-2025

Éditeur : Edile (Edition et diffusion de l'écrit scientifique)

Dépôt légal : 6109-2014

Edition numérique : <https://aleph.edinum.org>

Date de publication : 24 juillet 2024

ISSN : 2437-1076

(Edition ASJP) : <https://www.asjp.cerist.dz/en/PresentationRevue/226>

Date de publication : 16 avril 2025

Pagination : 189-201

ISSN : 2437-0274

Référence électronique

Abdelkader Babkar, « Murmurs of Harmony: Intertextual Explorations in *The Forty Rules of Love*, *The Three Hermits*, and the Maghrebi Tale of *Maymouna* », Aleph [En ligne], Vol 12 (1) | 2025, mis en ligne le 05 janvier 2025. URL : <https://aleph.edinum.org/13990>

Référence papier

Abdelkader Babkar, « Murmurs of Harmony: Intertextual Explorations in *The Forty Rules of Love*, *The Three Hermits*, and the Maghrebi Tale of *Maymouna* », Aleph, Vol 12 (1) | 2025, 189-201.

Murmurs of Harmony: Intertextual Explorations in *The Forty Rules of Love*, *The Three Hermits*, and the Maghrebi Tale of *Maymouna*

همسات الانسجام : استكشافات بين النصوص في قواعد العشق الأربعون والقديسون الثلاثة
والحكاية المغاربية عن ميمونة

Murmures d'harmonie: Explorations intertextuelles dans *Les Quarante Règles de l'amour*, *Les Trois Ermites* et le conte maghrébin de *Maymouna*

ABDELKADER BABKAR

UNIVERSITY OF TAMANGHASSET

Introduction

In the labyrinth of narratives that extends over continents and spans epochs, stories echo, intersect, vary, and evolve, forming a mosaic of shared themes and timeless astuteness. This article embarks on a subtle exploration of intertextuality, unraveling the common and different threads within Elif Shafak's *Sweet Blasphemy* and *The Forty Rules of Love*, Leo Tolstoy's *The Three Hermits*, and a cherished Maghrebi and Berber tale featuring *Maymouna* from the Maghreb region. At the heart of this literary convergence lies the key motif of the encounter between religious authorities (prophets, bishops, and sheikhs) and simple men (hermits, wise simple men, and women), a motif that transcends cultural boundaries, linguistic nuances, and the passage of time.

Shafak's *Sweet Blasphemy* introduces readers to a shepherd whose unorthodox worship resonates with the hermits in Tolstoy's narrative—individuals who unintentionally defy mainstream religious teachings to forge a direct connection with the divine. This exploration is deepened by the echoes of Rumi's *The Masnavi*, where the story of Moses and the shepherd finds its poetic resonance. Tracing Rumi's inspiration, we discover the roots in the Quran, where Moses encounters a humble man named Khidr, who engages in seemingly blasphemous acts, prompting Moses to question until the profound wisdom behind these actions is unveiled by the divine.

Tolstoy, a literary giant of the Russian tradition, prefaces *The Three Hermits* with an epigraph from the sixth chapter of the Gospel of Saint Matthew, infusing his tale with biblical undertones. This biblical connection adds layers to and highlights the hermits' unconventional worship, inviting readers to contemplate the intersection of literature, spirituality, and wisdom.

Intertwining with these narratives is the tale of *Maymouna*, a Berber hermitess (which also takes different forms across the Maghreb and southern Algeria) residing in the Maghreb region. Speaking only Berber or Tamazight, *Maymouna's* story adds a distinct cultural texture to our exploration. Her hermitage becomes an asylum where rain answers her calls, attracting villagers who seek her divine connection and wisdom.

The arrival of a stranger, an Arab man, introduces a cross-cultural dynamic, setting the stage for a fascinating intertextual dialogue.

This stranger's attempt to 'correct' *Maymouna's* prayers unconsciously becomes a pivotal moment in the tale. His intervention, aiming to impose a 'proper' form of worship, serves as a metaphor for the complexities of cross-cultural encounters. As he loses his way through the forest, with *Maymouna* forgetting her old prayers, the narrative weaves a poignant commentary on the potential for misunderstanding amidst attempts at spiritual correction.

In the pages that follow, we embark on shedding light upon the intertextual nuances of these narratives, exploring how the motif of religious authority versus simplicity creates a human polyphonic symphony across Shafak's, Tolstoy's, and *Maymouna's* tales. Through this comparative lens, we aim to illuminate the interconnectedness of diverse cultures (even within the same country or region sometimes) and their narratives, underscoring the cultural richness that emerges when stories engage in a timeless dialogue across linguistic, cultural, and temporal landscapes.

1. Shafak's *The Forty Rules of Love*

1.1 Examination of How the Shepherd's Worship Deviates from Mainstream Religious Teachings

The shepherd's prayer in *Sweet Blasphemy*, a story within *The Forty Rules of Love*, challenges conventional norms of worship, reflecting a deep, personal connection with the divine. His willingness to express love in his own way contrasts sharply with established religious practices. This deviation becomes a focal point for Shafak, sparking a discourse on love, the essence of faith, and the diversity of spiritual expression.

1.2 Reflection on Theological and Philosophical Implications

Shafak uses Moses as a conduit to explore the theological and philosophical implications of the shepherd's unconventional worship. Moses, initially quick to condemn the shepherd's prayer as blasphemous, represents the inability to perceive other existing truths, even if we think we are wise enough to do so. However, God's subsequent rebuke challenges this perspective, emphasizing the importance of sincerity, pure intentions in worship, and always being ready to learn new things and reach new horizons of knowledge. It is worth quoting the story at length:

... "Oh, my beloved God, I love Thee more than Thou can know.
I will do anything for Thee, just say the word. Even if Thou asked me to slaughter the fattest sheep in my flock in Thy name, I would do so without hesitation. Thou would roast it and put its tail fat in Thy rice to make it more tasty."

Moses inched toward the shepherd, listening attentively.

"Afterward, I would wash Thy feet and clean Thine ears and pick Thy lice for Thee. That is how much I love Thee."

Having heard enough, Moses interrupted the shepherd, yelling,

“Stop, you ignorant man! What do you think you are doing? Do you think God eats rice? Do you think God has feet for you to wash? This is not prayer. It is sheer blasphemy.” [...] But that night Moses heard a voice. It was God’s. “Oh, Moses, what have you done? You scolded that poor shepherd and failed to realize how dear he was to Me. He might not be saying the right things in the right way, but he was sincere. His heart was pure and his intentions good. I was pleased with him. His words might have been blasphemy to your ears, but to Me they were sweet blasphemy” (Shafak, 2009, pp. 59-60).

Ultimately, Moses realized his mistake and visited the shepherd the next day, finding him praying differently but sincerely. Acknowledging his error, Moses apologized and encouraged the shepherd to continue praying in his own way, recognizing its value in God’s eyes. The shepherd, initially surprised, felt relieved. However, he chose not to return to his old prayers or adopt the formal ones taught by Moses. He had discovered a new, personal way of communicating with God, moving beyond his previous naïve devotion.

The above quotation from *Sweet Blasphemy* obviously re-presents the lines from Rumi’s *The Masnavi*:

Once, Moses overheard a shepherd pray:

‘O God! O God!’ he heard the shepherd say.
 ‘Where do you live that I might serve you there?
 I’d mend your battered shoes and comb your hair,
 And wash your clothes, and kill the lice and fleas,
 And serve you milk to sip from when you please.
 I’d kiss your little hand and rub your feet,
 And sweep your bedroom clean and keep it neat.
 I’d sacrifice my herd of goats for you—
 This loud commotion proves my love is true.’
 So Moses asked, ‘What’s that I hear you say?’
 ‘I speak to my Creator there on high,
 The One who also made the earth and sky.’
 Moses replied, ‘You’ve truly lost your way;
 You’ve given up the faith and gone astray’ (Rumi, 2007, p. 101).

Rumi’s narrative mirrors the shepherd motif, with Moses condemning a shepherd’s seemingly misguided prayer. The subsequent revelation challenges Moses’ judgment, illustrating that God values humility and sincerity over rigid adherence to religious norms.

God rebukes Moses for what he said to the shepherd. A revelation came down instantly:

‘You have just turned a slave away from me!
 Was not union the reason why you came?’

Is causing separation now your aim?
 As far as possible, do not separate—
 Above all else, divorce is what I hate.
 I've given each one their own special ways
 And their unique expressions when they pray.
 Moses and the shepherd,
 What he thinks virtuous, you deem scandalous:
 This person's meat, to you, seems poisonous.
 I stand immune to all impurity;
 Men's pride and cunning never bother me.
 I don't command for my own benefit,
 But so my slaves themselves can gain from it.
 For Indians, their own dialect sounds best,
 But folk from Sind think theirs the loveliest.
 I'm not made any purer by their praise;
 They gain in eloquence and godly ways.
 And I pay no attention to their speech,
 But to their intentions and the heights they reach—
 I know when men's hearts have humility,
 Even if they should speak too haughtily' (Rumi, 2007, pp. 101-102).

Shafak, a scholar well-versed in Sufi thought, explores similar themes in *The Forty Rules of Love* and her broader literary corpus. She underscores how the interpretation of language—or its misinterpretation—shapes societal relations and how misconstruing words can lead to dire consequences. She makes this clear in her article “Why the Novel Matters in the Age of Anger?”: “most of the problems of the world stem from linguistic mistakes and simple misunderstanding. Don't ever take words at face value. When you step into the zone of love, language, as we know it, becomes obsolete. That which cannot be put into words can only be grasped through silence.” (Shafak, 2018, p. 66).

The following quotation is from the Quran. The Quranic excerpt introduces the story of Moses and Al-Khidr, highlighting Moses' quest for knowledge. Al-Khidr's actions, seemingly unconventional and challenging to Moses, are later explained as divine guidance. This reinforces the Quranic theme that divine wisdom may surpass human understanding and conventional morality. His inability to fathom these acts exemplifies the Quranic theme that divine wisdom often transcends human judgment and conventional morality: the killing of an innocent boy, the building of a wall for people who didn't deserve it, and the breaching of a ship that could have caused the drowning of those on board: “these people gave us a free lift, but you have broken their boat and scuttled it so as to drown its people.”

Then they both proceeded, till they met a boy; he (Khidr) killed him. (Prophet Moosa) said:

“have you killed an innocent person who had killed none?
 Verily, you have committed a thing ‘Nukra’ (a great Munkar –
 prohibited, evil, dreadful thing!)”
 “Did I not tell you that you cannot remain patient with me?”
 Then they both proceeded, till, when they came to the people of
 a town, they asked them for food, but they refused to entertain
 them. Then they found therein a wall about to collapse, and he
 (Khidr) set it up straight.
 (Moosa (Moses)) said: “If you had wished, surely, you could
 have taken wages for it!”
 “This is the parting between you and me” (Quran, 73-84).

Shafak skillfully weaves together these narratives, creating a tapestry that encourages readers to question rigid and preconceived notions of worship and appreciate the diversity of spiritual expressions. The convergence of Shafak’s narrative, Rumi’s poetry, and Quranic wisdom underscores the universality of the theme, transcending cultural and religious boundaries.

2. Tolstoy’s *The Three Hermits*

2.1 Tolstoy’s Background

Leo Tolstoy, a titan of Russian literature, was born in 1828 into Russian nobility. His literary influences spanned European literature, Russian Orthodox Christianity, and philosophical traditions. Tolstoy’s profound reflections on morality, spirituality, and the human condition marked him as a literary giant whose works, including *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, continue to shape the world’s literary landscape.

The Three Hermits is a poignant short story by Tolstoy, reflecting his later spiritual and philosophical period. Written in 1885, it tells the story of an encounter between a bishop and three simple hermits on an isolated island. The narrative unfolds as the bishop seeks to correct the hermits’ unusual form of worship, only to be humbled by their profound connection with the divine when they are depicted walking on the sea.

2.2 The Motif of a Religious Figure and Simple Men’s Encounter

Tolstoy’s hermits engage in a form of worship characterized by simplicity, humility, and direct communion with God. Their repetitive prayer, “*Three are ye, three are we, have mercy upon us*” (Tolstoy, 1886, para. 6), underscores their unadorned approach, challenging traditional religious norms. The hermits’ unconventional worship becomes a vehicle for Tolstoy to explore the essence of faith and the potential pitfalls of institutionalized religion.

Tolstoy prefaces the story with an epigraph from the Gospel of Saint Matthew, Chapter 6, emphasizing the Lord’s Prayer:

“And in praying use not vain repetitions, as the Gentiles do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not

therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him" (*Tolstoy, 1886, para. 1*).

This epigraph sets the stage for the narrative, framing the story within the teachings of Jesus. The choice of this biblical passage aligns with the themes of simplicity, humility, and direct communion with God that permeate the text.

The biblical connection serves as a guiding force, influencing the moral undertones of Tolstoy's narrative. Its impact is profound, as the story delves into the bishop's realization that the hermits' unadorned prayer is inherently pure and genuine, echoing the spirit of Jesus' teachings:

"Your own prayer will reach the Lord, men of God. It is not for me to teach you. Pray for us sinners" (*Tolstoy, 1886, para. 15*).

3. Comparison with Shafak's Narrative

Comparing Tolstoy's hermits with Shafak's shepherd, parallels emerge in their deviation from established religious norms. Both narratives explore the simplicity and purity of worship that transcend institutionalized practices. However, the cultural and religious contexts differ significantly, shaping the characters' journeys in distinct ways.

The comparison prompts reflection on the shared thematic elements—unconventional spirituality, simplicity in worship—and the nuanced differences arising from the authors' cultural and religious backgrounds. Tolstoy's Orthodox Christian lens and Shafak's exploration of Islamic Sufi wisdom offer unique perspectives on the universal quest for genuine faith and enlightenment.

Interestingly, both writers are known for their deep spiritual transformations. Tolstoy gradually embraced Christian anarchism, as witnessed in his later works *The Kingdom of God Is Within You* and *Resurrection*, where he elaborates on true Christian teachings. He emphasized non-resistance to evil, pacifism, and love. Similarly, Shafak, deeply moved by the violence she witnessed upon her return to Turkey with her grandmother, began seeking explanations and solutions, which led her to Sufism.

This undertone of love, non-resistance to evil, and pacifism can already be observed in *The Three Hermits*, where, ultimately, the three simple men's prayers are not met with violence or rejection but with acceptance and tolerance.

4. Maymouna's Tamazight Tale

Maymouna's Tamazight tale is deeply rooted in the cultural fabric of Algeria and North Africa, narrated in the desert region and among the Amazigh population. The tale transcends identity, nationality, language, and religion, resonating with universal interpretations and lessons. It embodies the essence of Algerian popular genius and reflects the wisdom of ancestors, drawn from collective experiences and the complexities of identity and religiosity throughout history.

Maymouna, a Sufi woman known for her righteousness and piety, is renowned for her devout prayers and virtuous life. Her hermitage, secluded from the village, becomes

a sacred space where she communicates with the divine. The uniqueness of *Maymouna* lies in her linguistic background—she speaks Tamazight, the original language of the Amazigh people, and is not versed in Arabic. Despite the language barrier, her heart is filled with goodness, fear of God, and love for all.

Maymouna's connection with the divine is expressed through the shepherd motif, reminiscent of the motif of a religious figure and a simple man's encounter in other narratives. In her prayers, she utters a phrase in Tamazight: “Mamunat tasan rabi, rabi yasan Mamunt”, which means “*Maymouna* knows my Lord, and my Lord knows *Maymouna*.” This phrase reflects her simplicity, sincerity, and direct communion with God. The simple man motif becomes a symbolic thread weaving through her spiritual journey (Zaoui, 2023, para. 3).

Maymouna's prayers in Tamazight symbolize the authenticity of her spirituality, emphasizing that a genuine connection with the divine transcends linguistic and cultural barriers. Her prayers, though unconventional in the context of Islam (a newly introduced religion at the time), carry profound significance in their simplicity and purity.

5. Harmonizing Echoes: Intertextuality and Cultural Intersections

5.1 Intertextuality in Tolstoy's, Shafak's and the Tamazight popular narrative

To fully grasp the complex intertextual fabric that unites *The Three Hermits*, *The Forty Rules of Love*, and the Tamazight tale of *Maymouna*, it is essential to examine the literary strategies through which each text engages with external sources—whether religious, cultural, or philosophical. Drawing from theories of intertextuality, particularly as articulated by scholars such as Kristeva, Cuddon, and Hutcheon, the following section explores a range of textual relationships including allusion, reference, adaptation, intertextual dialogue, archetype, borrowing, and genre conventions. These strategies do not merely reflect the presence of earlier texts but actively reshape meaning, constructing new layers of significance through reinterpretation, homage, critique, or cultural translation. The interplay of these techniques not only reveals each author's creative engagement with tradition but also underscores how texts from vastly different cultural and linguistic backgrounds can participate in a shared literary conversation.

- Allusion: The Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory defines allusion as an indirect mention of another piece of literature or art, referring to a person or an event. (Cuddon, 1998, p. 27). In *The Three Hermits*, Tolstoy makes allusions to the Gospel of Saint Matthew, adding depth to the narrative through indirect references to religious texts. Shafak, in *The Forty Rules of Love*, alludes to Rumi's *The Masnavi*, enriching her narrative with the wisdom of Sufi poetry. *Maymouna's* Tamazight tale alludes to Berber cultural elements, connecting the story to a broader cultural heritage. The three stories could also

be read as parodies for they may be ironic in their subtle criticism of religious practices as David Jasper argues in *Images of Belief in Literature*, commenting on Tolstoy's narrative dialogue with religious texts, that "there are two things clear about the Christian religion at the present time: 'One is, that men cannot do without it; the other, that they cannot do with it as it is' (Jasper, 1984, p. 12).

- **Reference:** According to the Literary Criticism Online Resource, within the framework of intertextuality, reference is a direct indication of an external literary text (Licor, 2024). Tolstoy references the Gospel of Saint Matthew and the Christian tradition in *The Three Hermits*, establishing connections with religious texts. Also, Shafak references Sufi philosophy, Rumi's teachings and Quran providing a broader cultural context for her narrative. *Maymouna's* Tamazight tale references Berber and Maghrebi cultural elements in general, creating a rich tapestry of references to indigenous traditions.
- **Adaptation:** Adaptation represents a prolonged connection to an entire text, yet the term is ambiguous and subject to debate, partly due to its diverse interpretations. While adaptations frequently entail a shift in medium (commonly seen in a film based on a novel), this transformation is not obligatory. Typically viewed as a fresh iteration of an existing artistic creation, an adaptation is expected to serve as an equivalent to its precursor. However, achieving such a level of similarity is often challenging or unfeasible (Licor, 2024). Shafak's *The Forty Rules of Love* can be viewed as a derivative work that builds upon a prior adaptation. In this context, Rumi's rendition of the story of Moses and the Shepherd serves as an adaptation itself, having been derived from the Quranic narrative of Moses encountering Khidr. While not a direct adaptation, Tolstoy's adaptation lies in his reimagining of religious themes in *The Three Hermits*. *Maymouna's* Tamazight tale is an adaptation of Berber and Maghrebi cultural and spiritual elements into a narrative form.
- **Intertextual Dialogue:** Kristeva discusses an intertextual conversation in which Western literary texts participate, alongside social, political, and philosophical dialogues (Allen, 2000, p. 50). Indeed, Tolstoy's *The Three Hermits* engages in an intertextual dialogue with biblical narratives, reinterpreting religious themes. Shafak's intertextual dialogue involves a conversation between Rumi's poetry, her own narrative and the Quranic verses in *El-kahf*, exploring shared spiritual themes. *Maymouna's* Maghrebi tale, with its variations, engages in a dialogue with Maghrebi, Arab and Berber literary, cultural and religious traditions.
- **Archetype:** It is a prototype or a fundamental model used as a basis for creating copies (Cuddon, 1998, p. 53). The hermits in Tolstoy's story can be seen as archetypal figures representing simplicity and direct communion with the

divine. The bishop and his journey can also be seen as an archetype of the quest for knowledge and wisdom (also present in Shafak's narrative). Shafak's portrayal of characters in a spiritual quest aligns with archetypal themes found in Sufi literature. *Maymouna* herself embodies the archetype of a wise hermit, resonating with similar figures in Berber mythology.

- **Borrowing:** Shafak borrows spiritual concepts from Rumi's poetry, and by extension, from the Quran, and incorporates them into her narrative, adding depth to the exploration of love and faith. Tolstoy borrows religious themes and motifs, incorporating them into a new context in *The Three Hermits*. *Maymouna's* tale borrows from Berber cultural and spiritual traditions, weaving them into a narrative form.
- **Genre Conventions:** Tolstoy adheres to conventions of religious and philosophical storytelling within the short story genre in *The Three Hermits*. Shafak navigates the conventions of historical fiction and spiritual literature in *The Forty Rules of Love*. *Maymouna's* Tamazight tale follows conventions rooted in local oral storytelling and cultural traditions. The oral story as Amin Zoui argues is narrated in various versions and plots across the Maghreb region showcasing the flexibility of oral literature and its malleability according to the societal and cultural dictates.
- **Interplay of Allusion and Parody:** In her *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* Linda Hutcheon argues that in its ironic trans-contextualization and reversal, parody involves repeating with a variation. There's an inherent critical separation between the text being parodied and the new work that incorporates it, a separation often indicated through irony. Playfulness and constructive criticism are potential aspects of this irony, in addition to its potential for belittlement and destructiveness (Hutcheon, 2000, p. 32).

The intertextual dynamics, where Rumi's, Tolstoy's, and *Maymouna's* narratives intersect, showcase a sophisticated interplay of allusion and parody. The juxtaposition of different cultural and religious elements serves as a parody of institutionalized religious practices while simultaneously alluding to the universality of certain spiritual themes. The comparison between Shafak's narrative and Tolstoy's adds another layer, with both authors utilizing a religious authority like Moses or the bishop and the humble man motif in a parody of conventional religious storytelling. This comparative lens alludes to the diverse ways in which authors interpret and adapt common themes across cultural and religious contexts.

5.2 Cultural Intersection

The analysis of cultural intersections between Shafak's Turkish narrative, Tolstoy's Russian Orthodox context, and *Maymouna's* Tamazight tale contributes to the exploration of intertextuality. This examination alludes to the richness that emerges when different cultural and religious traditions intersect, fostering a deeper

understanding of spirituality. The linguistic diversity highlighted in *Maymouna's* Tamazight prayers and the stranger's attempt at correction adds an element of parody, emphasizing the challenges and potential misunderstandings that arise when linguistic and cultural dimensions intersect, even within the same traditions like Shafak argues above. *Maymouna's* Tamazight tale reflects more importantly what Kristeva calls the Intertextuality of the text from "(within the text) of history and society" (Kristeva, 1980, p. 37). Fascinatingly, the portrayal of the three hermits walking on the sea intersects with an alternative retelling of the *Maymouna* tale set in the Algerian desert (and other part of Maghreb like Tunisia, Libya and Morocco), particularly in In Salah. In this version, *Maymouna* follows a stranger walking across the sea to seek guidance on the correct way of prayer he had previously taught her. Graciously acknowledging his own oversight, the stranger encourages her to return and continue worshiping God in her preferred manner. The Algerian desert, renowned for its rich Sufi culture and diverse schools of Sufism, becomes a unifying backdrop that links the three narratives and their respective cultural contexts. This region, evoking memories of Rumi's encounter with his spiritual guide Shams, underscores the shared thread of mystical practices.

Moreover, the three stories accentuate extraordinary events, often termed as miracles, emphasizing that such occurrences are not exclusive to prophets but extend to virtuous ordinary individuals. The motif of walking on water, present in both the Quran and the Bible in relation to Moses, resonates in Islamic narratives involving companions of the Prophet Muhammad, such as Saad Ib Abi Ouakas in the Battle of Elkadisia. This illustrates how the Algerian desert's rendition of *Maymouna* took a distinctive path. However, the story, with its variations, can be described as polyphonic, incorporating voices from, perhaps, Christian, Tamazight, and Islamic cultures. The three texts engage in a dialogic conversation, borrowing Bakhtin's term, where the collective genius of humanity, despite geographical and cultural differences, appears to convey a final message affirming its unique and unified nature. Moreover, the different variations of *Maymouna* narrative could be considered as one literary text involved in a dialogical, heteroglossic conversation amongst its dialectical components (Arabic, Tamazight and the different dialects of Maghreb) to reveal the complex religious, ideological and societal systems that make up the whole Maghreb and Islamic world.

Conclusion

In the intricate tapestry of narratives woven by Elif Shafak's *Sweet Blasphemy*, Leo Tolstoy's *The Three Hermits*, and *Maymouna's* Tamazight Tale, the Motif of a Religious Figure and simple man encounter emerges as a powerful chord, connecting disparate stories across continents and cultures. As we traverse the landscapes of Shafak's Turkish odyssey, Tolstoy's Russian spiritual quest, and *Maymouna's* North African sanctuary, the whispers of harmony echo, revealing the timeless resonance of shared wisdom.

Shafak, through the lens of *Sweet Blasphemy*, beckons readers to witness a shepherd's unconventional worship, challenging established norms and evoking the spirit of Rumi's poetry. Tolstoy, a literary luminary, invites us to an isolated island where hermits engage

in unadorned communion with the divine, drawing from the Gospel of Saint Matthew. Meanwhile, *Maymouna*, a Berber hermitess, invites us into her Tamazight-speaking world, where cultural richness and spiritual purity intertwine.

Our exploration illuminates the interplay of allusion, where Rumi's verses, biblical scriptures, and Berber traditions converge, creating a harmonious symphony of diverse voices. The mosaic of quotations, whether from sacred texts or Sufi poetry, underscores the universal nature of spiritual themes that transcend linguistic and cultural boundaries.

In this literary journey, adaptation takes form as Shafak breathes life into Rumi's teachings, and Tolstoy reimagines religious themes for a new audience. *Maymouna*, in her Tamazight tale, adapts cultural and spiritual elements into a narrative that resonates with the collective wisdom of the Amazigh people.

The intertextual dialogue between these narratives unfolds as a continuous conversation—Tolstoy responding to biblical narratives, Shafak engaging with Sufi philosophy, and *Maymouna's* tale in dialogue with Berber cultural traditions. Archetypes, borrowed elements, and genre conventions surface as common threads, binding these stories into a shared exploration of faith, simplicity, and direct connection with the divine.

As the tales intersect, homage is paid to the cultural and religious traditions that birthed them. Tolstoy pays homage to true Christian spirituality, Shafak to the Islamic Sufi legacy, and *Maymouna* to the rich tapestry of Berber heritage. Each narrative, though distinct, becomes a tribute to the collective human quest for meaning and connection.

While not overtly metafictional, these stories invite readers to reflect on the nature of storytelling, blurring the boundaries between fiction and reality. The interplay of allusion and parody unveils layers of complexity, questioning institutionalized practices and celebrating the universality of spiritual themes.

Cultural intersections emerge as points of enrichment, where Turkish, Russian, and Tamazight traditions converge, fostering a deeper understanding of spirituality. The linguistic diversity in *Maymouna's* prayers becomes a poignant reminder of the challenges and beauty that arise when different dimensions intersect.

Bibliography

Livres

Allen, G. (2000). *Intertextuality*. Routledge.

Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays*. University of Texas Press.

Cuddon, J. A. (1998). *Dictionary of literary terms and literary theory*. Penguin Reference.

Hutcheon, L. (2000). *A theory of parody: The teachings of twentieth-century art forms*. University of Illinois Press.

Jasper, D. (1984). *Images of belief in literature*. Macmillan.

Kristeva, J. (1980). *Intertextuality*. *Critical Inquiry*, 37(1), 1-15.

Maymouna. (2023). *Tamazight tale*. (D'après l'article en ligne d'Amin Zaoui).

Rumi, J. E. (2007). *The Masnavi: Book Two*. Oxford World's Classics.

Shafak, E. (2009). *The forty rules of love*. Viking.

Tolstoy, L. (1886). *The three hermits*. (Édition du domaine public).

Tolstoy, L. (2006). *The Kingdom of God Is Within You* (Trans. C. Garnett). Dover Publications. (*Ouvrage original publié en 1894*)

Sources en ligne

Shafak, E. (2018, octobre). *Why the novel matters in the age of anger*. *New Statesman*. <https://www.newstatesman.com/long-reads/2018/10/why-novel-matters-age-anger>

Volda University College. (2023, 25 octobre). *Intertextuality, reference and allusion*. *Literary Criticism Online Resource*. https://licor.hivolda.no/?page_id=1230

Zaoui, A. (2023, 14 décembre). *Maymouna knows God, and God knows Maymouna*. *Al Arabiya*. <https://bit.ly/4iyMorL>

Vidéos en ligne

Forgotten Tunisian Tales. (2018, 19 mai). *Maimouna knows my Lord and my Lord knows Maimouna + Tunisian stories* [Vidéo]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iFfx3jjCIiE>

Source religieuse

Le Coran. (n.d.). <https://www.tokopedia.com/s/quran/al-kahf/3>

Abstract

This article offers a nuanced exploration of intertextuality by examining recurring motifs in Elif Shafak's *The Forty Rules of Love*, Leo Tolstoy's *The Three Hermits*, and a renowned Berber tale featuring *Maymouna* from the Maghreb region. At the heart of this literary convergence lies the narrative of Moses and the shepherd, a motif that transcends cultural and historical boundaries. Shafak's novel introduces a shepherd who challenges dominant religious norms, echoing Rumi's *Masnavi* and rooted in the Quran. Tolstoy's *The Three Hermits* integrates biblical undertones into the hermits' unconventional worship. The Tamazight tale of *Maymouna* further enriches this dialogue, offering a distinct cultural perspective on spirituality and cross-cultural encounters. Through allusion, quotation, reference, adaptation, and intertextual discourse, these narratives form a complex web of shared wisdom, highlighting universal themes of faith and human connection. This study investigates the intricate intertextual relationships among these works, shedding light on their literary, religious, and cultural intersections.

Keywords

Moses and the shepherd, Elif Shafak, Leo Tolstoy, Berber folktale, *Maymouna*

الملخص

تستكشف هذه الدراسة التناص من خلال تحليل الأنماط المشتركة في قواعد العشق الأربعة لـإليف شفاق، النساك الثلاثة لليو تولستوي، وحكاية أمازيغية شهيرة تروي قصة ميمونة من منطقة المغرب العربي. يتمحور هذا التقارب الأدبي حول قصة موسى والراعي،

وهو سرد يتجاوز الحدود الثقافية والزمنية. يعرض عمل شفق راعيًا يتحدى المعايير الدينية السائدة، وهو موضوع ينعكس في المثنوي لجلال الدين الرومي، ويستند إلى تعاليم قرآنية. يدمج تولستوي في النساك الثلاثة عناصر توراتية في طقوس النساك غير التقليدية. تسهم الحكاية الأمازيغية لميمونة في تعزيز هذا الحوار التناسي، حيث تقدم رؤية ثقافية فريدة حول الروحانية والتفاعلات بين الثقافات. ومن خلال التلميح، والاقبتباس، والإحالة، والتكيف، والحوار التناسي، تشكل هذه السرديات نسيجًا معقدًا يعكس الحكمة المشتركة والتلاقى بين الإيمان والإنسانية. تبحث هذه الدراسة في العلاقات التناسبية العميقة بين هذه الأعمال، مسلطة الضوء على تداخلاتها الأدبية والدينية والثقافية.

الكلمات المفتاحية

موسى والراعي، إليف شفق، ليو تولستوي، الحكاية الأمازيغية، ميمونة

Résumé

Cet article propose une analyse approfondie de l'intertextualité en identifiant les motifs récurrents dans *Les Quarante Règles de l'amour* d'Elif Shafak, *Les Trois Ermites* de Léon Tolstoï et un conte berbère mettant en scène *Maymouna*, figure emblématique du Maghreb. Au cœur de cette convergence littéraire se trouve le récit de Moïse et du berger, un motif qui transcende les frontières culturelles et temporelles. Le roman de Shafak met en avant un berger défiant les normes religieuses dominantes, un écho au *Masnavi* de Rumi et aux enseignements coraniques. Tolstoï, dans *Les Trois Ermites*, intègre des résonances bibliques dans la pratique spirituelle non conventionnelle des ermites. Le conte Tamazight de Maymouna enrichit ce dialogue intertextuel en offrant une perspective culturelle singulière sur la spiritualité et les rencontres interculturelles. À travers l'allusion, la citation, la référence, l'adaptation et le dialogue intertextuel, ces récits s'entrelacent pour illustrer la transmission de la sagesse et les points de convergence entre foi et humanité. Cette étude examine les relations intertextuelles complexes entre ces œuvres, mettant en lumière leurs intersections littéraires, religieuses et culturelles.

Mots-clés

Moïse et le berger, Elif Shafak, Léon Tolstoï, conte berbère, *Maymouna*