Marriage Al 'Mosaico' in Divorzio All'Islamica a Viale Marconi: Muslim-Arab Migrants' Code Switching at Play in Amara Lakhous' Novel

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Abstract

The present article focuses on a popular novel set in Rome, Divorzio *all' islamica a Viale Marconi* (2010)*,* in which the Italian-Algerian author Amara Lakhous discusses the struggles of immigrants in an 'arabicized Italian' narrative style. The study offers insights on the patterns and meanings of code-switching as used by Muslim-Arab migrants living in Italy.

The fact that non-Italian codes (Arabic, French, and English) are often followed by an equivalent translation into Italian- the original language of the text- brings forward the questioning of the reason behind this particular kind of code-switching. That is, according to the text, if Italian lexical support is sufficient to describe emotions, attitudes, and behaviours, what function does code-switching play for Muslim-Arab migrants living in Italy? And is this function motivated by the dynamics of a strategic *convivencia* or by some hidden potencies of Othering?

I argue that there exists in *Divorzio all'islamica a viale Marconi* a coexisting relationship between code-switching and identity, and that code switching in the novel acts as a polyphonic bridge that ingeniously connects the gap between multiple voices giving rise thereby to a hybrid zone where negotiation of meaning occurs.

Keywords: Postcolonial Migrant Literature, Contemporary Italy, Code Switching, Sociolinguistics, Bakhtin, Bhabha, Dialogic theory, Hybridity, Third Space, Integration.

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Introduction:

All over the world the rapid emergence of multicultural communities has resulted in frequent contact between peoples communicating in different languages and dialects. Conversations in such milieu are often carried on with an alternation between linguistic codes. This common process of changing back and forth language and/or language varieties is known as code-switching, which is considered one of the most chaotic phenomena in the field of sociolinguistics.

Despite the sizable literature that exists on the numerous aspects and functions of code switching, studies that investigate the motivational purpose of this concept are much rarer. And even among the analyses that examine the motivating factors behind shifting language/dialect within the social contact, many tend to conclude that code switching occurs due to lexical need or social discourse.

The case study to be offered here is *Divorzio all' islamica a Viale Marconi*, a 2010 novel written by the Italian-Algerian author Amara Lakhous. In this literary production, the author discusses the issue of immigration and integration of Muslim migrants in an Occidental country, Italy. The narrative description in this book offers insights on the patterns and meanings of code switching.

The focus of the present paper is on the analysis of non-Italian utterances used in their original linguistic form (Arabic; French; English) by postcolonial Muslim-Arabic migrants living in Italy. The fact that the non-Italian codes are often followed by an equivalent translation in Italian, which is the original language of the text, brings forward the questioning of the reason behind this particular kind of code-switching. That is, according to the text, if the Italian lexical support is sufficient to describe emotions, attitudes, and behaviours, what function does code-switching play for Muslim-Arab migrants living in Italy? And is this function motivated by the dynamics of strategic integration or by the hidden potencies of 'Othering'[1]?

I argue that there exists in *Divorzio all'islamica a viale Marconi* a coexisting relationship between code-switching and identity, and that code switching in the novel acts as a Bakhtenian polyphonic bridge that ingeniously connects the gap between multiple voices giving rise accordingly to the Bhabhanian 'third space' of hybridity where negotiation of meaning occurs.

Synopsis of the novel:

Divorzio all'islamica a viale Marconi is the creation of the Italian Algerian- born author Amara Lakhous whose writing style has been dominated by a mix of satire and tradition and by an innovative strategy that adopts Arabic along with Italian as languages of literary expression. The "arabicized Italian" has become a constant in

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[1] Othering, in this context, means the exclusion of non-Muslims from the *ummah* -community- through the inclusion of Islamic phrases in their speech that are expressed in Arabic language. Another case of Othering is related to the postcolonial context: the migrants are Muslims coming from places that have been colonized by European countries. The article questions whether Italians are othered. In an affirmative situation, it would be related to using the postcolonial language (French/English) as a 'speech back' to transmit one's historical identity. In the way, Italy gets dissolved in a huge classification- the Occident. In other words, Italy becomes 'occidentalized'.

Lakhous' productions which also come to be distinguished by the writer's practice of rewriting not anymore from Arabic to Italian, but vice versa from Italian to Arabic.

Set in 2005, the novel throws light on the personal and communal aspects of Muslim immigrants' life inside a crowded area of Rome that is rarely seen by tourists, Viale Marconi. The story unfolds in alternating chapters by first-person narratives of two ordinary protagonists, Christian/ Issa and Safia/Sofia.

Christian is a Sicilian citizen with a Mediterranean appearance who acquired native - like proficiency in speaking Arabic after having spent his life studying the language. He is recruited by an Italian undercover agency to infiltrate a terrorist cell in the Muslim community of "Little Cairo" and to try to stop the conspiracy before it takes place by using his new identity of a Tunisian immigrant, "Issa". In his double life, Issa shares an apartment with various Muslim menand proves to be better at having compassion towards their struggles as immigrants than at finding information that proves them guilty of a crime. Besides that, Issaworks at a pizzeria with an Egyptian supervisor Said/Felice who happens to be Safia/Sofia's husband.

Safia is an Egyptian woman who migrated to Italy after her arranged marriage to Said. By considering himself a devout Muslim, her husband demands that Safia wear the veil and limit her life to fulfilling the domestic role of a wife and of a mother. Safia appears to be obedient to the masculine imposed commands. But on the other side, having been influenced by Italian cinema while still living in Egypt, she has always aimed to become a hairdresser. This dream migrates with her to Rome where she starts practicing it clandestinely with the neighbourhood clientele. In that way, Sofia, like Issa, goes undercover to rebel against patriarchal oppression that is enforced on her in the name of religion, Islam.

The paths of the two protagonists intersect one day with Issa's defense of Sofia in the face of Italian racism to which she fell victim at an outdoor food market. In the meantime, Sofia's marital life has been taken by conflicts that ended with domestic violence and Sofia being repudiated by her husband three times which, according to Islamic tradition, is equivalent to a finalised divorce and to a marriage that cannot be restored unless the wife consummate marriage with another Muslim man, then gets divorced by him. Taking advantage of this religious arrangement, Sofia intends to marry Issa and to remain with him as the two has become increasingly attracted to each other.

However, Christian's boss at the intelligence service, Giuda, twists the plan by revealing that the entire terrorist plot was a test to see if Christian enjoys the required skills to work in real 'War on Terror ' projects. Although Christian was deemed successful in his mission, Giuda tells him that by falling in love with Sofia, he failed the 'woman' test. Christian does not provide any answer regarding Giuda's offer to join the undercover team, and with that the end of the story remains open.

Analysis:

Under the title *Divorzio all'islamica a viale Marconi* which means *Divorce Islamic style in Viale Marconi*, the novel is introduced into a dialogical third space. The female protagonist Sofia declares that "ormai *Divorzio all'islamica a viale Marconi*

ha superato tutte le telenovele egiziane, messicane, brasiliane e turche messe insieme!"[2](Lakhous, 2010)

Such was her response to the regretful husband who is asking to be forgiven after having repudiated Sofia for three times, and in so doing has finalized the divorce procedure. According to Lombardi-Diop and Romeo (2012),this is a classic *mise-en-abyme* in reverse because it is Sofia's Divorce Islamic Style, being similar to a telenovela, that renders the embedding work (literary text) metafictional.

From an Islamic perspective, it is important to note that this formula in ending a marriage is limited to the Sunnis and does not entail the Shia doctrine. Sunnism allows for the repetition of divorce to be pronounced by the husband who keeps the right to take the wife back in the first two times. The marital status is lost only in the third time. The novel projects this phenomenon through Sofia's voice echoing,

"Sembra una scena tratta da una telenovela noiosissima. Il titolo potrebbe essere *Divorzio all'islamica*"[3]At the third recurrence, partners are considered divorced, but also the no-longer married woman cannot go back to her husband unless she is married to someone else, and then she is to be either divorced or widowed from the second marriage.

However, in Shiism, this issue takes a different turn. First, the right of divorce is given to both man and woman. Second, the legality of a divorce is not determined by the repetition of the utterance *Anti tàliq* 'Sei ripudiata'[4], but by character witnesses who must be present to testify about the moral fitness to a party in divorce.

In addition, Sofia's voice can be disintegrated into a multiplicity of voices that can exploit distinct ideological perspectives for the reader entering in a dialogic relationship with the character. The above-mentioned example can be taken as a case in which though the linguistic forms presented by Sofia were not switched, the meanings still had their festival.

However, at the end of the literary text, the dialogue created by Christian's imagination is carried on between Giuda and himself. The voice embeds a linguistic polyphony at work to create new meanings for what is thought to be fixed/destined or *màktub*.

" 'Quindi l' operazione "Little Cairo" è stata tutta una messa in scena?' 'Messa in scena noooo …L' hai appena letto: nient'altro che un test, un training'. 'Una sorta di *Scherzi a parte*, un *Truman Show* all'italiana!'"[5]

The *Truman Show* narrates the story of a man whose innocence of his own reality is highlighted in him not knowing that he has become an international star through having every moment of his life broadcast via television to a global audience. Moreover, insult is added to injury as Truman is not only given a false identity, but also is told that it is the truth. (Sutherland, 2000)

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[2] For subsequent examples from the novel, only page numbers will appear in the body of the paper.
[3] 168
[4] 84
[5] 185

Hence, on the part of Christian who crossed in his role-play to the Muslim migrant side, code switching into today's global communication language, English, stands as an insightful pose to question the reality of migrant identity and its connection to representations of the foreigner Other.

The shifting of "Little Cairo", "test", "training", "Truman show" into English bridges the gap between the various linguistic forms, Sicilian, Italian, Tunisian, and Egyptian, used by Issa throughout his national security mission. It does that by creating a third space that problematizes the binary opposition in the question of who is/ is not a migrant in the Italian future.

So, how does the mutability of language within the rest of the text reflect the unsettled dialogue between thoughts and voices? The answer to this question shall be the main concern of the analysis in this article. I take as a case study the voices of Muslim Arab migrants, and particularly that of Christian/Issa. It is important to note that the latter protagonist is Sicilian, and that his identity is mirrored linguistically in dialectal utterances that are native to Sicily. However, since Christian's mission in the plot is to infiltrate the Muslim community at "Little Cairo", his identity is in disguise. He is introduced in the text as the narrator "Issa". Thus, his voice belonging to that of an Arab Muslim migrant reveals constant shifting into Arabic.

Lakhous' narrative reflects an awareness of the polyphonic meanings that lie beneath the surface of linguistic codes. This is seen through a planned presentation of code switching within the text. As Bennett-Kastor (2008) points out, "multiliterate texts are constructed deliberately so that switch points or other points of linguistic contact within the text often signal additional, metaphorical levels of meaning which are coherent with the theme and/or other aspects of the work"

Divorzio all'islamica is written in what Lakhous calls "arabicized Italian"(Lakhous, 2010). The main language is Italian, but it comes interspersed with Arabic terms, interjections or phrases. The insertion of Arabic is, in most cases, immediately followed by a translation of meaning to Italian. In some cases, the terms that are introduced in Arabic belong to the same terminological order as those present in Italian. Poplack and David Sankoff (1988) referred to this strategy as *constituent insertion*.

Within this framework, code switching gives priority to monolingual Italian readers by providing a barrier-free access to the content of the text. However, the translation that places Arabic in explanatory opposition to Italian can look redundant to bi/multi-lingual, (non) Italian-Arab immigrant readers. Thereby, code switching would not have here the effect of familiarizing an 'exotic' linguistic form, but rather it would merely constitute a repetition that is necessary to preserve the coherence of the text itself.

Furthermore, some Arabic terms or phrases have been used within the text without any recurrence to translation. The understanding of the monolingual Italian reader hereis made easy through the context – that is, the situation of the term/phrase within the text as well as on its grammatical and syntactical agreement with the whole semantic compositionality that surrounds it.

To go more into further specificity and details, the novel illustrates four main aspects of code switching: cultural, religious, postcolonial, and global. Examples of each category is provided below and grouped under the corresponding voice that echoes its occurrence throughout the plot. It will be noted that the voices of Muslim Arab migrants do not involve only Arabic varieties - classical, Egyptian, and Tunisian- but also non-Arabic linguistic forms including Italian, French, and English. And as Groppaldi (2012) indicates, there exists a game of mirrors in the morpho-sintactical structure of the lakhousian language.

The narrative voice of Issa:

A. Cultural code switching:

1. Issa's Tunisian grandfather:

"*Shismek*, come ti chiami? *Shniahwelek*, come stai? *Win meshi*, dove vai? *Yezzi*, basta! *Nhebbek barsha*, ti voglio bene assai. E altre ancora"[6]

These are the first Arabic words that Issa learned from his Tunisian grandfather. They are not expressed in the classical form of the language, but rather belong to the colloquial dialect of Tunis. Issa needed to mirror an expertise of the system through the process of adopting a native Tunisian accent that ungrammaticalizes his Italian.

This strategy which also requires incorporating more Sicilian dialect in his speech having been a Tunisian immigrant in Sicily before can guarantee his linguistic camouflage within the Muslim Arab community in "Little Cairo" at Viale Marconi.

"L'ideale è parlare un italiano con doppia cadenza: araba, perché sono tunisino, e siciliana, perché sono un immigrato che ha vissuto in Sicilia. Forse meno italiano parlo meglio sarà. Decido senza esitazione di sospendere momentaneamente molte regole grammaticali, quindi via il congiuntivo e il passato remoto. Mi scassa la minchia rinunciare al nostro adorato passato remoto"[7]

2. Saber:

"Issa, ho bisogno solo di un minuto ber conquistarla. Non mi hai ancora visto all'obera. Quando scendo in bista non c'è bosto ber nessun concorrente!"/ "Non c'èbroblema. Sarà lei a venire da me"[8]

This is an example of an Egyptian migrant who appears to use his Arabic 'accent' to express himself in Italian. The present phonological switching needs to be understood in the context of the immigrant's native language. In the Arabic alphabet, there are twenty-eight letters, and none of them represents the unvoiced bilabial phoneme /p/. The closest Arabic equivalent is carried with the phoneme /b/.

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[6] 17
[7] 45
[8] 70

Although its production is bilabial such as seen in the case of the English phoneme/p/ for its articulation takes place by bringing the lips together, the Arabic/b/-"ب" is different in terms of voicing. It is a voiced phoneme that engages the vocal cords in its articulation. This phenomenon contrasts with that of the voiceless consonant 'p' which employs air flow without any vocalized tone.

Therefore, what Saber's switching of the phonetic code symbolizes here is the act of bridging the voice of linguistic struggle that Arab migrants face when trying to learn a new language that features striking differences from their own native tongue. Even at the phoneme level, where lies the smallest unit of language, Arabic needs to integrate new arrangements in its system for understanding to occur.

In this regard, it is important to indicate that an Arabic letter has been created, in fact, to represent the transliteration of the English phoneme /p/. It appears as the Arabic equivalent "ب" for /b/, but the difference is seen in the addition of two more dots at the bottom of the original Arabic letter. "پ"

3. Mohamad:

A Moroccan immigrant suffering from depression for living far away from his family who he left back home, Mohammad shares his personal problems and experiences with Issa who empathizes with his roommate situation. The secret agent´s supportive attitude gains him the trust of Mohammad who shares with him a story of sensitive content

"E mi racconta la storia di un connazionale, residente in una città del Nord, arrestato perché aveva detto a un amico al telefono quesdta frase: "Ho intenzione di fare una *màjzara*islamica, inscialla". Qualche interprete, forse per incompetenze o per malfede, ha tradotto la parola *màjzara* con "strage" anziché con "macelleria"!" [9]

The use of code-switching in Mohammad's conversation brings attention towards the Italian maxim: traduttore, traditore in a real-life situation. The shared story reveals that translating a code at the morphological level without considering a contextualization of the source culture can hinder the comprehension of the message creating, as seen in this case, a serious dilemma. Mohammad does not intend to commit a real *Màjzara* (a slaughter/crime), but rather he recurs to the colloquial use of this word which has gained popularity as a connotation that reflects the high state of anger that a particular situation invokes in a person.

According to Bahameed (2008), the translator's mission should cover the loyalty to the linguistic properties of the code itself in the source language, but it is responsible also to produce a code that suits the cultural expectations of the target language addressees. And so here, the question of intercultural translation can be raised.

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[9] 156

4. <u>Music:</u>

"Riesco anche a vedere la copertina del cd che ha nelle mani: *Aawwedt aini*, 'Ho abituato i miei occhi', di Umm Kalthum" [10]

The use of code switching here is an attempt from the narrative voice to do justice to the cultural identity carried by the connotative meaning of the song title.

5. <u>Education:</u>

"Ecco perché lo chiamano *bash mohandes*, architteto"[11]

The word *bash* which means 'chief' in Turkish and the Arabic word *mohandes* for 'engineer' or 'architect' are followed by the italian word *architteto* or architect. In Arabic cultures, there are certain occupational terms of address that come preserved for people. Their usage determines where the individual falls on the power axis in society.

Words such as *syadat* "the dominance of" and *sa'adat*/ Ma'ali "the Excellency of" are an example ofaddress terms used exclusively to Muslim scholars and polititians. Likewise, there are specific words that can only be extended to those with high prestige. This aspect is typically acquired by becoming a Ph.D. holder, an engineer, or a doctor - professions that enable to place practitioners on the top of the social hierarchy. (Abuamsha, 2010)

Therefore, the code switching is essential here to convey the problematic transition that the Egyptian immigrant had to face in the new Italian society.From Said the *bashmohandes* to Felice the pizzeria supervisor, the occupational move can be considered tragic from an Arab point of view due to the significant decrease in the involved social prestige.

B. Religious code switching:

1. <u>Dialogue with readers:</u>

"La *salat*, la preghiera, è una sorta di appuntamento con Dio,èmolto importante arrivare puntuali, una prova di rispetto."[12]

"Una fatwa contro il mio velo! Emessa da chi? Dalla macelleria *halal* di tuo marito?"[13]

"Non dire "però. Toccare il maiale è *haram*. Questo non è un parere personale, ma una *fatwa* dei nostri grandi dotti."[14]

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[10] 95. The song is also mentioned on pp. 138
[11] 97
[12] 67
[13] 107
[14] 115

"Il signor Halal ha un modo pacato di parlare, non alza mai la voce. Riesce a smontare la *fatwa* del signor Haram punto per punto, insistendo sul principio secondo il quale il contesto dovrebbe avere la precedenza sul testo [...]"[15]

With the term *salat*, code switching marks the significance of using Arabic language not just in the articulation of the word *per se*, but also in the performance of the act this word calls for. Arab along with non-Arab Muslims refer to prayers using the Arabic term *salat* which in turn is to be performed using the commanded Arabic recitations.

With the terms *fatwa* and *halal*[16], the absence of subsequent Italian equivalent terms sets an expectation from readers to be familiar with words that have become known internationally for their multiple uses especially in the marketplace and politics. In the last two examples, religious code switching reflects the satiric voice regarding the Islamic *fatwa* which is blindly followed by practicing members. Cited by Mr. Halal, the *fatwa* gives Muslim migrants the permission to work in Italian restaurants, whereas when cited by Mr. Haram it stresses on the forbidden acts in Islam that 'we', unlike 'they', should avoid.

2. Akram:

"*Assalamu aleikum*!", "*Aleikum salam*!"[17]

"Ci vediamo presto, insciallah."[18]

The Islamic greeting *Assalamu alaikum* which conveys the meaning of "Peace be upon you" is used in its Arabic form by many Muslims regardless of ethnicity and place of living. This brief form of exchange speaks of an ideology that centers peace at the speaker's level of consciousness. Accordingly, in Muslim communities, *Assalamu alaikum* is perceived for its spiritual content as an indicator of the devoutness of individuals who use it.

 In the novel, Akram certainly intends to assert a high level of *taqwa,* religiosity in "Little Cairo". And, he aims to fulfill this mission through recurrent uses of Islamic greetings and expression. Throughout the text, Akram's hidden intentions to attain social power are revealed. He is the first suspect in what regards the terrorist attack. This shows that *Assalamu alaikum* can be used by hypocrites, and therefore it cannot be considered a reliable measure of a person's goodness from an Islamic perspective.

The response Issa elaborates saying *Alaikum salam* is an example of *adab/ Akhlak*, politeness/ manners. Code switching here follows as well the teachings of the Qur'an:

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[15]136
[16]The word *Haram* is followed by Illecita later on page 102
[17] 13
[18] 15

"When a courteous greeting is offered to you, meet it with a greeting still more courteous, or at least of equal courtesy. Surely Allah takes account of all things." (Surat An-Nisa', 4:86)

Moving on to the *Inscialla* that means God willing, it can be noted the lack of return to the original Italian code to provide an explanation. This also applies to the aforementioned Islamic greeting. The reason is based on the globalised status they have acquired through their sprinkling on Muslim speech in all occasions.

3. <u>Giuda:</u>

"Ya Tunisi, hadhi al shabba al arabia, halal aleik! Tunisino, quella bella araba è tua!"[19]

The code needed to be switched to Arabic here to call attention towards the dominance of shari'a in the Muslim community where personal relationships- even at the most intimate level- get constructed by the ideology of *halal/haram*.

C. Postcolonial codeswitching:

" E io non ho nessuna intenzione di giocare a fare il James Bond o il Donnie Brasco, mi manca il *physique du rôle*"[20]

Adopting the narrative voice of a Tunisian immigrant, Issa stresses, from the beginning of the novel, on the "both" identities that a Tunisian carries as a postcolonial individual prior to being an immigrant. Previously colonized by France, citizens of Tunis code-switch their national variety of Arabic and French in daily life. According to Myers-Scotton (2002), this linguistic engagement is appropriated particularly by the highly educated who attempt to link such language choice to a form of "elite closure". This record does not contradict the educational background of Issa who amazed his colleagues at the university in his rapid learning and skillful use of language.

Issa 'writes back' to the high-class people as he switches to the French phrase *la crème de la crème* to link their socially privileged status to unjust practices within the Italian migration system.

"Nella sala d'attesa, aspettando il suo turno, s' assittò accanto ai raccomandati, alla gente che conta, la crème de la crème: familiari degli ambasciatori stranieri in Italia, imprenditori russi e cinesi, cittadiniextracomunitari di prima classe (americani e canadesi)." [21]

D. Global code switching:

"Mi sottopose al suo quiz preferito, quello delle cinque "w": where, when, why, who e what."[22]

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[19] 162
[20] 12
[21] 91
[22] 31

"Bush figlio è un inguaribile texano, da piccolo adorava I western e andava matto per questa frase: *Wanted, dead or alive*"[23]

" "Little Cairo" deve lanciare al mondo un messaggio chiaro: la lotta al terrorismo islamico, la War on terror come dice il presidente G.W. Bush., richiede una collaborazione internazionale. Forza, brindiamo!"[24]

The Muslim migrant voice switches the code to English when the topic of discussion became political and concerned with fighting terrorism. The tone implied is satirical for the nature of the plot that was planned to stop the terrorist attack against security and stability of citizens turned out to be fictious.

Issa's code switching is contextual. His voice connotates that the United States has been working for the past few decades to bring into reality her ambitious and transformative visions on Muslim majority countries. It has applied the five 'w' questions with caution to astutely secure her status of power and leadership around the globe. But, her heroic to-do list is so far delusional and Muslim citizens and/or migrants who can be innocent but treated as suspects of a crime are as depicted in the novel victims not only of their blind adherence to 'Islamic' traditions, but also of the daily chaotic uncertainties in which they are thrown by the eyes of power.

Several general inferences can be made from the analysis of protagonist narrative voices. First, from the ortho-typographic standpoint, Arabic insertion is distinguished from Italian with plain italic script. This increases the inclusive visibility of the migrant presence in the wider social discourse.

The importance of names is in their power to reveal one's linguistic, ethnic, or religious identity. Some Muslim Arab migrants tend to change their names as an act of linguistic integration within the Occidental society. By that, I mean they intend to eliminate challenges of mispronounciation for non-native Arabic speakers.

This applies to the case of Sofia who becomes aware of Italians' translinguistic process of switching the vowel 'a' that renders her name 'Safia' foreign into the vowel 'o' that brings it to 'Sofia', the familiar name that belongs to Italian culture. This apparently simple tic is not so simple on the deeper level of identity.

The text states that Safia was named so after Safia Zaghloul who, for Egyptians, represents the wife of their first revolutionary minister, Saad Zaghloul. On the other hand, Sofia is connected in the Italian collective imaginary to the famous actress, Sofia Loren. Therefore, this asserts that she is willing to change her name that is integrally connected with her identity as an Egyptian, and it expresses an open desire from her part to become an integral member of Italian society.

The process is mirrored in the case of Christian who, even though he did not have to change the etymological meaning of his name, was required to adopt its Arabo-

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[23]113
[24]140

Islamic form, Issa. This word play is sufficient not only to make him conform with the Migrant Muslim community, but also to emphasize that his own identity is rooted to an Arab-Muslim ancestry.

Conclusion:

Linguistic hybridity in Lakhous' text can be detected in the use of a variety of code switching types. These in turn set out the 'Third Space' where Muslim-Arab identities are always shifting from fixed cultural, religious, postcolonial, and global stereotypes. The polyphonic voices of Sofia and Issa reverberate the 'entre langue' which Bhabha (1994) defines as the language of diffraction that splits the Manichean dialogue of the self and the Other into a multiplicity of possible promises.

Because of the coexistence of diverse dialects in Arabic and Italian and the fact that both languages are interspersed with global loan terms (not to forget the postcolonial linguistic influence in the case of Arabic), there exists in both societies a heteroglotic web of voices that, from a Bakhtinian perspective (1935; 1981) , interact by shifting codes in order to inhabit the multilayered interstices of identity.

By including hybrid Arabic codes, Lakhous reappropriates the Italian language rather than fixing it. A tactic that produces language as the malleable signal of a unique identity that draws upon the diverse cultural milieus. This is the chant of democratic voices that migrate across the mosaic. ~~Can you hear it?~~ Can you feel it?

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