



**SPECIAL FOCUS ON AMAZIGH LITERATURE: CRITICAL AND CLOSE
READING APPROACHES**

The Amazigh Republic of Letters: A Review and Close Readings

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Amazigh literature refers to the literary tradition of Amazigh-speaking populations.¹ Imazighen or Amazigh speakers are the Indigenous people of Tamazgha. Described as the Amazigh homeland, Tamazgha encompasses the territory extending from the Canary Islands in the Atlantic Ocean to the oasis of Siwa in southwest Egypt, including Morocco, Algeria, Niger, Mauritania, Chad, Mali, Libya, Burkina Faso, and Tunisia.² The countries composing this vast territory of indigenous populations have historically spoken a variety of “awāl Amazigh” (Amazigh language).³ Although the current varieties of Tamazight spoken nowadays in these places may not be fully intelligible, they are descendant of a common language that was shared by the different people of Tamazgha. This linguistic kinship is what cements the different trends that compose the expansive territory of Tamazgha. Because of long historical processes beyond their control, the inhabitants of Tamazgha speak a variety of non-Indigenous languages, including Arabic, French, and Spanish. Since their advent at different historical periods, these non-Indigenous languages have shaped the cultural and social landscape in Tamazgha in ways that suppressed the indigenous language and prevented it from fully achieving its literary and

¹ There is an important body of literary studies that we cannot fully engage with in this short introduction. Readers are advised to read: Paulette Galand-Pernet, *Littératures berbères: Des voix et des lettres* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1998); Daniela Merolla, *De l'art de la narration tamazight (berbère)* (Louvain: Éditions Peeters, 2006); Mohand Akli Salhi, *Littérature kabyle: Contexte, poétique et enseignement* (Tizi-Ouzou: Éditions Achab, 2019); Lahcen Zaheur, *Al-Adab al-amāzighī al-hadīth bi-al-maghrib: Al-nash'a 1967-2000* (Ait Melloul: Publications Tirra, 2021); Mohammed Usus, *Fī rihāb al-ungāl: Dirāsāt fī al-riwāya al-amāzighīyya bi-al-janūb* (Ait Melloul: Manshūrāt Rābitāt Tirra, 2022).

² See Brahim El Guabli, *Moroccan Other-Archives: History and Citizenship after State Violence* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2023), 34–36.

³ Al-Hasan al-Wazzān, *Waṣfū ifriqīyya li Muḥammad ben al-Hasan al-Wazzānī al-fāsī al-mulaqqab bi-lion al-ifriqī*, trans., Mohammed Hajji and Mohammed El Akhdar (Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1983), 39.



intellectual potential. These non-indigenous languages have also been used to produce literature and thought, furthering complicating the very notion of Amazigh literature and its contours.⁴

Language is both the vehicle and the vessel for literature. Where there is a language, there is necessarily literature. Imazighen, as a people endowed with a millennial language, are not exceptional in that they have produced a rich literary corpus that is suitable to their cultural, social, and existential needs. After all, literature is crucial for understanding the world and responding to both its challenges and threats. Whether it is mythologies or fables,⁵ tales or novels,⁶ theater,⁷ folklore or poetry,⁸ Amazigh literature, writ large, contains Imazighen's worldview and depicts their ethos vis-à-vis their environment. Using their language's capacity to convey meaning and create new worlds, Imazighen have created founding myths, made gods speak, and sent characters in otherworldly realms.⁹ Imazighen have also long traditions of singing and dancing that produced a rich corpus of proverbs, truisms, and wisdom that are transmitted across generations. Imazighen may not have known the novel and the short story until the postcolonial period, but they certainly have nothing to envy other literary traditions. Imazighen themselves have taken pride in their ancestors' creativity and drawn on this heritage to revive their language and culture during the most challenging period when their very existence was threatened by state de-Amazighization policies in the post-independence period starting from the middle of the 1950s.

⁴ See Brahim El Guabli, "Tankra Tamazight: The Revival of Amazigh Indigeneity in Literature and Art," *Jadaliyya* November 1, 2021, accessed 20 October 2023, <https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/43440>.

⁵ There is a long scholarly tradition that focused on Amazigh tales. Some important works in this regard include René Basset's *Nouveaux contes berbères: Recueillis traduits et annotés* (Paris: Ernest Lereux, 1897), Mouloud Mammeri's *Contes berbères de Kabylie* (Paris: Pocket Jeunesse, 1996), and Hassane Benamara, *Contes amazighs inédits: Bilingue Amazighe-Français* (Paris: Éditions L'Harmattan, 2023).

⁶ The Amazigh novelistic tradition has taken off in the last thirty years. Works published in Tamazight in Morocco and Algeria have been increasing by the day, and the existence of nongovernmental organizations, like Tirra and Ad Nuru in Morocco, has led to a phenomenal increase in the novelist output. An example is Mohamed Akounad's *Tawarigt d imk* (A Dream and a Little More) (Aït Melloul: Centre Imprimerie, 2018), which revolves around the preacher Ssi Brahim, who delivers his Friday sermon in a local Amazigh village in Tamazight, highlighting the language's capability to convey both the sacred and the mundane aspects of life.

⁷ Amazigh theater has an important, albeit underresearched, history, connected to the emergence of the Amazigh cinema in the 1990s. Some studies that focus on theater include Zohra Makach's "Le théâtre marocain d'expression amazighe: un traitement esthétique de l'héritage. L'exemple du metteur en scène Boubker Oumouli." *Expressions maghrebines* 21.1 (2022): 53–67 and Abdellah Boufour's "Hemmu U Namir ou l'Œdipe berbère," *Études et documents Berbères* 14 (1996): 119–141.

⁸ The tradition of tamdyazt or sung poetry is widespread in the Amazigh-speaking communities, and Amazigh poetry is one of the most studied facets of this literature. See, for instance, Hassan Jouad, "Les Imdyazen: une voie de l'intellectualité rurale." *Revue de l'occident musulman et de la méditerranée* 51 (1989): 100–110; Aḥmad 'Aṣīd, *Imārīn: Mashāhīr shuu'arā' ahwāsh fī al-qarn al-'ishrīn* (Rabat: IRCAM, 2011); Ali Khadaoui, *La poésie Amazighe entre l'oralité et l'écriture* (Paris: Edilivre, 2016); Claude Lefebvre, "Les poètes Berbères." *Cahiers de la méditerranée* 38 (1989): 5–21.

⁹ For a longer analysis of this point, see El Guabli, "Tankra Tamazight."

Colonial scholars dismissed the significant Amazigh literary corpus as an oral tradition. Andre Basset argued that Amazigh literature is an oral phenomenon.¹⁰ Amazigh scholars Salem Chaker and Abdellah Bounfour concur with the predominantly oral nature of the old Amazigh literary tradition, but push its boundaries further to highlight the existence of a written tradition as well.¹¹ It has been almost twenty years since Bounfour and Chaker stated this view, and the Amazigh literary field has been transformed in unprecedented ways. Not only has the number of literary works and Amazigh-speaking countries increased, but so, too, has the infrastructure available for publication and dissemination of Amazigh literature become more autonomous, robust, and even more legitimate in the eyes of states and society. The last two decades have witnessed a phenomenal increase in the number of novels, short stories, and poetry collections that form the backbone of the neo-Amazigh literature in Algeria and Morocco specifically. The very fact that the Amazigh literary field shifted from a state of non-existence to a state of increasing prominence, both in terms of numbers of works published and the quality of the literature produced, is a miraculous feat. This is all the more so because Imazighen had not benefited from state resources and governmental budgetary largesse to revitalize their language and literature. Hence, *taskla tamazight tamaynut* (the new Amazigh literature) is a literature forged in the work of civil society and the effort to restore Imazighen's Indigenous rights to land, language, and culture in their own homeland of Tamazgha.¹²

The development of *taskla tamazight tamaynut* has enmeshed it in different networks and disciplinary areas that form a larger interconnected literary sphere.¹³ Literary scholar Daniela Merolla has devised the phrase "Amazigh literary space" to account for the "multilingual, multimedia productions that intersect and interact with literatures produced in one of the vernacular forms of Amazigh (the Berber language)."¹⁴ The notion of an Amazigh "literary space" points to the multiple ways in which Amazigh writers practice writing in Tamazight be it in Tamazight itself or through other languages. As a multilingual people, Imazighen have always written in languages other than their mother tongue. From Saint Augustine to Apuleius to Assia Djebar, Amazigh intellectuals have and will continue to produce literature and thought in languages they inhabit and interact with in their lifetime.¹⁵ This fact complicates

¹⁰ Robert Aspinion has written in his book *Apprenons le berbère: Initiation aux dialectes Chleuhs* that "Berber is not a written language" and that "there is no Berber writing." See Aspinion, *Apprenons le Berbère*, 1.

¹¹ Abdellah Bounfour and Salem Chaker, *Littérature berbère* (Paris: Karthala, 2006), 5.

¹² See Lahoucine Bouyaakoubi, "Amazigh Neo-Literature: The Challenge of Civil Society," *Jadaliyya*, November 1, 2021 accessed 20 October 2023, <https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/43441>; Zaheur, *al-Adab al-amāzighī*, 7.

¹³ Readers can refer to Zaheur's *al-Adab al-amāzighī* for a detailed explanation of the notion of *taskla* in Tamazight. Zaheur, *al-Adab al-amāzighī*, 33–36.

¹⁴ Daniela Merolla, "Intersections: Amazigh (Berber) Literary Space," in *Routledge Handbook of Minority Discourses in African Literature*, eds., Tanure Ojaide and Joyce Ashuntantang (New York: Routledge), 48.

¹⁵ For example, in *Vaste est la prison*, Assia Djebar explores through a Francophone novel the relationship between individual and collective Amazigh memory and literature in the context of

the notion of Amazigh literature and makes a concise definition of its contours not only impossible but also nonproductive. Hence, scholars of Amazigh literature will still continue to be faced with crucial questions regarding the periodization of this literature as well as the place to be allotted to Amazigh literature written through other languages.¹⁶ For this issue, however, our intervention is an attempt to refocus attention on works written in Tamazight. The accessibility of Euro-American languages has already led to the production of an important body of studies that examine Amazigh literature conveyed through these languages, but close reading practices and methodologies have not been applied enough to works written and published in Tamazight.

These debates and the language and circulation politics attendant to them could be resolved by thinking in terms of an “Amazigh Republic of Letters.” Drawing on the intricate weaving of the Persian tapestry, Pascale Casanova sees a “World of Literature” where each singular literary text “can be grasped only in terms of the position it occupies within the whole, and its interconnections with all the others.”¹⁷ However, this interconnectedness is in and of itself a creator of hierarchies as well as a sustainer of relations of domination that govern the relationship of the literary center with its othered periphery. In Casanova’s words, the “the literatures of the periphery are inked to the center by polyglots and translators.”¹⁸ These intermediaries have such power that the numbers of neither readers nor writers matter as much as the “number of cosmopolitan intermediaries – publishers, editors, critics, and especially translators – who assure the circulation of texts into the language or out of it.”¹⁹ Accordingly, these powerful individuals form their own literary regime whose only “imperatives” are supposedly “those of art and literature.”²⁰ Casanova’s *Republic of Letters* has definitely made a significant contribution to literary studies, but it has also failed to see the multiple republics of letters that are created locally to spur literary creativity and, in the case of indigenous languages, revitalize entire absented literary worlds. While a reading of Casanova could suggest that Amazigh literature occupies a meaningful space in the global cultural landscape and should not be confined by the operational restricting laws of national political spaces, this aspiration is limited by the inexistence or the weakness of the intermediaries and institutional setups that she theorizes in the first place. As a result, it is crucial to think about the Amazigh Republic of Letters as its own world, where Amazigh litterateurs, who are in conversation with other literary worlds, come together to rehabilitate and enhance the literariness of their indigenous mother tongue. This Amazigh Republic of Letters has its own producers, norms, judges, aestheticians, awards, evaluators, critics, and transregional and transnational networks

postcolonial Algeria. Also see, Abdelkader Cheref, “Cultural Memory and Resistance in Assia Djebar’s *Vaste est la prison*.” *Romance Studies* 37.3–4 (2019): 134–148.

¹⁶ El Guabli, “Tankra Tamazight.”

¹⁷ Pascale Casanova, “Literature as World.” *New Left Review* 31 (2005): 72.

¹⁸ Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. M.B. Debevoise (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2007), 20.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 21.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 29.

in which community members work position their indigenous literature vis-à-vis other literatures and languages.

Successive colonialisms have impacted the continuity of Tamazight's capacity to develop and expand. The Roman Empire colonized North Africa in the aftermath of Carthage's destruction in 146 BCE and imposed Latin on its inhabitants. Several Amazigh intellectuals and writers adopted Latin to write their literary or liturgical works. These include Saint Augustine and Apuleius. Long after the Roman Empire was gone from North Africa, the Islamic conquests in the seventh century brought Arabic and Islam, further complicating the relationship between Imazighen, their literature, and their mother tongue. Even more so than Latin, Arabic, because of its deep association with Islam, has transformed the linguistic reality in North Africa. Today, the five countries of the Maghreb are described as an Arabic-speaking region, which cannot be further from the truth. Finally, the colonial period in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries compounded the already complex linguistic situation by adding French and Spanish to the list of spoken languages in the region.²¹ France's "Berber policy" specifically hurt Imazighen and their language in unprecedented ways because its colonial policies encouraged Arabization and undermined the Amazigh language.²² As Amazigh activists have already explained, "French has had an Arabizing function" in North Africa.²³ Imazighen have witnessed the number of their mother tongue's speakers decrease even as the "fight" against French language served as a catalyst for the Arabization of their societies, specifically after independence in the 1950s and the 1960s. As a result of these successive colonizations and the historical processes they set in motion, Tamazight became threatened and its existence as a language and culture doomed were it not for the intervention of a generation of Amazigh pioneers who worked to foil the Arabization project.

Independence did not bring Imazighen linguistic and cultural rights.²⁴ Most Tamazghan countries achieved their independence between the 1950s and the 1960s. However, political independence did not bring Imazighen any recognition of their language and culture. Rather, they were excluded from the new nation through an Arabization project that required them to relinquish their mother tongue and supplant it with Arabic. Although articulated as a policy to put an end to the domination of the colonial language (French), Arabization was entirely directed at Imazighen and their language. Strategic

²¹ Alil Alalou, "The Sociolinguistic Situation in North Africa: Recognizing and Institutionalizing Tamazight and New Challenges." *Annual Review of Linguistics* 9 (2023): 155–170.

²² Abderrahman El Aissati, "Ethnic Identity, Language Shift and the Amazigh Voice in Morocco and Algeria." *Race, Gender and Class* 8.3 (2001): 57–69. Also see, David M. Hart, "The Berber Dahir of 1930 in Colonial Morocco: Then and Now (1930–1996)," *The Journal of North African Studies* 2.2 (1997): 11–33.

²³ Brahim El Guabli, "Literature and Indigeneity: Amazigh Activists' Construction of an Emerging Literary Field," *Los Angeles Review of Books*, October 28, 2022, accessed 21 October 2023, <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/literature-and-indigeneity-amazigh-activists-construction-of-an-emerging-literary-field/>.

²⁴ See Brahim El Guabli, "When Tamazight was Part of the World," in *Colonial Vocabularies: Teaching and Learning Arabic in Europe (1870–1970)*, eds., Sarah Irving, Rachel Mairs, and Karène Sanchez-Summerer (Holland: Amsterdam University Press, forthcoming).

Arabization of education, media, and public life meant in reality that the spaces available to Imazighen to be proud of their language and culture in the post-independence period shrank significantly. Morocco and Algeria put in place measures that specifically put an end to all the institutions that the French colonial authorities established in order to promote Tamazight and Amazigh Studies (*études berbères*).²⁵ Amazigh-focused institutes, journals, academic chairs, and language teaching initiatives were brutally terminated, and all the state efforts were channeled toward the Arabization of society. Consequently, generations of Amazigh youth have lost the capacity to speak their mother tongue and even those who do speak it at home cannot use it to discuss any intellectual topics. Even worse, very few Imazighen were aware of their history and culture in a context in which linguistic opportunism to secure better careers furnished no incentive for people to pursue any form of reckoning with their own Indigenous culture.

The minoritization of Imazighen in their own homeland was a wakeup call for Amazigh activism. Algeria and Morocco, where the vast majority of Tamazight speakers lived and still live saw the emergence of the Amazigh Cultural Movement (ACM), which sought to redress the erasure of Amazigh language and culture by advocating for educational, media, and cultural reforms that would rehabilitate Tamazight.²⁶ Started in the 1920s by educated Kabyle speakers, this movement would garner a bigger and deeper valence in 1966 with the establishment of the *Académie berbère* in Paris. A year later, the *al-jam'iyya al-maghribiyya li-al-baḥth wa-al-tabādul al-thaqāfi* (The Moroccan Association for Research and Cultural Exchange, AMREC) was founded in Morocco in 1967. Although different in their approaches and discourses, the founding of the *Académie* and AMREC announced the beginning of a new phase in the history of Imazighen's struggle for recognition. Instead of relying on the generosity of self-defined Arab-Islamic states to rehabilitate Imazighen in their own homeland, these organizations as well as others founded in the following decades worked to build awareness through cultural and revivalist activities that enabled Imazighen to regain their historical consciousness in ways that were inconceivable in the past. On the one hand, the *Académie* was more political, which cost its activists and sympathizers within Algeria dearly under Houari Boumédiène's rule (1976–1978).²⁷ On the other hand, AMREC was almost apolitical, and its leadership deployed much soft power to convince Moroccan authorities that the recognition of Imazighen and their rights was part and parcel of the Moroccan national

²⁵ El Guabli, "When Tamazight Was Part of the World;" Salem Chaker, "L'Algérie 1962–1974: Le refoulement des études berbères," *Le temps de la coopération: Sciences sociales et décolonisation au Maghreb* (Paris: Karthala-IREMAM, 2012).

²⁶ See Brahim Akhiyyat. *Al-Naḥḍa al-amāzighiyya kama 'ishtu mīlādahā wa taṭawwuraḥa* (Rabat: Maḥa'at al-Ma'ārif al-Jadida, 2012); Paul Silverstein, "The Cultivation of 'Culture' in the Moroccan Amazigh Movement," *Review of Middle East Studies* 43.2 (2009): 168–177. Also see Brahim El Guabli, *Morocco's Other*.

²⁷ For more information about this context, see Mohand Aarav Bessaoud. *Histoire de l'Académie Berbère* (Algiers: L'Artisan, 2000).

project of “unity within diversity.”²⁸ The *Académie’s* confrontational attitude was only matched by AMREC’s reconciliatory overtures towards the state.

This new Amazigh consciousness required the use of novel tools to reconquer the space that Imazighen lost during their repeated colonization since the seventh century. Cultural production became a central locus for the revitalization of Amazigh language and culture. Amazigh cultural initiatives from the 1960s through the 1980s focused on documenting and collecting Amazigh heritage. This period of documentation was spurred by activists’ awareness that anything that is not documented was necessarily going to be lost. Hence, both Moroccan and Algerian activists worked in their home countries or in the diasporas to collect poetry, tales, songs, and any other form of literary or artistic expression that they deemed important to preserve for future generation. It is also during this period that journals like *Agraw*, *Amūd* and *Arrātn* were created to disseminate these writings among Amazigh activists. Documentation was also accompanied by efforts to organize annual conferences and seminars that allowed the participants to reflect on critical issues for a better use of the collected materials.²⁹ In Morocco, the Agadir Summer School was a historical gathering that has been in existence since 1980. The period of documentation of Amazigh heritage gave rise to the period of literary production during which Amazigh activists worked to create a new Amazigh literature by applying theoretical and aesthetic approaches to their mother tongue. This period extends from mid-1980s through the end of the 1990s, witnessing the production of a significant amount of poetry collections, short stories, novels, and plays in Tamazight in Morocco and Algeria and in their diasporas. This literary production was also accompanied by a phenomenal proliferation of activist writings that examined the multiple facets of Amazigh activism, including an increasing consciousness of indigeneity as an avenue for Amazigh activism globally after the Vienna Human Rights Conference in 1993.

Several factors made the 2000s a transformative moment for Amazigh literature. Both Algeria and Morocco had slowly warmed up to the demands of Amazigh activists as a result of the rise in human rights discourse and the success of the ACM to leverage these states through transnational human rights and Indigenous peoples’ mechanisms. Algeria established the *Haut Commissariat à l’Amazighité* in 1995 while Morocco established the Royal Institute for Amazigh Culture (IRCAM) in 2003. These significant changes would later achieve constitutional recognition in Morocco in 2011 and in Algeria in 2016. These institutional and political changes had an important impact on literature, cinema, and other forms of cultural production in

²⁸ Brahim El Guabli, “Where is Amazigh Studies?” *Journal of North African Studies* 27.6 (2022): 1092–1100.

²⁹ The seminars of the Agadir Summer University organized by *Jam’iyyat al-jāmi’a al-ṣayfiyya bi-agādīr* (The Association of the Summer University in Agadir), recurrent since 1980, are the prime example in Morocco. In Algeria, the seminar of Yakouren was an important encounter where the participants identified some of the principles of the Amazigh movement in the country. See *Algérie, quelle identité?: Rapport de synthèse du Séminaire de Yakouren, 1-31 août 1980* (Algiers: Imedyazen, 1981).

North Africa. The number of films and literary works produced in these regions kept increasing.³⁰ The rise in the number of literary works published in Tamazight speaks to a new publishing reality in which civil society organizations, like *Rābiṭat Tīrrā li-al-Kuttāb bi-al-Amāzighīyya* (Tirra Association for Writers in Tamazight) in Morocco and independent publishers, like Achab and Tira Editions, in Algeria, are supporting writers in Tamazight. These platforms not only publish the finished product, they also invite aspiring writers to writing workshops, award prizes, and accompany authors throughout the process of publication of their work. This support allows writers in Tamazight to have a sense of community and incentivize them to continue writing.

This literary production has not been reflected in Anglophone academia's curricular and programmatic endeavors.³¹ The absence of Amazigh Studies programs in American universities has been detrimental to Amazigh indigeneity and its cultural production. American and British universities still act as if Arabic and French were the *only* languages of knowledge and cultural production in Tamazgha, thus contributing to the marginalization of Imazighen and the worldviews they convey in their cultural production. In the absence of the teaching of Amazigh language and given the inexistence of any Amazigh Studies infrastructure within Middle Eastern or Maghrebi Studies for the inclusion of Tamazight, undergraduate and graduate students alike specifically in the area are underprepared for the job market and the scholarly challenges that the rise of Amazigh Studies have brought to the study of the region. Not only does this exclude Imazighen and silence their efforts and initiatives to revitalize their language and culture after decades of oblivion from being examined and discussed in seminar rooms, but it also deprives students of learning and research opportunities that would position them to play key roles in shaping Amazigh Studies in the future. Amazigh Studies can only exist in Anglophone academia when the current departmental cultures make the necessary self-critique to understand how the continued hegemony of Arabic and Francophone approaches are colonizing the Amazigh homeland cultural production in academic settings. These two non-indigenous languages have imposed an invisible glass ceiling on Amazigh Studies and continue to prevent it from emerging in Anglophone academia. Imazighen are revitalizing their language and transforming their societies in unprecedented ways, but Anglophone academia continues to cling to old methods that do not capture the nature of the developments that happen in Tamazgha.

This collection of essays is therefore both a necessary and timely intervention to draw attention to what Anglophone academia is not including in its current configuration. By curating and presenting this collection of essays that apply critical and close reading approaches to a variety of texts written

³⁰ For Amazigh film festivals, see Houssine Soussi, "Amazigh International Film Festivals and the Promotion of Amazigh Cinema" in *The Annual Kurultai of the Endangered Cultural Heritage AKECH Conference Proceedings*, ed., Anticus Multicultural Association, 154–167 (Constanta, Romania: Anticus Press, 2019).

³¹ Aomar Boum and Brahim El Guabli, "Why Amazigh Studies Initiatives Now," *Tamazgha Studies Journal* (forthcoming).

originally in Tamazight, this issue is probably the first in its kind to have undertaken a direct engagement with content produced in Tamazight. Departing from the philological tradition, which has dominated the field of “Berber Studies,” the current contributions reach beyond the authors’ contexts and paratextual information to actually delve into the texts themselves to interpret them and analyze what they are trying to say and how they are saying it. This methodology frees contributors from the prevalent approach and allows them to engage with questions of narration, characters, and themes in Amazigh literature. As much as we find debating the nature of Amazigh literature important, we are equally convinced that close reading of issues related to wisdom, poetics, racism, narrative, activism, history, and sung poetry are more generative for our effort to model reading practices for future generations of students who will work in the field of Amazigh Studies.

The uniqueness of these essays lies also in the fact that all contributors speak Tamazight. Although we strove to include contributions from other parts of Tamazgha, the contributions we were able to assemble have de facto focused the issue on Amazigh literatures produced in Morocco and Algeria. By giving Tamazight speakers the opportunity to read their mother tongue and write about it in English, we rehabilitate the Amazigh worldview, voice, and interpretive potential. This issue also is an act of advocacy to truly assess this Amazigh Republic of Letters’ output and a step toward a better recognition of its existence in English language. We also show that Tamazight is a language like others that needs to be taught, known, and understood for readerly purposes that will enrich our reading practices in English and in other languages. Accordingly, this analytical and critical exercise puts engagement with the original Amazigh text at the center of the entire project to furnish fresh readings of Amazigh literature. This project cannot happen without recentering Tamazight in our reading practices and without conveying clearly that Tamazight is a living language that needs to be mastered, taught, and appreciated in order for us to fully apprehend its literary capacity. We will have achieved the two objectives guiding this project if and when colleagues in North African, Tamazghan, or Maghrebi Studies start asking themselves about the opportunities and spaces they can create in their own courses, units, departments, or even universities for Amazigh Studies. We will also have achieved the goal of this issue if these materials are widely used in courses that teach students about Tamazgha. Only when these authors’ insightful perspectives are taught and used in coursework will we know that we have added another brick to the edifice of Amazigh Studies in Anglophone academia. For now, we are certain of one thing: this issue is a rare opportunity to introduce Amazigh literature and literary republic to English-speaking academia.