Moralizing Stances

Discursive Play and Ideologies of Language and Gender in Moroccan Digital Discourse

Atiqa Hachimi

1 Introduction

Speaking and dressing are stylistic practices and performances that carry social (indexical) meanings. As such, they often mediate social positions and evoke entrenched, sometimes humoured, ideologies of language and of gender within specific cultural and historical contexts. Evaluative stances evaluate such semiotic practices and are taken up in discourse – be it oral, written, or multimodal. It is through these stances that we often judge others' cultural authenticity, appropriateness, loyalty, respectability and a range of other value-laden cultural meanings that are constitutive of a specific gendered socio-moral order.

In this paper, I focus on Moroccans' disapproving stances in online discourse vis-à-vis co-national entertainment celebrities. I look specifically at a Facebook page entitled "Moroccan Stars on The Blacklist" which is dedicated to the blacklisting of overwhelmingly female performing artists (singers and actresses) for failing to uphold appropriate ways of speaking and dressing.¹ This blacklisting Facebook page was established on 5 April, 2011 – a time of radical political change in North Africa and the Middle East, the so-called "Arab Spring". Its emergence came soon after Egyptian activists published a Blacklist of co-national celebrities who did not support the January 25th, 2011 revolution in Egypt. Although the reasons for these Egyptian and Moroccan Blacklists are starkly different, both however police the role of celebrities as public figures in the re-imagining of both nations at a time of major social change.

Based on the chronological order of the discussion threads, the first few months, from April to November, saw a flurry of Facebook posts and comments in response to the metalinguistic discussion thread: "Black list" لا نفتخر بمن لا يفتخر بلهجتنا المغربية ("Black list" We are not proud of those who are not proud

1 The Facebook page emerged online under the web link:
www.MoroccanStarsOnTheBlackList. It was taken offline at the end of 2015.

of our Moroccan dialect). Disloyalty to Moroccan Arabic was thus given as the main reason behind the blacklisting, and the culprits were mainly Moroccan singers who converged to Middle Eastern (Mashreqi) Arabic varieties in mediatized pan-Arab encounters. Members continued to admonish Moroccan singers for their disloyalty through updates throughout the four years the page was active. However, by December 2011 immediately after the 10th edition of the Marrakech International Film Festival (MIFF), this Facebook community turned to rebuke Moroccan actresses. The latter's blacklisting was not the result of their linguistic choices, but rather their clothing choices at MIFF's red carpet event, which as the ironic discussion thread *مهرجان مراكش الدولي للعرى* (Marrakech international festival of nudity) makes amply clear, are framed as a form of indecent exposure.

This blacklisting Facebook page, I shall argue, is an important window on ideologies of language, gender, and Moroccan national identity politics in this highly mediatized and globalized era. On the one hand, the "verbal hygiene" (Cameron 1995) that underlies this national dialect loyalty campaign, as I show here and elsewhere (Hachimi 2016), is formed in relation, and in opposition, to the hierarchical Arabic sociolinguistic order that I call the "Maghreb-Mashreq language ideology" (Hachimi 2013, 2015, see also Chakrani 2015, Schulties 2015). The emergence of this social networking site thus points to larger sociolinguistic and language ideological changes in Morocco. On the other hand, its gendered culpability and moralizing discourse, shows the ways in which anxieties about female celebrities' linguistic and clothing styles are formed in relation to anxieties about gender morality and Moroccan national identity and reputation. I argue here that the policing of the celebrities' verbal and non-verbal practices, are two sides of the same "metasemiotic" coin (Silverstein 1993), and that the performative enactment of this policing in digital discourse provides an important site for investigating digital literacy practices and cultural ideologies writ large.

Drawing on the concepts of stance (Jaffe 2009), multimodality (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2001), and heteroglossia (Bakhtin 1983), my aim in this paper is to show how the moralizing stances taken up by this Facebook community incorporate power-laden discourses of playfulness and humour in the co-construction of respectable Moroccan womanhood. I am interested specifically in how this "serio-ludic" stance (cf. Rouzie 2001, North 2007), or the tension and ambivalence between humour and seriousness, is expressed, keyed and enacted in Moroccan digital writing and discourse.

Stance is "a public act by a social actor, achieved dialogically through overt communicative means (language, gesture, and other symbolic forms), through which social actors simultaneously evaluate objects, position subjects (them-

selves and others), and align with other subjects, with respect to any salient dimension of value (Du Bois 2007:169).” In other words, the affective stances (i.e., feelings of amusement, anger, disbelief, disappointment and so on) in Facebook comments on celebrities’ linguistic and clothing choices allow us to examine the interdiscursive and intertextual accomplishment of ridicule and the indexical processes that link such performances with larger social meanings. Specifically, I show how the Facebook participants play with languages, scripts, typographic resources, and deploy a wide range of playful texts such as puns, proverbs, metaphors, parallelism, and ritual insults, to co-construct the Moroccan celebrities as inauthentic and disreputable.

Since writing is hardly the only mode of communication in Facebook and other social media sites, digital discourse scholars stress the centrality of multimodal analyses of computer-mediated communication, particularly because of the intertextual and heteroglossic affordances that characterize new media convergence (Georgakopoulou 2003, Androutsopoulos 2006, 2011). Multimodality refers to the making and conveying of meaning through different semiotic modes (textual and visual). These modes, according to Kress (2003), have different affordances, that is potentials and constraints for making social meanings. A multimodal discourse analysis therefore enables us to study the modes, means and channels of signification, and the ways in which the participants playfully exploit multiple linguistic and other semiotic resources to achieve their communicative goals. Building on recent multimodal analyses of literacy practices (e.g., Jaffe, Androutsopoulos, Sebba and Johnson 2012; Sebba 2013), I show the complex ways in which writing resources interact with other modes to make and index social meanings and produce ideological oppositions that are meaningful.

Bakhtin’s concept of heteroglossia provides a theoretical concept that captures the outcomes of the complexity brought by social media’s multimodal affordances specifically because it “invites us to examine contemporary new media environments as sites of tension and contrast between linguistic resources, social identities, and ideologies (Androutsopoulos 2011:281).” My interest is in the ways this heteroglossia is performed in this multilingual, multi-scriptural and multimodal Facebook page, and how the heterogeneity of styles, modes, scripts, linguistic varieties and discourses, as well as the multiplicity of authors and audiences do ideological work when they come together.

Before turning to a detailed analysis of the explicit metalinguistic comments and implicit metapragmatics of ridicule of the Moroccan celebrities more generally, the next section locates the Facebook page in the historical moment in which it had emerged, specifically within the wider language ideological debates in Morocco.

2 Language Ideological Debates and Change in Morocco

One of the most visible and important sociolinguistic developments in Morocco in the last decade has been the reclamation of Moroccans' 'mother tongues' – Moroccan Arabic and Berber, known respectively as *dārīja* and *amāzighīyya*. While the Arabic-Berber debates have been taking place since the 1970s (Boukous 1995, 2013), the rise of a public discourse about *dārīja*, however, can be traced to the 2000s. The ongoing reclamation of these once largely oral linguistic varieties, both in terms of their transitioning to literacy and the rise of public discourse, can be conceptualized as ways of reconfiguring the relationship between language and power in contemporary Morocco, and reimagining Moroccan national identity (see Benítez-Fernández, Miller, de Ruiter and Tamer 2013).

Put differently, the official monolingual language ideology or "the one language equals one nation" ideology (Silverstein 1998) that informed the Arabization policies of the post-independence era is giving way to an official discourse of plurality and multiculturalism in what has come to be known as the 'New Morocco', which acknowledges the different constituencies of Moroccans as African, Arab, Berber, Andalusian, Muslim and Jewish.

It is important to remember that in practice this monolingual ideology marginalized Berber, Morocco's indigenous language. Thus, the latter's official recognition in 2011 as the second official language of the country is a significant symbolic moment in Moroccan national identity politics. French, the former colonial language, on the other hand, despite the lack of a *de jure* official status, has been a *de facto* official language that has never ceased to be the language of power and prestige, and the language of different types of elites in Morocco – Arabophone and Berberophone alike. In other words, Arabization education policies have affected primarily what Moroccans call *wlād shsha'b* (folk's kids), an admittedly vague category that refers to the non-elite majority (poor, lower and lower middle class Moroccans) who cannot afford private schools where French continued to thrive. This political-economic factor is critical in understanding the indexical meanings of different languages and linguistic varieties in Morocco. A prime example is the ideological association of Standard Arabic (*fūṣḥā*) with the lower classes despite being the *de jure* official language. In the same vein, social class positioning is erased in much of the ideological associations of *al-mu'arrabīn* (Arabic educated) with religious conservatism and radicalization especially after the 2003 Casablanca terrorist attacks. These orientalist discourses which locate the roots of terrorism in Standard Arabic have entered the language ideological debates in Morocco and are worthy of investigation (see Al-Khalfi 2012).

The standard language ideology views Standard Arabic as the only correct and legitimate Arabic variety and subordinates vernacular Arabic as corrupt, and associates it with illiteracy. While the standard-vernacular language ideological debate has a long history in Egypt and Lebanon for instance (see Haeri 2003, Suleiman 2003), it is much more recent in Morocco. It can be loosely traced to journalist Ahmed Reda Benchemsi's publication in 2002 of an article entitled *Dārija, langue nationale* (*Dārija*, national language) in the francophone weekly magazine *TelQuel*, where he argues that *dārija* is Moroccans' "real language" (Caubet 2003). Importantly, the polemic that followed a widely publicized call in 2013 to integrate Moroccan Arabic into the school curriculum and acknowledge it officially as a national language has placed the *dārija* debate into the highly contested realm of education (see Miller, this volume). Although there is a tendency to pit *dārija* against *fushā* in the recent linguistic debates in Morocco, some Berber activists see the rise of *dārija* as an attempt by Arabophones to undermine the recognition of Berber and its new found official status.

The recent reclamation of *dārija* has been documented in a range of domains including artistic creation by disenfranchised youth (Caubet 2008), dubbing of foreign soap operas on Moroccan television (Miller 2012a), and its proliferation in radio programs (Miller 2013). Its recent transition to literacy has been examined in different genres including advertising (Iraqi-Sinaceur 2011), the written press (Benítez-Fernández 2004, Miller 2012c), and literature (Aguadé 2006, Elinson 2013, Miller 2012b). With the ongoing expansion of written *dārija*, efforts to standardize its wildly variable orthographic practices as well as the ideologies that often accompany and inform such efforts are emerging (Moustaoui 2012, Chekayri 2013, Miller, this volume). Of central concern to this paper is the massive expansion of written *dārija* in digital communication technologies. Orthographic variation in *dārija* writing has been discussed in SMS messages (Benítez-Fernández 2003) and the internet including Facebook (Caubet 2012, 2013).

In contrast to these existing studies which have looked at the reclamation of *dārija* at the national or local level, this paper shows the importance of locating the valorization of *dārija* in relation to the wider Arabic-speaking world. The ideology of national dialect loyalty explicit in this blacklisting Facebook page is tied to the proliferation of pan-Arab TV shows which reinforced the non-Arabness of Moroccan Arabic and other North African Arabic varieties and stressed their deficiency rather simply their difference (Hachimi 2013). Some of these practices include subtitling of North African speakers in *fushā* or their re-voicing in Mashreqi varieties, predominance of Mashreqi-speaking Emcees and judges, overwhelming choice of Middle Eastern Arabic songs by Maghrebi

and Mashreqi contestants, mockery of contestants speaking North African varieties, and linguistic convergence to Mashreqi varieties by Maghrebi speakers – the contentious issue in the blacklisting Facebook page under investigation. It would seem that the pan-Arab-media and popular culture, by overtly exposing the Maghreb-Mashreq language ideology, provide the potential for its enhanced contestation. In other words, since ‘ideology is most effective when its workings are least visible’ (Fairclough 2001: 71), the Maghreb-Mashreq language hierarchy is made vulnerable by its high visibility in popular culture.

This recent rise and valorization of *dārīja* and its spread to domains that used to be the preserve of Standard Arabic, French or Middle Eastern varieties is tied in complex ways with new communication technologies (internet and satellite tv) and the globalized new economy. Today, we can talk about advertising, dubbing, and the performance arts as sites of the commodification of *dārīja*. In other words, *dārīja* has become a commodity in the sense of having “added value” (Heller 2010). I argued elsewhere (Hachimi 2013) that while Egyptian Arabic has been a prized commodity throughout most of the 20th century, with the proliferation of pan-Arab tv, other Middle Eastern Arabic vernacular varieties have been competing for airtime and cultural value. Lebanese Arabic started dominating pop music videos, Syrian Arabic (at least before the civil war) has dominated the dubbing market, and Gulf Arabic has become a valuable commodity thanks to the highly lucrative market of the Gulf music industry. *Dārīja* maybe following suit especially if we take into account the very recent interest in singing in Moroccan Arabic not only by young Moroccan hopefuls but also by seasoned Middle Eastern singers. These recent developments have engendered language ideological debates of their own, and are worthy of attention.

Of relevance to the expansion of *dārīja* online is that this phenomenal proliferation of Moroccan Arabic pop songs is mediated on YouTube, which is now circulating written *dārīja* lyrics at a massive scale. The Saad Lamjarred phenomenon – the young Moroccan singer whose latest 2015 single, *Lm3allem* or المعلم (The boss), received more than 23 million views on YouTube within three weeks of release, and was awarded a Guinness World Record achievement as a result – takes *dārīja* to new heights. As of April 2016 this same music video has reached well over 300 million views. His 2014 lyrics video single *Enty* or إنت (you, fem.) has reached more than 67 million views on YouTube. The unprecedented circulation of *dārīja* through lyrics video is unmatched by any other form of written *dārīja* offline, and raises new and important sociolinguistic questions.

So far, I have been talking about *dārīja* as an abstract metalinguistic label. In fact, *dārīja* like any other linguistic variety encompasses a variety of regional

and social linguistic varieties that has its own internal hierarchies and ideologies (Hachimi 2011, 2012).

So, what language ideologies and voices are upheld, silenced, subverted, or challenged, and how are these processes enacted in this Facebook page?

3 Playful Voices and Policing Loyalty to *dārīja*

The pervasive metalinguistic discourse in this blacklisting Facebook page allows us to examine the affective stance-taking and the ways in which complaints about the celebrities' stylistic practices is metacommunicatively and interdiscursively accomplished on the site.

In a previous study, I have examined the meanings of loyalty or disloyalty to *dārīja* by considering the extent to which this metalinguistic discourse corresponds with the blacklisted artists' actual linguistic choices in the remediatized videos which either incriminate or exonerate the artists in question, or do both in some cases (Hachimi 2016). I drew on Cameron's (1995) concept of verbal hygiene to argue that the Facebook participants can be thought of as a virtual community of verbal hygienists who demand that their national Arabic vernacular be valorized in pan-Arab encounters. Those singers who fail to uphold this ideal are accused of selling out and are, therefore, blacklisted for cultural treason and immorality. Here, my focus is on how this moralizing stance is playfully achieved in this grassroots national dialect loyalty campaign and what language ideologies are animated in the process.

As is typical of the multilingual internet (Danet and Herring 2007), different languages and scripts compete for attention in this Facebook page. What is intriguing, however, is that in this digital Moroccan space one is confronted with English and Standard Arabic in the metalinguistic discussion thread in (1). Similarly, as shown in figure 10.1, the two captioned images of the actresses are also in Standard Arabic and English, respectively, in addition to the prominent vertical English-only text.

(1) “Black list” لا نفتخر بمن لا يفخر بلهجتنا المغربية

(“Black list” We are not proud of those who are not proud of our Moroccan dialect.)

On the one hand, the conspicuous absence of French and the choice of English can hardly be said to be neutral. The choice of English itself is clearly a tokenism because it is hardly used again by the administrator of this page or by the other

FIGURE 10.1 Collage of some of the blacklisted Moroccan singers. The Arabic text in the image on the left reads: (And the list is long.)

contributors for that matter. Yet, it is strategic because it creates an ideological tension between French and English that is increasingly being felt in offline discourse. On the other hand, while the initial choice of Standard Arabic aligns this Facebook page creator with the standard language ideology, as I show below, the other examples by this same contributor draw creatively on both the resources of *fushā* and *dārīja* to achieve a serio-ludic stance.

- (2) إلى بغيتو تزيدو شي اسم مرحبا الليستة باقا مفتوحة لاستقبال الاسماء الجديدة لول غير و
كان جيبوولينا شي فيديو كييين ان هداك الاسم اللي بغيتوه يتزاد كيهدر بشي لهجة من غير
الدارجة و جيبوه هنا نديروليه محاكمة قدام الشعب.

(If you want to add a name to the list you are welcome to do so; the list is still open to welcome new names lol (laugh out loud). However, you must provide us with a video that shows that the particular name you'd like to add speaks in a dialect other than *dārīja* and bring it here so we can put it on trial before the Moroccan public.)

The play frame in this summons is keyed and accomplished in a variety of discursive means. Perhaps the most obvious cue of playfulness is the metaprag-

matic use of لول for the acronym lol (laugh out loud). The humor lies not only in lol being iconic of laughter but also in its writing in the Arabic script لول. Other resources of the playfulness include the facetious tone of the content which appropriates legal discourse by making references to incriminating evidence of disloyalty to *dārīja* and to a mock trial before the Moroccan public. In addition to this interdiscursivity, other subtle cues include the use of the nativized French loan الليسته (līsta, the list) and an immediate switch to Standard Arabic words such as مفتوحة and لاستقبال in what started as a recognizably Moroccan Arabic register. The choice of الليسته instead of its corresponding Standard Arabic word اللائحة used in the captioned image in (1) is strategically deployed for humorous effects. It is through this playful incongruity between *dārīja* and *fushā* frames that humor is achieved.

Arguably, the order of the incongruity is reversed in (3) where the unambiguously *dārīja* idiomatic expression قلبت الفيسطة (lit. she has flipped the jacket) is inserted in an otherwise *fushā* comment to capture the condemnation of disingenuous dialect loyalty, that is, the singer's use of *dārīja* in pan-Arab contexts only when audience voting is needed.

(3) الجمهور المغربي غاضب من دنيا بطمة لأنها في أول لقاء قلبت الفيسطة وتخلت عن لهجتها
المغربية وهذا في برنامج كلام نواعم

(The Moroccan public is angry with Dunya Batma because in her first tv interview (after *Arab Idol*) she (lit. flipped the jacket) sold out by giving up her Moroccan dialect in the show *kalām nawā'im*.)

Judging from the laughter whenever I have presented these comments to an audience either in academic conferences or to lay Moroccans in social gatherings, the attempts at humor are successful. This strategic play with the resources of *dārīja* and *fushā* produces meaningful oppositions, and triggers humorous effects precisely because of their unexpected use. It can be surmised that the dissonance is reflexive of a diglossic language ideology where the expectation is that *dārīja* and *fushā* occupy different domains.

Intertextual links (or texts that refers to other texts) are deployed in abundance to achieve humorous effects in the complaints against the blacklisted singers. The object of comment (4) is a young singer, composer, and songwriter who often positions herself as being true to her *tamyraḥit* or Moroccanness. She is hailed on several Moroccan talk shows as a living example that Moroccan songs can travel to the Middle East.

- (4) هدى سعد صدمتنا فيك كانت قوية
 ما هو الداعي من غناء الاغنية المغربية الى في لقاء عادي مثل هذا نسييتي لهجتك و تكلمتي
 باللهجة اللبنانية
 حتى كلامك لم تطغ عليه اللهجة المغربية ولا حتى كلمة كيما كنقولو تزهق
 للاسف لست ممن يمثلون المغاربة في الخارج
 لا نفتخر بمن لا يفتخر بلهجتنا المغربية

(Houda Saad, Our disappointment in you was very strong.

What's the point of singing Moroccan songs if in an ordinary interview such as this you have forgotten about your dialect and you speak in Lebanese Arabic.

Even your speech was not dominated by the Moroccan dialect, not even one word has escaped, as we say.

With regret, you're not one of those who represent Moroccans abroad.)

The opening line of this comment (صدمتنا فيك كانت قوية) presumes a knowing enculturated Moroccan (reading) public that can recover the cross-reference to a famous Moroccan song الصدمة كانت قوية by the iconic Moroccan male singer Abdelhadi Belkhayyat. By virtue of this intertextuality the comment does a great deal of ideological and gendered work. It serves to juxtapose this younger female artist, who represents the new generation of Moroccan female singers, and pit her against the older generation of Moroccan male singers who have not sold out. Interestingly, this commenter (i.e., the creator of the page) comes back with another post but this time in *dārija*. The disapproving stance is expressed through lengthening of the verb *ما حسيناااااا* (we didn't feel), questioning, and directives like *حسسونا* 'make us feel', in addition to the use of the plural pronoun *نا*, which suggests a shared stance and affiliative alignment with all Moroccans in *هذا هو , كتمثلونا , حسسونا , ما حسيناااااا* طلبنا.

- (5) ما حسيناااااا واش انت مغربية
 علاش كتنسوا لهجتكم بمجرد انكم تكونو خارج المغرب
 حسسونا انكم كتمثلونا انكم مغاربة هذا هو طلبنا

(We did not feel that you are Moroccan.

Why do you (plural) forget your dialect as soon as you're out of Morocco?

If outright disdain is directed toward artists whose linguistic choices approximate too closely those of their Middle Eastern interlocutors, more annoying and bewildering it seems is when a Moroccan singer borrows a Mashreqi dialect with co-North African interviewers as conveyed in comment (6).

(A Tunisian program/show, which means Maghrebi (i.e., of the Great Maghreb), and she is screeching in Lebanese, she said zghera tffffffuuuuuuuu.)

At the level of orthographic choice, the creator of this Facebook page as the examples have shown thus far uses the Arabic script consistently in writing *fushā* and *dārija*. This strategic choice is consistent with the meta-message of the page, and shows allegiance to the Arabic script. This does not extend to the majority of the commenters who tend to use Romanized *dārija* and *fushā* in admonishing the Moroccan celebrities, or code switch between *dārija* and French as illustrated in examples (7) and (8) as well as in the numerous examples provided in section 4.

(pchaaaaaaaakh [exaggerated expression of disbelief] you can't tell this one is Moroccan at all ... Oh, my sorrow!)

Atiqa Hachimi - 9789004346178
Downloaded from Brill.com04/26/2023 10:19:27AM
via free access

(These people are justified to say that Moroccan women are PR(ostitutes) and they really are.)

These comments were addressed to Moroccan singer Mona Amarsha who sings and speaks mainly in Gulf Arabic. In (7) the serio-ludic stance is enacted both by reduplication in *pchaaaaaaaakh* to heighten the expression of disbelief but also by the use of the Standard Arabic *wa ʔasratah!*, a hyperbolic expression of sorrow that one often encounters in serious styles and genres. Here, orthographic play and intertextual incongruity combine to achieve humorous effects. While (8) can hardly be said to convey humour, what is significant and ironic from a language ideological perspective is that the commenter uses French – the former colonial language – to rebuke this performing artist for passing as a Gulf Arabic speaker. I have argued elsewhere that a Moroccan woman's ability to pass for a native speaker of Gulf Arabic varieties has become “iconic of sexual availability” (Hachimi 2016:165). These comments conjure up the stereotypical images of the seductive, temptress, and sexually loose Moroccan woman that circulates in Middle Eastern representations.

Relevant to the gendered discourse that permeate this Facebook page is that the few blacklisted male artists on this Facebook page are portrayed as homosexual or unmanly or both when criticized for converging to Middle Eastern Arabic varieties. The implication here is that presumably “real Moroccan men” are loyal to their local variety and only those who embrace “feminine qualities” speak the Mashreqi dialects. In general, this gendering of linguistic authenticity, which has been addressed in relation to French in Tunisia (Walters 2011) and Morocco (Sadiqi 2003), points to the importance of gender in the linguistic construction of national identity. In the next section I turn to the moralizing stances towards the Moroccan actresses' (under)dressing style and show the ways in which the written texts and images co-construct them as inauthentic and disreputable.

4 Playful Voices and Policing Clothing Style

As I mentioned earlier, complaints about the Moroccan actresses' breach of modesty come primarily from the 2011 Marrakech International Film Festival (MIFF), known in Arabic as المهرجان الدولي للفيلم بمراكش. Figure 10.2 is a collage of compromising images of three Moroccan actresses at MIFF's red carpet event with pragmatic and metapragmatic framings. The multimodal resources the administrator of the page draws on here show a great deal of creativity. They involve artful and playful combinations of different styles/registers, scripts,

FIGURE 10.2 Moroccan actresses as the target/object of ridicule in the Facebook page

colours, languages, verbal art forms like punning and irony, as well as the skillful juxtaposing and spatial ordering of images. Indeed, as Kress (2003:140) succinctly put it “*The world told is a different world to the world shown*” (emphasis in the original).

This collage is produced by the administrator of the Facebook page and displays a “communicative act in which image and text blend like instruments in an orchestra” (Van Leeuwen 2005). Indeed, the written texts and the images work in tandem to animate the serious playfulness that runs throughout this social networking site. The play frame is keyed by the front and centre summons *aji dhak m3ana* (come laugh with us) and consolidated by the other

metapragmatic material in this pastiche. For ease of referencing, the linguistic varieties and typographic resources in this collage are reproduced as extracts (9)–(11) and discussed individually.

(9) Moroccan Arabic in the Roman script

aji dhak m3ana

(Come laugh with us)

This Moroccan Arabic summons is rendered in the Roman script with the numeral 3 as a substitute for the letter *ʿayn* in *m3ana*. This substitution of letters with numerals, which has been discussed in a number of CMC Arabic studies (e.g., Caubet 2012, Palfreyman et al 2007, Warschauer et al 2007), in fact, is not limited to Arabic but has been part of the playful resources by early CMC users. Looking at the typographic and visual elements of the summons, however, one is struck by the smaller font and the yellow colour against a white background which renders it almost imperceptible in sharp contrast to the striking and prominent vertical text on the left hand side, which is rendered in the Arabic script and in red, and stands out against the white background (the text is reproduced in a linear fashion in (10)). Both the spatial ordering of the Standard Arabic text, the bigger font, and the red colour conveys its visual importance vis-à-vis the Romanized Moroccan Arabic text. This I believe is not necessarily because Standard Arabic texts carry more importance than Romanized *dārija* texts but rather because, in this context, the Standard Arabic text *does* the humour while the Moroccan Arabic text merely *signals* to it. In other words, the administrator of the page privileges the social and pragmatic function of the SA text, because it carries a pun, or verbal play.

(10) Standard Arabic in the Arabic script:

مهرجان مراكش الدولي للعرى 18 +

(The International Marrakesh Festival of Nudity 18 +)

The pun in (10) plays on the very name of the festival مهرجان مراكش الدولي للفيلم (lit. The International Marrakech Festival of the Film) by substituting للفيلم (of the film) with للعرى (of nudity), rendering it instead (The International Marrakech Festival of Nudity.) By adding the 18 + (i.e., age 18 or older), the administrator of the page is wittily drawing on familiar Hollywood discourses of rating films according to their (un)suitability for younger audiences. Thus ranking these images as 18+ exaggerates their sexual content and implies their suitability for adult audiences only.

The humorous effect and double entendre of puns are also exploited in the top right image of the collage but this time through a ludic French text which involves punning of *Fatale* ~ *Tefal*, which is reproduced in (11).

- (11) French pun in the Roman script
 Femme Tefal
 (Tefal woman)

This verbal play of the French word *Fatale* with *Tefal* changes the original *Femme Fatale* 'lit. fatal woman' into *Femme Tefal* 'Tefal woman'. Tefal, of course, is the brand name of non-stick cooking appliances. The intended indexical chain and symbolic associations here are with food and overweight. The humorous effect of this French pun relies on incongruity in two ways. If the iconic *Femme Fatale* "depicts an attractive and seductive woman, especially one who will ultimately bring disaster to a man who becomes involved with her" (Oxford Dictionary), the Tefal woman depicts a woman who lacks these qualities because she is overweight from overeating. The dissonance essential in humour exploits visual incongruity between type of body and type of gown. That is, the target of the ridicule here is the voluptuous body (the uncovered upper body) in a strapless dress. The expectation is for this type of body, as the cultural script goes, is to stay clear from this type of Western gown. Pushed to its logical conclusion, this pun entails that this 'Tefal woman' brings disaster not to the man involved with her but to her nation. Indeed, verbal play, as Sherzer (2002) has long pointed out, is not a frivolous pursuit. Rather, it "flirts with the boundaries of the socially, culturally, and linguistically possible and appropriate".

Clearly, the fact that the producer of this collage is choosing to write one caption in the Roman script and another in the Arabic script shows that technological constraints are not at issue, that is, writing in the Arabic script is not a hindrance. Since writing and orthographies are hardly socially neutral technologies (Sebba 2012), the scriptural variation observed here seems to be a strategic stylistic choice that is deployed for pragmatic and ideological effects. Similarly, the intertextuality involved in the French pun indexes not simply familiarity with the French language but an ability to cite and play with iconic cultural products. The author of the collage seems to be showing and writing to a co-national audience that can get the humor and participate in making it. In responding to the call to join in on the humour, the participants' uptake, however, ranges from those who uphold the humour to those who exploit the discursive license afforded by the lack of responsibility to the stars and anonymity of the internet to engage in direct verbal abuse and slander.

Proverbs and idiomatic expressions are deployed heavily and creatively in the co-production of the ridicule of the actresses. Proverbs, as Mieder (2004: 40) notes “represent traditional wisdom about life’s concerns and tribulations, and they continue to be employed as fitting commentaries on human relationships and social concerns.” There is an over reliance on a few ironic Moroccan proverbs and I will consider one that has been deployed the most to enact the playful moralizing stances. Excerpt (12) is a textual alteration of the original Moroccan proverb by the administrator of the page to frame one of the photos in Image (2). By far, the bottom left photo in the collage has received the most number of shares reaching 4,019,337 shares by 2013 when I first came across this Facebook page. It is also by far the image that has received the largest number of comments. While this intensified sharing and commenting maybe indicative of the most abhorred form of “indecent exposure”, one that offends the sensibility of Moroccans, there is no denying that people secretly like looking at the pictures as they condemn them.

(12) الزين يحشم على زينو ولطيفة اشرار الى هداها الله لoooooool الله يستر

(The beautiful is shy about flaunting his beauty, and Latifa Ashrar will do so only with the grace of God (lit. if Allah showed her the right path) looooooooool May Allah send his mercy.)

Comment (12) plays with a very familiar proverb that has great currency in Morocco ‘zine (ka)yhsham *علا zino, u lkhaayb ila hdah Allah*’ by reproducing the first phrase *الزين يحشم على زينو*, and substituting the original word of the proverb *lkhaayb* ‘the ugly’ with the actress’s first and last name. While her first name is reproduced faithfully, her last name however involves wordplay by phonic substitution of *h* with *sh* to turn the actress’ last name *ahraar* (lit. free, plural), into *ashraar* (lit. villain plural). The playfulness is maintained by the lengthened *لoooooool* (Loooooooool) and ends with a double entendre in the well-known idiom *الله يستر* (May Allah protect but also ‘May Allah cover (this nudity).’)

Figure 10.3 is a creative response from one of the participants, which involves the playful combination of this authoritative proverb with images for great rhetorical effects. It juxtaposes photos of two American actresses in gowns that fully cover their legs with the Moroccan actress in different compromising poses who is deliberately opening her Kaftan to show her legs. The Romanized *dārija* caption placed beneath the photos aligns each of these with a corresponding line from the proverb, with the American actresses aligned with the

Zine Kay7cham 3La Zino... wLkhayab Lah Yahdih..

FIGURE 10.3 *Juxtaposing images of American and Moroccan entertainment celebrities*

positive line *Zine Kay7cham 3la Zino* (The beautiful is shy about flaunting his beauty) while the Moroccan actress is aligned with the second and negative line of the proverb *wLkhayab Lah Yahdih* (but the ugly may Allah show him the right path). Capitalization of the first letters of the words in (o7) adds to the visual effects here.

(13) *Zine Kay7cham 3la Zino ... wLkhayab Lah Yahdih ...*

(The beautiful is shy about flaunting his beauty ... but the ugly may Allah show him the right path...)

The juxtaposition of the captioned images of the American actresses who embody authentic Hollywood red carpet practices with those of the Moroccan actress is a powerful semiotic strategy that works to position the Moroccan actress as a 'clone', not the real thing. This creative juxtaposition sneaks in the trope of "us" (Moroccans) versus "them" (Americans) and suggests that even those who are legitimate representatives of Hollywood practices and have license to be less modest in their dress, are in fact showing more modesty than our tasteless Moroccan actresses. The 'clone' bothers and deserves to be ridiculed. Yet, she gets to be watched intensely. It is in these ways that discursive and visual elements co-construct the inauthenticity of the Moroccan actress.

Equally important is the creative iteration of this very proverb by a large number of commenters. I consider only a few examples here that illustrate how the creative quoting of the proverb interacts with linguistic and orthographic variation in the animation of the playful stance. On the one hand, we can see a great deal of variation in romanized Arabic writing when we compare extract (14) with (13) above (Zine vs. zin; o vs. w; ya7cham vs. kayhcham, lkhayb vs. lkhayab). The proverb in (14) follows a French sentence itself rendered in an informal register (indexed by lack of capitalization and double negation, non-standard spellings *ms* for *mais*, *fais* for *fait*). The switch to the authoritative voice of Moroccan folk wisdom functions almost like a punch line.

- (14) je sais pas ce qu'elle aurait fais si elle etait belle ms bon ... **zine ya7cham
gla zino w lkhayab ghir yla hdaah llah**

(I don't know what she would have done if she were beautiful but well ... The beautiful is shy about flaunting his beauty, and the ugly (does so) only (lit. if Allah showed him the right path) with the grace of Allah/God.)

Idioms, as Drew and Holt (1988:398) have pointed out "have a special robustness which lends them the function of summarizing the complaint in such a way as to enhance its legitimacy, and simultaneously to bring the complaint to a close." While comment (14) does just that, the comment in extract (15), however, plays with the proverb by faithfully citing its first line at the very start of the comment but drops the second part altogether replacing it instead with a sarcastic irony and ritual insults.

- (15) **zin kihechal g3ala zino walkhayba** bahal had lkamar hantoma katchofo kahrja men film dial lkhli33 wdik rajlin karminn mafihom mayt3ara

(The beautiful is modest about his beauty but the ugly like this face (pejorative), as you can see, she came out from a horror film, and those legs are (lit. dry) skinny, they are not worth flaunting/exposing.)

Regardless of where they are placed, proverbial expressions are quotable texts that have authority. This recurring proverb, as I have shown, serves as a ready-made packaged insult that ties in well with the larger goal of policing morality by targeting the size and the shape of these actresses' bodies. If these actresses are trying to showcase their beauty, it would seem that the most effective way to undermine them is to ridicule the very bodies they flaunt. And just as the

voluptuous body is ridiculed so is the thin body as the ritual insults to which I turn make amply clear.

Ritual insults are also deployed with great frequency in this playful space. As one browses the large number of comments on this Facebook page, one gets the sense that the participants are on a stage of verbal humour competition. Comments (16)–(22) are illustrations of some of the ritual insults that exploit metaphors to ridicule the actress's legs. Used by different participants, comments (16) and (17) are typographic variations of the same referent: Marquise cigarettes, a local brand of cigarettes that are known for being skinny, tall and cheap. Comment (18) continues with smoking metaphors likening the actress's legs to *sabssi* (سبسي); a local smoking device that is about four times longer than cigarettes and is often associated with hashish smoking.

(16) jouj marquise

(17) 2 MARQUIZ

(18) kon kan chi zin dial bssah ya sabssi

(lit. I wish there was some actual beauty, oh (you) smoking tube)

In their desire to come up with the most creative ritual insults, other participants deployed bird metaphors likening the actress' legs to the long and skinny legs of a stork, adding reduplicated signs of laughter for further affective impact as in (19). Others, on the other hand, turned to metaphors of calamities while respecting the rhyme as in (20), while others turned to diseases and even death as in extracts (21) and (22), respectively.

(19) heta rejlin dyala b7al rejlin d belarej hhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh

(Even her legs look the legs of a stork hhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh)

(20) واش كتبين لين فورما ديلها لزين لفصلا كيفها كيف لبالا

(Is she showing us her body shape? No beauty, no shape, she resembles a calamity)

(21) fiha lkosa7

(She has rickets disease)

- (22) hadik raha majatch twarri lnass gaftan lmaghribi raha jat twarri ma ta7t algaftan. wa ra ta haja ma jat m3ak wa nti **b7al** ila nawdok man tabout ya **wjah drakula**

(This one didn't come to show people the Moroccan Kaftan. Actually she came to show them what's beneath the Kaftan. Nothing suits you, and you look like you've just risen from a tomb, Dracula face.)

In this space for ridicule, sarcastic and ironic comments populate the comments as illustrated by examples (23)–(25). They all target the naked body and draw from a variety of stylistic resources and linguistic varieties including Moroccan Arabic but also Egyptian Arabic. Combined with sarcasm, (23)–(25) exploit a panoply of discursive tactics to enact the serio-ludic stance with enhanced affective impact (e.g., reduplicated punctuation '!!!!' in (23); Lengthening in yaaaaasalam in (24) and **ايبسيحشم** in (25); onomatopoeia (e.g. hhhhhh in 24). In many ways, these tactics are very similar to what Thurlow (2011) and others have found in the performative enactment of playfulness.

- (23) **la 7aydih nti 7ssen !!!!**

(Why don't you take it off, that's even better!!!!)

- (24) hhhhhhhhhhhhhh yaaaaasalam zela gaftan almaghribi hhhhh

(hhhhhhhhhhhh Oh(lengthened) wow? Look at the Moroccan Kaftan hhhhh)

- (25) **وكنشوف مهران مراکش كانوا فيه غير المحترمه لاختها الله ينعل لي ما ايبسيحشم**

(I see that there were only respectable women at the Marrakech festival. May Allah curse those who have no shame.)

Unlike other comments which are predominantly in Moroccan Arabic either in the Arabic or Roman script, comment (26) is in Romanized Egyptian Arabic. It makes reference to a very well-known line from an Egyptian comedy play from the 1980s called **شاهد ما شفش حاجة** (a witness who didn't see anything). Whether this comment is made by an Egyptian or a Moroccan is difficult to say since Moroccans have a complex linguistic repertoire that includes Egyptian Arabic. The point here is that an Egyptian Arabic line is an intertextual resource in humour and meaning-making for Moroccans.

- (26) laabsa minghir hodom hhh [Egyptian Arabic]
 (Lit. she is wearing without clothes, i.e., she is naked)

Before I turn to the discussion section, it is important to see how ‘serious’ voices are animated in this ‘space for play’. Comment (27) might be considered a typical ‘serious’ stance that draws heavily on religious discourse to admonish the actresses’ breach of decency. Yet, while (27) uses the Arabic script and thus aligns script and religious discourse, religious discourse is neither tied to the use of Standard Arabic or the Arabic script. A great many frozen expressions that draw from religious discourse are common and exploit different writing resources as shown in (28)–(30). In extract (30), the serious and religious stance is further communicated through a variety of discursive and visual tactics: the iconography (I love Mohammad, Peace Be Upon Him), the screen name is *Mouslim*, and the frozen religious aphorism (Oh Allah indeed, this is a great sin.)

- (27) الله يسترنا من هذا القوم نساء كاسيات عاريات لا يشمن ريح الجنة وليس هن وزن يوم القيامة (27)
 ... الله يستر ... الله يستر.

(May Allah protect us from these people, “women who will be dressed but appear to be naked.” They will not smell the fragrance of paradise and will have no weight in the Day of Judgment. May Allah protect us ... May Allah protect us.)

- (28) la 7awla wala kowatta illa bilah ...

(Lit. There is no power or strength except with Allah.)

- (29) behal hade l forma khaseha tkhabiha chaweheti rasek w chawhtina m3ak welina nehachemo ngolo rana mghareba a3oudo bilah mina chaytane rajime.

(With a body shape like this, she should hide it. You’ve brought shame on yourself and shame on us too. We are shy to say we are Moroccans. I seek refuge from Allah against the cursed Satan.)

- (30) llahomma inna lahad monkar

(Oh Allah, indeed this is a great sin)

In sum, the different examples in this section demonstrate well how participants display serious play through creative multimodal resources, and how the heteroglossic and intertextual affordances of digital discourse produce ideological oppositions that are meaningful at the levels of form and content.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

Online discourse has massively expanded the writing of vernacular Arabic, and thus provides an important window into the workings of different language ideologies and heteroglossic semiotic practices. This paper has centred on a Facebook page dedicated to the blacklisting of Moroccan celebrities who are accused of committing transgressive verbal and non-verbal acts. My aim has been to shed light on language and gender ideologies in Moroccan digital discourse.

To understand the ways in which social meaning is co-produced and negotiated in this Facebook page, the analysis has drawn on the insights of the 'third wave' of new media sociolinguistics which takes *discourse*, *technology*, *multimodality*, and *ideology* to be key organizing principles. I have shown how participants draw on, and juxtapose, a variety of multimodal resources made available by the ability of Facebook to converge texts, pictures, videos, and images on a single platform. The creative deployment and juxtaposition of these different modes and textualities work in tandem to co-produce the moralizing discourse that underlie the verbal and social hygiene in this Facebook page.

Specifically, I have shown the significance of playfulness and creativity in Moroccan digital discourse. Linguistic and discursive creativity in new media – increasingly central in the analysis of digital writing and discourse – does not necessarily mean creating anew but appropriating and combining elements from different resources at the stancetaker's disposal (e.g., Danet 2001, Danet and Herring 2007, North 2007, Chun and Walters 2011, Thurlow 2011). Playfulness in this blacklisting Facebook page is enacted through diglossic and multilingual play, register play, verbal play, intertextual play, scriptural play, orthographic play, typographic play, and visual play, among others. To view this multimodal and multidiscursive creativity as heteroglossic goes beyond simply acknowledging the co-existence and alternation of different linguistic varieties or considering them as resources, but to pay attention to their dialogic relationship, polyvocality and the extent to which their ideological oppositions have significance (Bailey 2007).

While the metalinguistic discourse explicitly contests the Maghreb-Mashreq ideology, the implicit metapragmatics of written discourse – i.e., the inter-discursive and textual resources through which the gendered serio-ludic stances are animated – contest and subvert in their turn the monolingual and standard language ideologies that inform standard writing norms and styles. This messing with norms by playing with the boundaries of languages and scripts liberates the assumptions of the dominant style through humor and chaos.

However, as I have shown, this messing with the norms is not consistently upheld by everyone in this Facebook page or by a single contributor across all genres. A case in point is the linguistic and scriptural choices of the owner/administrator of this Facebook page, who uses mostly the Arabic script in writing Moroccan and Standard Arabics, and tends to avoid Arabic-French code switching and French except in a single pun. These agentive and strategic choices index a desire to do as one preaches, and manifest a need to style the self as an authentic Moroccan who is loyal to symbolic means of Moroccaness. Furthermore, the choice of English over French in framing this Facebook page can hardly be said to be ideologically neutral. It animates a newer language ideological opposition – one that pits French against English in reimagining national identity in the New Morocco.

As new media technologies have become an integral part of young people's everyday lives in Morocco, I have shown that scholars need to pay particular attention to the complexities of digital writing and discourse and its implications for the discursive construction of language, gender, and national identity.

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