Youth in Morocco: Rebels Without a Cause?
Youth Violence, Social Media, and the Discontents of Moroccan Consumer Society

Younes Yassni[•]

Abstract

Recently the Moroccan public had to grapple with what was perceived to be a worrying upsurge in youth crime related to *Tsharmil* or (cyber) bullying in the Moroccan vernacular. Mainstream media coverage of this issue ushered in an overwhelming sense of panic towards "deviant" youth that pose a serious "threat" to public law and order. By addressing the issue of *Tsharmil*, this article aims to go beyond the infotainment and politics of fear that have informed mainstream Moroccan media reports, which have failed to capture the complexities and ramifications of this phenomenon. Far from being a sudden, unwarranted outbreak of violence instigated by youth bullies, it is a strong indication of the emergence of a youth subculture where new modes of "marginal" practices, identities, solidarities, and visibilities have become inextricably woven into a rising consumer and brand culture. By looking specifically at Facebook pages devoted to *Tsharmil* and conducting formal interviews with members of the *Tsharmil* movement, this article argues that social media has provided youth with possibilities for the articulation of new practices, imaginaries, and identities in the face of a marginalizing consumer culture that has pushed youth to the ranks of flawed, disenfranchised, and frustrated consumers unable to fully partake and indulge in consumerist lifestyles.

Introduction

This article addresses the rise of consumer culture and its relation to youth in an attempt to contribute to the scarce scholarship on this key social category. More specifically, it discusses the emergence of *Tsharmil*, or youth cyber-bullying in the Moroccan vernacular, as a good point of entry to study the sense of frustration and disenchantment as a result of the inability of Moroccan youth to take part in an emerging consumer culture. To discuss this issue is to emphasize the role of social media in the formation of spaces for the expression of new forms of identities, visibilities, and modes of resistance among Moroccan youth in the age of global

[•] *English teacher and lecturer at University of Rabat. PhD candidate, Faculty of Letters, Rabat, Morocco.*

capitalist consumer culture. Furthermore, *Tsharmil* can be best grasped as a subversive subculture where the manipulation of signs and symbols sparks a form of "semiotic guerilla warfare" (Eco cited in Hebdige 1979, 105) that oppose two antithetical positions: On the one hand, a neoliberal sovereignty that posits the role of the individual subject as first and foremost a consumerist agent, and, on the other hand a socio-economic regime that, despite placing great emphasis on individualism and the desire to satisfy consumerist needs generated by a brand-driven and consumer-oriented culture, pushes youth to the rank of flawed consumers faced with the dilemma of immersion in and (dis)enchantment with the consumerist values of the current global era.

Tsharmil: Infotainment and Scaremongering Politics

The word *Tsharmil* has grabbed the headlines in mainstream Moroccan media. Etymologically, the word *Tsharmil* finds its roots in the culinary arts. In Moroccan vernacular it is a piece of marinated meat or fish. The word, however, has recently become more associated with the criminal than the culinary in the Moroccan collective consciousness since the phenomenon brings under scrutiny urban youth crime. It is important to notice at the outset that *Tsharmil* came to prominence in Moroccan public debates, not through everyday life experience, but rather through viral social media videos and photos of violent, saber-wielding teenagers. This contributed to the development of public distress as to the grave menace posed by soaring juvenile delinquency. Indeed, *Tsharmil* attests to the interconnectedness of the offline and online spheres in that it occupies a liminal space between the open, boundless virtual sphere of digital social media and the physical, surveilled space of everyday life. In other words, what started as a cyber subcultural movement on Facebook, turned into a real source of security concerns for many Moroccans. Such feelings of insecurity were further exacerbated by media reports and news stories that treated *Tsharmil* as a worrying instance of deviant behavior by unruly, idle youth as evidenced by soaring crime rates (Bousquet, 2016). A key happening that drew public attention was an incident at a beach located in the capital city of Rabat, the theatre of a horrible act of aggression, where holidaymakers had their possessions ransacked by a band of ten *Msharmlin* (those adept in *Tcharmil*) armed with knives and sabers. Only after an intensive manhunt were police able to arrest the assailants who turned out to be under-aged students (Moho, 2015).

As a reaction to this glaring act of aggression, there emerged an overwhelming feeling of panic towards youngsters who were portrayed as posing a grave menace to public law and order. In the midst of such sentiments of insecurity, dwellers of such metropolitan urban centers as Rabat and Casablanca lamented the dramatic increase in crime rates due to the failure of the state's policing to counter the growing insecurity in public spaces. To take action and voice their anxiety citizens created a Facebook page named *# March Against Insecurity in Casablanca* in an attempt to express growing concerns over *Tsharmil* and pressure the state to take the necessary measures to crack down on juvenile delinquency. In a sense, *Tsharmil*

underlies the role played by supposedly deviant behaviour not only in reinforcing "boundary maintenance between 'good' and 'bad'" but also provoking "collective response that heightens group solidarity and clarifies social norms" (Giddens, 2009: 942). Indeed, public pressure on state security apparatuses was so intense that the Moroccan Ministry of Interior took a number of measures to counter the panic posed by *Tsharmil* (Yabiladi, 2014). Security forces therefore engaged in a campaign to crackdown on drug trafficking considered to be the main cause behind soaring crime rates related to this phenomenon. Even more noteworthy, the issue stirred into action the highest strata of the Moroccan state when King Mohamed VI called on police forces to take the necessary measures to clamp down on *Tsharmil* youngsters (rfi Afrique, 2014). However, beyond the ambient scaremongering and politics of fear that informed reactions towards the phenomenon, to what extent does the rise of *Tsharmil* lay bare the plight of Moroccan youth in a consumer society which denigrates their rights for a decent life?

Youth in Morocco: Young is Beautiful?

Although youth represent huge expectations and great prospects for the future of their societies, the socio-economic situation of this category in Morocco is rather grim, leaving a lot to be desired in terms of basic needs, such as healthcare, education, and employment. According to World Bank figures, "young people in Morocco make up to 30% of the population, and one tenth of the region's total youth population" (Hoel, 2012). Nonetheless, despite representing a large segment of Moroccan society, young people are victims of social exclusion with 49% of Moroccan youth neither in school, nor in the workforce. Such a plight is corroborated by the High Commission for Plan, or HCP, which shows that 20.6 % of young Moroccans aged between 15–24 are unemployed (2012). This predicament is the cause of slow economic growth and a lack of structural economic reform. Adding to this is an educational system deemed to be irresponsive to the demands of an ever-changing job market. As a consequence, a growing number of young graduates are finding it difficult to integrate into the job market. The unemployment rate among higher education graduates is 18.9% (HCP, 2012), casting doubt on the ability of schools to offer social mobility to youngsters striving to lift themselves out of poverty. Due to its inability to exploit the demographic potential of a youth bulge, the oft celebrated gift of youth has gradually turned into frustration and disillusionment in Morocco, with the Arab Spring alerting us that "young people's patience with limited opportunities for economic participation and political engagement is finite." (La Cava cited in Hoel, 2012)

Against the backdrop of a grim socioeconomic situation compounded with social exclusion, it is no coincidence that a growing number of youth shy away from actively partaking in politics and civil society, laying the blame on state institutions to bring in change to their lives. The figures provided by the HCP confirm this disillusionment: Only 6% of young Moroccans are NGO members

and only 1.3% are members of a political party or a trade union (2012). This is illustrative of the profound rift between youth and political and civic engagement, a reality accentuated by the growing defiance and lack of trust vis-à-vis political elites and institutions often lampooned as being irresponsive to the aspirations and expectations of youngsters in Morocco. Indeed, shunning politics by youth has often been singled out as a major act of defiance against Moroccan political life and a source of great concern for a number of political parties faced with the challenge to rally the support of young people to strengthen their political impact. So, pushed to the ranks of exclusion from the spheres of economy, society, and politics, a segment of youth displaced their desire for visibility, recognition, and integration from political and civic engagement into the realm of global consumer culture, a dynamic terrain for the expression of repressed aspirations and unfulfilled dreams in a social system driven by unwavering espousal of a consumerist ethos.

The Rise of Consumer Culture in Morocco: Brands, Brands, Brands

In contemporary Morocco, there is a remarkable tolerance towards the display of signs of wealth and luxury. Judging by the growing consumption of luxury cars and the rising popularity of brands among consumers, it seems that the consumerism is alive and well in Morocco, a trend marked by the emergence of a culture of conspicuous consumption. Big cities like Rabat, Casablanca, and Marrakech are becoming vibrant hubs where the culture of consumerism is articulated through the growing appeal of tokens of extravagant lifestyleluxury cars, posh fitness centers, shopping malls, spasand the billboards that have recently sprouted along roads and highways in Morocco are a strong reminder of the power exercised by consumer culture on Moroccans' imaginaries. Likewise, the growing number of shopping malls and other similar venues offers insight into the changes in consumption styles and practices among some Moroccans whose considerable purchasing power has allowed them to become avid consumers willing to spend huge sums of money to meet their desire for personal satisfaction and social distinction. This confirms the assumption that rich Moroccan's mounting appetite for luxury cars, such as BMW, Mercedes, and Range Rover, whose sales have grown remarkably in recent years, is compelling evidence that the economic crisis hit only the middle and lower classes while the upper class and *nouveaux riches* remained unaffected by the pinch of economic dire straits (Al Rimi, 2014).

Not only can changes in consumption attitudes be read on an individual level as a form of expression of self-identity and individual freedom, they can also be explored in the manner they give rise to new patterns of social organization of everyday life. To account for such consumerist transformations many scholars contend that the formation of the consumer society is part and parcel of (post)modernizing forces which Frederic Jameson believes to be "closely related to the emergence of this new moment of late, consumer or multinational capitalism" (1991) and Moroccan society is by no means immune to these capitalist dynamics. Over the last decade, Morocco has witnessed the rise of a number of shopping

malls and retail outlets, opening up avenues for the creation of new consumer needs, desires, and habits. Indeed, Morocco saw a 24 % increase in the number of franchises of international brands. This is a far cry from the small convenience stores on neighborhood corners or *joutiya*, the popular street markets, which used to be key sites of everyday socialization and consumption of basic foodstuffs across Morocco. As these popular socializing spaces have been gradually supplanted by Western-style supermarkets, shopping malls and retail outlets, new consumption patterns emerged, with controlled buying giving way to shopping spreeswith shoppers often purchasing products they did not initially intend to (Dahanculture, 2012)and socialization and personalized, face-to-face interaction, traditionally part of the act of everyday consumption, giving way to the anonymity of mass consumption of supermarkets and virtual spaces.

To a large extent, Moroccan youth live in a space straddling both the real and the virtual, where the overwhelming presence of brands is ubiquitous and where the desire to purchase a branded product is pressing. As Naomi Klein contends in her seminal book, *No Logo* (2002), these youth are not obsessively drawn to the product per se but rather to the symbolic power of brands and how they confer on them a feeling of belonging to a the consumerist order, concurring with the marketing philosophy of Nike's founder, Phil Knight, who asserts that his company is not selling products but the image of the brand. This assumption echoes Baudrillard's account of contemporary societies' entry into the era of "commodity/sign form" which presupposes that "commodity is an object not only of economic but more importantly of *semiotic* exchange, an object that signifies within a *socially meaningful system* of objects." (Dunn, 2008: 54) Just as consumerism can be a form of resistance to the dominant market ideology through subversive consumption it can also be an instance that mark the supremacy of a neoliberal regime that "privileges exchange value, resists all forms of government intervention, […] celebrates excessive individualism and consolidates the power of the rich." (Giroux, 2011: 76) At this historical juncture Moroccan youth find themselves under the sway of a totalizing market logic hinged on a "public pedagogy of consumerism designed to influence, shape, and produce future generations of young people who cannot separate their identities, values, and dreams from the world of commerce, brands, and commodities." (Giroux, 2009: 32) Arguably, the adoption of liberal economic policies and the market economy is a key driving force in the institutionalization of consumer society: the functioning of the liberal capitalist economy is inconceivable without consumption, digital media and the concomitant relentless creation of new, ephemeral needs and desires. Under the rule of such a consumerist ideology, "people are groomed and trained to meet the demands of their social identities." (that is, the fashion in which men and women are' integrated' into the social order and given a place in it) (Bauman, 2005: 24). But what happens when youth fail to fully take up consumer roles ascribed to them by society? Are Moroccan youth forced to bear the brunt of the paradigm shift from a "producer society" to a "consumer society"?

Tsharmil Subculture: The Discontents of Consumer Culture

As mentioned earlier, beyond the politics of fear and scaremongering informing media and public perceptions, we argue that *Tsharmil* offers interesting insight into the rise of consumer culture and the frustration it breeds among youth from poor and low-income families, for whom consumption has not only become a means to assuage their suppressed consumerist drive but also a subcultural practice existing on the margins of society. According to Baudriallard, this process of consumption is deeply intertwined with feelings of dissatisfaction and frustration: "more consumption entails more unfulfilled needs and desires," (Baudrillard, 1988: 21-25) exacerbating feelings of frustration due to a lack of economic resources to meet an insatiable desire for unlimited consumption dictated by the capitalist order.

In such a context, Moroccan youth have fallen prey to an anomic mindset that Robert Merton designates as the "strain put on individuals' behaviour when widely accepted cultural values conflict with their lived social reality." (Giddens, 2009: 943) In a sense, with the unprecedented large-scale proliferation of global media, Moroccan youngsters can easily take part in the relatively inclusive "Global Cultural Bazaar" but their chances of being part of the "Global Shopping Mall" are compromised due to its highly exclusive nature, reducing the poor to mere window-shoppers (Barnet & Cavanagh, 1994). In other words, in a period of economic strain young Moroccans have to brace for lack of financial resources, which prevents them from satisfying their desires for consumption. In these conditions, violence is turned into a coping mechanism to deal with a system that many youth consider to be rigged against them. Indeed, the blending of images of affluence with sabers and machetes bring to the fore the violence and brutality inherent in an economy of the market where survival is for the fittest and where (social) competition is cut-throat. In a sense, through the blending of consumption and violence, these teenagers are doing nothing but laying bare the very destructive nature of the consumer society and Zygmunt Bauman rightly reminds us that "to consume also means to destroy [since] in the course of consumption, the consumed things cease to exist, literally or spiritually […] 'used up' physically to the point of complete annihilation" (1998: 23). To be a consumer or not to be is what establishes distinction between "the haves" who can afford brands and the "have nots" of the social marginparticularly youthwho are left with only the enthralling potential of the virtual sphere of social media in an endeavor to attain symbolic capital. Thus, pushed to the receiving end of want and despair, youth social imaginaries have migrated to the online sphere of social media, a space that holds the promise of untrammeled consumption and, most importantly, visibility.

Tsharmil, Facebook, and the Quest for Visibility

An examination of *Tsharmil* would be incomplete without touching upon the key issue of youth occupation of, and visibility in, public space. The recent upheaval that has rocked the Arab world in what was known as the Arab Spring has indeed alerted us to the highly destabilizing potential of the street in this region of the world. For all the negative connotations and biased images associated with the Arab street as the site of "brute force expressed in riots and mob violence," the embodiment of a "violent imaginary" that threatens to "imperil interests or disrupt grand strategies," (Bayat, 2003) and a "metaphor [that] constructs Arab public opinion in a stereotypical, inaccurate, and pejorative fashion," (Regier & Ali Khalidi, 2009) this physical space was the catalyst for profound political and social change, translating the despair and aspirations of Arabsparticularly youthfor free and democratic societies.

Although the increasing visibility of Moroccan youth in urban space contributes to galvanizing forces of dissent by normalizing the occupation of the streets," (Bennani-Chraibi et al., 2012) the state could not tolerate an unchecked occupation of public space because it meant the disruption of its firm grip over society at large. In the fight for survival, the *Makhzen*, the (deep) state in Morocco, exercises considerable power to monitor, if not prohibit, all forms of access to public space by individuals, be they young artists performing in the street or young *Ferasha* (street vendors) striving to eke out a living. In a social context marred by forces of control and exclusion, youth found in the virtual space of social media both an escape from a tightly controlled physical space and a vital outlet to articulate aspirations for recognition and visibility. That said, *Tsharmil* conveys a mediated subcultural appropriation and accommodation of space, both physical and virtual, adopted by Moroccan youth. It represents an aesthetecised stylistic embodiment of resistance. From a Hebdigian vantage point, subcultural styles, be they associated with Britain's *Mods*, *Rockers*, *Skinheads*, *Teddy Boys*, *Rastas*, and *Punks*and for our purposes *Msharmlin* in Moroccounderlie a subversive act against traditional social structures through the adoption and appropriation of styles that run counter to the appropriateness and common sense of society at large. In the Moroccan social context, youth appropriate the very credos, symbols, and brands that reflect the new values of consumerism to deliver a subversive (consumerist) blow to the social regime premised upon unwavering obedience to such traditional institutions such as family, religion, and the community by forging new modes of identification.

Tsharmil Movement: Giving Voice to the Voiceless

Recently, there has been a flurry of Facebook pages devoted to *Tsharmil* movement. Even more so, these pages have become so diverse that they represent a plethora of cities and groups, ranging from football ultras to fashionistas. My research was limited to the *Tsharmil* movement in Temara, a city located 11

kilometers to the south of the capital Rabat. The findings reflect the content of formal interviews conducted with youth. Also reflected in my study are the insights provided by observations and informal conversations with teenagers as well as an analysis of a number of Facebook pages associated with *Tsharmil*. All the interviews were carried out in Moroccan Arabic and the for the sake of privacy I have changed the names of all my informants. In what follows, we consider the discernible threads of topics that emerged during the course of interviews and observations.

A Youthful Machismo

The *Tsharmil* movement attests to the role played by the internalization of social values in producing aggressive and violent behaviour. Whether in large urban metropolises or remote rural areas, youth violence has become a major concern for Moroccan citizens. If a society exhibits high levels of violence, it is often the outcome of a rampant subculture of cruelty and aggressiveness. Similarly, in Morocco's patriarchal social construction, tokens of an ideal *rojoula*, or masculinity in Moroccan Arabic, toughness, physical power, and courage are highly celebrated, if not venerated *Tsharmil*. Put differently, pugnacity and combativeness are key survival skills. As one Facebook commentator put it:

> *El Hayah layst kaseya kama tatkhyal, enta li ratytb w wald mamak bela keyas*
> [*Life is not hard as you imagine, but you are excessively frail and pampered*][1]

According to Rachid, adopting *Tsharmil* style is not an easy task in a society that places great emphasis on "decent" behaviour in the public and private realms. It takes a lot of courage to face the social profiling and denigrating looks of society. For although Rachid is totally capable of weighing the social pros and cons of having to bear the brunt of the highly pejorative label of *Msahrmal*, he mockingly reveals that *Tsharmil* offers the chance to set himself apart from *kilimini*, or "spoiled rich boys", who would never have the guts to adopt his style because they can never break free from parental tutelage. Read from a class-based vantage point, *Tsharmil*, in an urban setting rigged with social inequality and exclusion, turns into a marker of a divisive class consciousness that erects clearly demarcated boundaries between a dominant rich urbanite middle class and the economically disinherited. These social differences are fuelling other forms of antagonisms. Coming from a poor socioeconomic background, Karim uses ostentatious forms of demarcation, such as a crazy hairstyle, tattoos, and sabers as a survival strategy that keeps the bullying of others at bay. In other words, dominant social values and norms exert considerable pressure on individuals, such as Karim, to project a self-image of violence, even if it runs counter their real, intrinsic beliefs. For Farid, a slum dweller, such violence is a source of pride. In an assertive tone he expressed his pride and admiration to a gang of *Msharmlin* who were able to escape *Sokour*, or

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[1] All translations have been done by the author.

hawks in Arabic, an anti-crime division of the police. He described how during a raid these supposedly formidable police forces became a point of ridicule when a gang of youngster was able to rob their motorbikes. To make these youth even prouder, they were able to film this event and post it on social media, demonstrating how the online sphere has become an amplifying platform for a fame-aspiring generation.

Interestingly, as the above photo clearly indicates the most common form of defiance that youth express is directed towards repressive apparatuses of the state, particularly the police, unveiling the stark enmity between a youth that are supposedly in need of social protection and police forces whose role is to protect society. These narratives of youthful heroism translate a desire to celebrate values of defiance towards the repressive apparatuses of the state. In short, living in "geographies of exclusion," (David Sibley, 1995) these youth find in deviant behavior not only a medium to flaunt dissent but also a strategy to attract public scrutiny. Consequently, *Tsharmil* turns into a fluid subcultural movement vacillating between petty crime and stylised portrayals of the self in everyday life:

> *A'lash li kilbs melih nahsdouh w nebkaw nesbo feeh le nartkah feeh el kaa' mozdhem w tahyah khasa leloqoul el raky.*
> [*Why are those who dress smartly insulted and envied? Let's elevate ourselves; the bottom is crowded and a special salute to the dignified minds*]
>
> *ahh aa'la el tashrmeel fi el kalb.. w lakn el tashrmeel steel mashy howa haz el sayf w mashy krsy f ebad Allah.. el tashrmeel howa lebas w el hasana*
> [*Oh, Tsharmil is in the heart. Tsharmil is a style; it is not about wielding a saber and bullying people. Tsharmil is about clothes and hairstyle*]

These Facebook comments show how *Tsharmil* is a style, and a way of life, which gives youth access to social capital. In other words, *Tsharmil* youth are engaged in an act of appropriation of middle-class credos of capital accumulation, conspicuous consumption and ostentatious display of gold accessories and flashy, branded attire.

Tsharmil: the Aestheticsization of Resistance

Tsharmil youth, as representatives of an urban underclass under the backdrop of rampant deindustrialization and searing unemployment rates, found in aestheticsalbeit violenta way to voice defiant behavior towards an oppressive social order. In this respect, Said's narrative about his experience at middle school is highly revealing. As a student who decided to adopt the *Tsharmil* style in terms of hair and attire, he was subject to the school regulations that impose strict control of bodily behaviour. On numerous occasions, he was kicked out of school and asked to sign an agreement whereby he promised to abide by the prescribed dress code. Undeterred by threats of expulsion, he even posted a photo of himself in class on Facebook. He confessed that he was often criticized by the school administration

for emulating *Msharmlin* on social media, an act which they considered to bring *lahchouma*, or shame, onto his parents who had failed to instill upon him the importance of a proper education.

That said, the repertoire of objects associated with *Tsharmil* (money, hairstyles, leather jackets, sabers, scooters) take on, like the vaseline tube in Jean Genet's novel *The Thief's Journal*, "a symbolic dimension, becoming a form of stigmata, tokens of a self-imposed exile." (Hebdige, 1979: 2). Consequently, to adhere to *Tsharmil* style in a conservative society that views conformity with great reverence is to run the risk of social exclusion. Unable to achieve change through a revolutionary movement backed by a political agenda, youth often act as agents of social change through the adoption of subversive lifestyles. This also shows that the ideal of Moroccan youth is no longer revolutionary but rather informed by a desire to jump on the bandwagon of the values of consumer society. In defense of their peculiar lifestyle, youth resort to *Tsharmil* to advocate their status of being young in an authoritarian society:

> *Because a youth movement is essentially about claiming youthfulness, it embodies the collective challenge whose central goal consists of defending and extending the youth habitus, by which I mean a series of dispositions, ways of being, feeling, and carrying oneself (e.g., a greater tendency for experimentation, adventurism, idealism, autonomy, mobility, and change) that are associated with the sociological fact of "being young." Countering or curtailing this habitus, youthfulness, is likely to generate collective dissent.* (Bayat, 2010: 118)

For Moroccan youth, social media act as loci of contentious behaviour, a setting where young people are empowered to experience choices, forge new role models, and construct and assert subversive identities.

A Mediated Subculture: *Tsharmil* as a Site of Youth Solidarity

The imaginary identification articulated by *Tsharmil* subculture operates at two levels. First, it engages youth's path towards self-identity and identity-formation. Second, it contributes to establishing connections and solidarities among minded-like youth who nurse a shared feeling of social exclusion. On Facebook pages dedicated to *Tsharmil*, Moroccan youth have developed their own language, symbols, and social codes. It is an esoteric realm with its own codes and language. Taking cues from Maffesoli, we could argue that *Tsharmil* is the embodiment of twenty-first century neotribes driven less by totalizing ideologies than a tendency toward some sort of "immediate localism (proxemics)." (Maffesoli, 1996: 40) This form of association is bred out of youth alienation from such spheres as economy, culture, or politics by empowering them to assert sovereignty over their existence through the manipulation of everyday, mundane symbols and gestures to undermine the 'logic of domination' (Maffesoli, 1996: 51) they are subject to. In the case of Morocco, social media as a space for consumption and the consumer

subculture of *Tsharmil* are two converging forces that contribute to the articulation of neotribe identities that resist categorization and packaging according to traditional social structures and worldviews.

Indeed, adepts of *Tsharmil* are "consuming subjects" engaged in a process of identity construction, identification, and association. They are the incarnation of the neotribe in an age marked by the departure from a modernist massification of society to postmodernist "fragmentized little masses" rallying around shared lifestyles and tastes. Being part of such "tribalized" mode of socialization is ammenable to *puissance*, which, in Maffesoli's perspective, designates the physical energy of people against the backdrop of *pouvoir*, which underlies the power of statist and corporatist regimes. In a sense, *Tsharmil* in Morocco is the embodiment of neotribal dynamics, a site of subversion of such traditional institutions as religion and family which place great emphasis on conformity and submission.

Concluding Thoughts

Beyond the scaremongering that informed mainstream media coverage and analysis, *Tsharmil* is the embodiment of a youthful consumerist subculture among economically disenfranchised young Moroccans who are at the receiving end of social exclusion. We argued that the association of *Tsharmil* to criminal activity is problematically reductionist since it overlooks the plethora of practices, symbols, and meanings making up this movement. Instead, deployment of the category of consumer society to discuss this youth movement carries analytical usefulness for it unveils the dynamics of consumption and its role in the construction of youth identity in contemporary Morocco. To be part of *Tsharmil* subculture is to engage in subversive consumption that lays bare the inconsistencies and blindspots underlying consumer culture, where youth face the conflict of an overwhelming desire to partake in a lavish capitalist culture and the reality of abject, constraining, socio-economic conditions that make such participation all but impossible.

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