

Tenacious Displacement of Home in Mohamed Dellal's "When the Wind of the Atlas Blows"

Abdellah El Boubekri¹

English Department, Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, Mohammed First University, Oujda 60000, Morocco

Received: 11.11.2023 • Accepted: 19.12.2023 • Published: 29.12.2023 • Final Version: 30.12.2023

Abstract: In its drive to valorize narrative heterogeneity and condensed contextualization, Diaspora literary criticism usually places a special accent on the need to listen to underground voices overshadowed by the leading diaspora figures located in the West. It sees that Diaspora is a state of mind that does not necessarily entail physical dislocation for writers to shake the essentialist grip of tradition and the ideological long-established dichotomies. Drawing on this theoretical premise, this article seeks to explore the subversive prospects of writing home in one example of such minority literary work. Mohamed Dellal's "When the Wind of the Atlas Blows" is a collection of short stories, written in English, that approach the trope of home from the perspective of local diasporic subjects. The narrative positions the present collection creates implicitly question the marginalization of the postcolonial experience of diversity for those who have not indulged the privileges of international migration.

Keywords: Local Diaspora, dislocation, tradition, home, postcolonialism

1. Introduction

Postcolonial scholarship attending to migration studies is usually concerned with the physical movements of formerly colonized subjects to the Western metropolises (see Chambers, 1994; Walters, 2005; Robinson, 2024). Research devoted to the literary writings of these migrants tends to identify their protagonists in terms of two ontological urges. On the one hand, there is a tendency to look backward to the homes left behind nostalgically to put up with racial reality in the host country. The outcome of such cultural mourning is their celebration of the comfort, unicity and fixity of stable homes that are easily recoverable when a return trip is made. On the other hand, home is for others a contested site of melancholy and oppression. The host place is also a source of racial exclusion and marginalization. Therefore, their look is forward to new uncharted spaces that promise fresh beginnings and new possibilities (Shamma et al., 2022). In Cultural Studies, the process of looking backward and forward symbolizes existential philosophical trends of eulogizing tradition or celebrating the spirit of change respectively. While the former is centred on the modern grounding of identity on geographical territory and maintaining the value of wholeness and continuity, the latter feeds on a postmodern emphasis on transformation and displacement. In other words, where the first urge heads toward homesickness, the second impulse dwells on homelessness (George, 1999).

Mohammed Dellal's literary narrative "When the Wind of the Atlas Blows," published in 2007, is hard to situate in either of the above classifications. For one thing, the gist of the stories revolves around displaced characters that can be mostly depicted as local expatriates as their movement does not go beyond the national boundaries. For another thing, the protagonists' ontological urges vacillate between the two extremes of homelessness or homesickness. Some characters exhibit a strong predilection for retrieving their long-abandoned homes; the fact that their endeavors prove failure

¹ Corresponding author: a.elboubekri@ump.ac.ma

interrogates the whole project of returning to roots and authenticity. Other characters are involved with the perpetuity of searching for novel ways of being and seeing away from the constraining power of stagnant traditions. Despite being biased towards none of these orientations, the writer stresses the tenuousness of the ontological displacement of the postcolonial subjects. This sense of displacement is instrumental in shaking the power relationships inherent in the culturalist discourses that promote unchanging absolutism.

2. Dislocation as the vignette of Postcolonial condition

One of the conspicuous repercussions of colonialism is the physical, mental and existential dislocation of formerly colonized subjects. Postcolonial critics have produced a plethora of literatures (see Appiah, 2001; Ponzanesi & Merolla, 2005; Brah, 1996; Robinson, 2024) documenting and dramatizing the cultural, ontological and discursive prospects that ensued from the diverse forms of postcolonial migrations from the periphery to the metropolis. They have theorized the latter in terms of different conceptual frameworks ranging from diaspora, exile, and transnationalism to expatriatism. However, literary writings concerned with the local dislocation of postcolonial natives have received very few criticisms. Herrera (2011, p. 45), for instance, uses the concept of *insilio* to refer to non-physical migration assuming that "one does not have to undergo physical movement to be in a state of exile. Exilic, "insilic," and diasporic consciousness are reflexive conditions –psychological states informed by a feeling of nostalgia for a past that can never be reclaimed fully and a longing of a future that no longer exists." While this disoriented stand seems useful enough in approaching Dellal's fictional protagonists, a look at some critical theorization on global migration might be helpful as well in understanding the thematic significance of his fictional worldview.

The recent experience of international migration challenges the homogenous definition of postcolonial critics and writers whose views are shaped by historical unitary forces such as nationalism and anti-colonial movements. Migration is thought to produce unsettled thoughts and narratives; identity becomes a matter of provisionality rather than continuity. Accordingly, the signifiers of stability, home and authenticity become subject to discursive rethinking. Walder (1998, p. 206) claims that the "instability of home" in the age of global migration "led to a sense of the instability of the colonial subject and the desire for an identity." Migration is a condition of all human societies since their beginnings and its legacies are context-specific. In the context of the current wave of global migration, nationalist formations seem to be inappropriate anachronism. The existing intellectual disposition of the migrant is characterized by a critical thought that firmly rejects the idea of homecoming and final conclusions. This open thought tends to travel across different routes in search of novel ways of seeing that have not yet been stabilized and conventionalized.

Issues related to migrant literature are usually subsumed in the immigrant genre which agrees with most liberation discourses on the challenge of hegemonic assumptions. Its critical potential appears in disrupting the historical inherited consciousness that is based on binaries. Migration enables one to liberate oneself from the weights of essentialism that inhabit the nationalist and the culturalist views known for playing on the reversal of binarism. The creation of diasporic and disenfranchised identities represents a challenge to all parochial ideologies. Importantly, the immigrant genre enriches the postcolonial theory of diaspora. In refusing to conform to the comforts of home and adhere to the Western official approaches to race, class and gender, this genre contributes to the growth of fluid identities that thrive in the continuity of becomingness.

Migration has become the metaphoric existential condition for the occupation of double perspectives that many critics see as un-belongingness or un-homeliness, "of yet but not quite", of straddling multiple times and geographies. In a chapter titled "Unsettled Settlers: Postcolonialism, Travelling Theory and the New Migrant Aesthetics," Huggan (2008, p. 36) believes that in the contemporary cultural criticism, since Said and Clifford and their works on "travelling theory," migration is taken as a metaphor which powerfully represents the fragmentation of subjecthood and the instability of personal, cultural and national identity under postmodernity, which in the final analysis leads to the opening of new possibilities of living and expressing. Huggan adds: "another benefit of travelling theory is to suggest that 'migrancy' is a condition of possibility; that it harbors the potential to transform a historical record of exclusion and discrimination into a utopian aesthetics

which suggests that ‘it is a figurative possibility in the language itself that makes the future possible (Carter, *Living 144*)’ (p. 44).

Being associated with such a tingling feeling of identification, migration is used as a tool for repelling borders. The Western conception of the nation is undermined by the figure of the migrant who keeps on projecting future forms of belonging. George (1999, p. 186) claims in this vein that immigration “underwrites nation and national projects because it flagrantly displays a rejection of one national space for another more desirable location, albeit with some luggage carried over.” The pervasive discourse of nation-states cannot easily achieve the containment of those at the margin whose mobility defies the constitutionalized demarcation of stable boundaries both at the physical and metaphorical levels. Their loose regard of the national borders inscribes split-ness and double-ness on the nation’s dominant discourse. The resultant ambivalence is perceived by Bhabha (1990, p. 319) as an instance of the production of textual resistance to the discursive hegemony. The language of the migrant and other wanderers disturbs the rhetoric of cohesions that the Western national tradition disseminates. The migrant’s redefinition of the discursive ideology of the frontiers sustains the antagonistic status of the marginalized. The double-ness they inscribe on the dominant discourse constitutes “the empowering knowledge for the migrant that is at once schizoid and subversive.” Bhabha is not alone in thinking this; Spivak’s theory of the subaltern (1994) pours in the same line of thought namely that the women at the margin do not cohere with the national calculation. The wanderers do not essentially involve a physical movement over multiple territories. Rushdie, as a prominent figure of the migrant, is always engaged with projecting new homes on different geographies, albeit residing most of the time in Britain.

The immigrant genre does not follow a single style. It is possible yet to identify some repeated narrative patterns such as the ones mentioned by George. The quest for home is an existential enterprise that may last over several generations. In the process of making oneself at home in another nation, one gets involved in undesignated wandering without breaking all ties with the past. The theme of migration appears as a disruption of nationalist ideologies in the sense that it upholds a sort of transnationalism that rejects the chauvinistic propagation of national identities.

Writing in the tradition of the immigrant genre is seen by George as compensation for the homes that are left behind. She thinks that the protagonists Lucy in Kincaid’s *Lucy* or Kala in Vassangi H.G’s *Annie John* get involved in the act of writing “in order to be reconciled with her past and thus to lighten the immigrant luggage or at least to rearrange the items so that it makes an easier load” (p. 197). She concludes that home for the postcolonial subjects is no more than an illusion that one can easily get detached from. She quotes Said’s contribution to an issue of patriotism to illuminate the postcolonial light attachment to physical lands: “Which country? I have never felt that I belonged exclusively to one country,....Thinking affectionately about home is all I will go along with.” (p. 200-1)

According to Hall (1996, p 44), “migration is a one-way-trip. There is no ‘home’ to go back to. There never was”. Besides suggesting the idea of no return to homelands, Hall believes that the migrant subjects develop a strong connection to the new wealthier centers. Seeing the economic comfort and socio-political adequacy, they do not get a round-trip ticket. The return is realized only at the level of imagination where the native home is used as an inspirational theme to enchant Western readers who are fascinated by stories about the exotic and the fantastic. In getting a one-way trip ticket some writers intend to sprout roots and get recognition in the host land. However, some Western cultural critics impede their ambition through processes of literary othering. In describing them as “a special category of writers”, they impose on them an essential difference that occludes their ascendance into the national tradition or the international Western literary canon. Anyhow, famous migrant authors, such as Milan Kundera, resist such othering efforts and enthrone themselves among the remarkable leaders of universal literature.

In her discussion of migrancy as a postmodern condition of human beings, Bammer (2005) used the texts of the Moroccan writer Abdelfattah Kilito’s “Dog Words” and the Turkish writer E. Ozdamar’s *Mother Tongue* to capture the various modalities of migrancy. The lost wanderer of Kilito’s tale represents the condition of postmodern unsettledness whereas Ozdamar espouses the notion of cultural rootedness. Ozdamar’s protagonist decides to go back to Turkey to retrieve her lost place in her native language unlike Kilito’s who chooses to move forward. Indeed, the loss of belonging is experienced in both migrancy modalities. The loss of the present home in the host country in favor of the old one is as inducing for creativity as is the loss of the past home in search of an uncharted future.

This is embodied by the Bedouin, for whom the origins seem to be a luxury that can be dispensed with. Not belonging to either home is challenging to the discourse of law and regulation. The search for unmapped homes at the expense of authentic belonging can be viewed as a critique of tradition and fixity such as the ones upheld by modernity. Chambers (1994, 24) shows that the "dispersal attendant on migrancy disrupts and interrogates the overarching themes of modernity." The Bedouin may enact resistance against the stable mastering discourse, but there is no guarantee that s/he would proceed on eternal movement.

The fluid state of the dislocated identity vouches for the evasion of essentialist impulses and the trap of intellectual centeredness. This being the case, the diasporic subject is capable of contesting identities without resorting to absolutist categories. In brief, the diaspora perspective broadens the space of critical thought and widens the distance from the traditional discourses and European rationalism that took once the responsibility of representing and speaking for everyone. This diasporic position is compatible with Chambers' definition of migrancy as involving "a movement in which neither the points of departure nor the arrival are immutable or certain. It calls for a dwelling in language, in histories, in identities that are constantly subject to mutation. Always in transit, the promise of becoming –completing the story, domesticating the detour –becomes an impossibility" (p. 5). It should be noticed in this quote that the primary abode of diaspora is language. It is through the discursive analysis of the linguistic output of diasporas that the dispersal of supremacist episteme is demonstrated. Crucial to such rationalist thinking is the identification category of the nation which was born out of the Western modern idea of wholeness and totality. In promoting a spirit of transnationalism, the migrant subject problematizes the nationalist enterprise of coherence and conformity.

Heated debates about nationalism and national identity often rise to the fore when security and stability are threatened by the migrant figure. The result is often the rekindling of hidden passionate exclusionary urges and reinforcement of classical imperial dichotomies of 'they' and 'we'. The primary turbulence of the national conceptualization of identity is ascribed to the international wave of migration and globalization which have blurred the significance of the nation-states and the physical/symbolic frontiers. National identity has been ebbing and withdrawing its classical worth to the advantage of growing transnational trends. In this vein, diaspora is thought to be "loosely associated with other terms, particularly transnationalism, to describe the disjunctures and fractured conditions of late modernity" (Brazier and Mannur, 2003, p. 7).

Homelessness emerges as the literary embodiment of the post-modern condition of migrancy and transnationalism. The transnational fiction, especially the novel, interrupts the monologic representation of history by presenting multiple characters and various voices that have no stable home to reside in. Temporal continuities and linear construction of official history are disturbed by the temporal/spatial heteroglossia inherent in these novels. Such works propose diasporic positions that reflect multiple identities and fractures of binary oppositions.

National identities can be considered as an exclusionary category that re-endorses the dichotomy of 'us' and 'them'. The transnational models surpass such binary hierarchies. Minnaard (2008) prefers to approach Moroccan Dutch authors with a view to the national concerns solely. She said: "national identity remains a central factor in any reflection on the (future of) contemporary globalizing world, both as discursive concept and as a field of contesting discourse. She argues that Bouazza and Benali interrogate the exclusionary dimension of the nation through the struggle for attaining Dutch identity. She adds: "national identity can, in my opinion, function as a factor of (multi-) cultural integration and social cohesion for the multiethnic communities of this time" (p. 18).

In reading their writings on home, through the national viewpoint, Minnaard misses what Walters (2005) considers as "the politically performative power of writing diaspora" (p. xviii). She asserts that Bouazza and Benali long to secure a location within the national identity. They are thought to articulate a resistance to the national identity discourses that exclude them. The transnational model shows that exclusion is resisted by intellectual displacement and refusal to conform. Minnaard concentrates her efforts on their public intervention in the national discourse and pays less attention to their literary contributions which are tainted with transnational flavors.

It is through writing that the transnational authors enact their performance of home in diaspora. Their writings enact a discursive negotiation of the modern over-determined categories of nation, race, gender and sexuality. They contest such singular identities imposed by the prevailing social order.

Literature is used as a discursive space invested to negotiate the notion of home. Displacement generates not only a physical distance but also a critical distance. Nostalgic yearning is coupled with a politico-artistic critique of all imagined homes. There is a kind of political critique that goes in tandem with the nostalgic remembrance of home.

The physical de-territorialization is often thought of, in migrant literature, to bring about linguistic and literature deterritorialization (George 1999). The latter is felt in the preponderance of instances of estrangement and exile in the de-territorialized voice. The act of territorial displacement forms an impetuous occasion to displace the common system of belief one used to inculcate. It is for this reason that some contemporary feminist writings call for a similar act of de-territorialization that may help them lift the yoke of marginality and gender inequality and provide the ground for the reassessment of their sexuality. Kaplan (1987) makes this point clear, “we must leave home, as it were, since our homes are often the sites of racism, sexism and other damaging social practices” (p. 35).

Not being home is an experience that promises the disruption of the old certainties and patterns of imagining the other. George interprets this kind of un-belongingness as “a matter of realizing that home was an illusion of coherence and safety based on the exclusion of specific histories of oppression and resistance, the oppression of difference even within oneself” (p. 26). The feminization of home and generally the gendering of places are supposed to exclude women as conscious independent subjectivities. To guarantee an aura of security and satisfaction, homes should be controlled, created and owned by men. Thus, when the significant allegory of woman as home is dislocated from the patriarchal equation (of women as the epitome of home and the latter as metonymy of identity, sensual delight, and stability) male’s naturalized power is disrupted and so its closure becomes undermined by some openings that allow other voices to cooperate.

Women’s writings were generally hostile to the prevalent conception of national identity which was perceived as imperialist and masculine. The travel outside of the precinct of domestic houses helped them interpenetrate the ideological fabric of imperialism and integrate the voice of women in the colonial discourse as a first step towards equal contribution to the cultural life of the West. Trodd (1991, p. 34) explains, “imperialism excluded women, while offering hopes of participation to men below the ruling class.” It seems that women were located at the lowest rank of the imperial hierarchy. Rather than triggering nostalgic yearning, homes for these female writers involve memories of subordination.

The situation is analogous to what sometimes happens when oppressed women, from a contemporary patriarchal society like in most third-world countries, have an opportunity to leave home. Going abroad for them is a liberating action that ends up in the reassessment of their selves and appreciation of their capacities. In the postcolonial nationalist agendas, women’s liberation was not taken seriously. For despite their now-and-then appearance in the public arenas, their natural place remained to be seen as the space of domesticity. They are mobilized only at the time of national emergencies to serve the patriarchy-controlled states. Kandiyoti (1994, p. 376) stated in this connection, “the apparent convergence between the interests of men and the definition of national priorities leads some feminists to suggest that the state itself is a direct expression of men’s interests.”

3. The Trope of Homelessness in Dellal’s “When the Wind of the Atlas Blows”

Dellal’s “When the Wind of the Atlas Blows” is a collection of interwoven stories that are set in a barren village by the name of *the Little Horns*. It unfolds the tragic experiences of postcolonial subjects undergoing the trauma of ontological disorientation that is expressive of colonialism’s legacy. The protagonists assume the role of both literal and metaphorical outcasts whose sense of belonging to the local culture is deranged. Whether they are hopelessly seeking irrevocable homes, searching for a shelter in nature after having deserted their community, indulging in the quest for new avenues of liberation from the shackle of customs, or dislocating the patriarchal mores of traditional societies, the protagonists are an embodiment of either the emancipatory prospects of displacement or the existential crisis of postcolonial subjects.

The collection of stories significantly opens with “The Homecoming,” a short story that sets the stage for the ontological paranoia that pervades the life of its protagonists. The homecoming of Baadi is portrayed in grim images since the onset. His feeling of existential void is reflected in unwelcoming

and hostile landscapes. "A vast and barren land" is what "lay ahead the bus" (p. 6) taking him to his supposed home in an attempt to reunite with his village after an absence of two decades in Algeria. The narrator's portrayal of the opening setting rules out any prospect of romantic homecoming where the abandoned home evokes comfort and joy for the returnees. The village instead evokes the melancholy of exilic sentiment. "The whole village had been deserted and there were very few signs of life...such a sight filled him with a hollowness he had already experienced in exile; a feeling that had frequently assailed him in front of frightening strangeness" (p. 6). A feeling of alienation, emptiness and strangeness overwhelms Baadi who was expecting a solace from the hassles of city life. The more he was approaching his hometown, the more "oppressing hollowness" (p. 8) and "incarnation of nothingness" (p. 9) he was feeling. The small trip was reducing him to a foreigner "who has to knock on the door, like a stranger, to be allowed in your own home. Father's land" (p. 9).

The villagers, or the caste as the narrator significantly prefers to refer to them, were suspicious of his return and could not fathom what kept him away for so long time; "the majority of them could not envisage the possibility of life outside the geographical limits of their home area" (p.11). His difference and indifference to the traditional authority of the caste triggered their infuriation and hostility. An analogy can be drawn here between the villagers and nationalist discourses as far as their skepticism of wanderers, parochialist thinking and the relating of identity to well-defined territory are concerned. "Afraid of change" (p. 14), he represents the nostalgic yearning of a migrant, who seeks to retrieve his sense of belonging in a home which suggests the coziness of the past.

The narrative fabric of the story amplifies his un-belongingness to his hometown. To his dismay, he was "reported dead a long time ago" (p. 20) as his administrative inquiry unfolds. Thinking that he was killed in an attack on the farm he was working on, his late mother declared him dead and therefore disinherited him. He was required by bureaucracy to produce evidence for his identity; in retaliation, the caste would not function as a witness for his legitimate kinship. He was later proposed to marry Halima, a woman in his mother's household, to be acknowledged as a member of the tribe. Being reluctant to compromise his right to his mother's land, he dismissed their offer and set out on a new journey to prove his identity.

Disenchanted by the hostility of the caste, he decided to move to a town hotel and attempt to prove his real identity. He spent all his bank savings to gratify the greed of corrupted bureaucracies to no avail. Even his alternative plan for settling in town and forgetting about his entitlement in the village faded away as the police started branding him as an illegal resident who must quit the hotel. Getting stranded in town because of the difficult rain season, he turned into a tramp "roaming from one place to another" (p. 39) and taking abode in a deserted garbage area on the outskirts of town. When the flood hit that area, his corpse was found by the villagers amongst their lost furniture and cattle. Although his corpse was recognized and rituals for burial were made, for a delegation of officials "No human casualties were reported" (p. 44). Arguably, even when nature allowed his body to return to his homeland, his homecoming was not granted by the human and cultural elements. This interpretation suggests that migration is a one-way ticket and that homes are irrevocable entities.

Baadi stands for the postcolonial disoriented subjectivity that is undergoing an existentialist dilemma. Neither could he retrieve the abandoned home nor could he look forward to another destination. With both a literary and metaphorical lost identity, Baadi had to face harsh ontological annihilation which could not be interceded even by the powerful will of nature, his last abode. His state exemplifies several of the postmodern postcolonial vignettes; the most outstanding one is the premise that migration is a one-way ticket. Once one leaves the precinct of one's cultural and geographical boundaries, the return will be met with insurmountable obstacles.

The juxtaposition between the protagonist's melancholic return to homeland or search for wandering relatives and the despondent nature of landscapes constitutes a typical opening strategy in almost all the stories. In so being, they can be read through the prism of ecocriticism which refers to "those forms of fictional and non-fictional writing that highlight nature and natural elements (landscape, flora and fauna, etc.) as self-standing agents" (Huggan and Tiffin, 2015, p. 13) and testimonies for the "a close relationship between the individual and nature" (Huggan, 2009, p. 8) In the short story "In the Beginning", the narrator's inquiring eye is directed on Ahmed who is trying to find his lost brother. The opening sentences "There was fog everywhere. Its thickness seemed impenetrable...the bad weather, the precarious roads..." (p. 46) translate a premonition for a failed mission to reunite individuals with a deserted homeland. Like Baadi, Ahmed is travelling with a light

bag and dwelling on nature as his provisional home. In his search for his younger brother Atman, the reader is exposed to the harsh reality of postcolonial Morocco; the barren nature is bound with wretched people to amplify the aftermaths of colonialism in Morocco. Apparently, Atman's decision to abandon his village and cherish the liberty of movement and the freedom from the restraint of tradition is informed by his intellectual upbringing and adherence to the existentialist creed. While Atman was sleeping in the open offshore, Ahmed took a book entitled "Prometheus Unbound" from Atman's pocket, a four-act lyrical drama by Percy Bysshe Shelley. In Greek mythology, Prometheus is a figure who underwent unimaginable torture from the God Zeus to bring fire to humanity. The drama focuses mostly on Prometheus' release from captivity. He is an icon of emancipation from the constraints of culture and tradition. Mulling over the book, Ahmed points out an ontological crisis that his brother's generation had to face. Unlike his generation who had a visible enemy to deal with, the new one seems to grapple with indiscernible antagonists who seem to be everywhere but tangible nowhere. Ahmed thinks that his generation "had to fight the French because they had been described as invaders. But what enemy are these youngsters fighting? He admitted that things become too complex for people like him" (p. 69-70). Significantly, Atman did not want to go back. In the morning, Ahmed found out his "footsteps on the wet sand beside him pointed to the *North*" (Italics added). His next destination is Europe which represents the source of the emancipatory philosophy he was cultivated in. The stability that Baadi looks for and Ahmed seeks for his brother is never a completed mission. Besides, loneliness and restlessness are a common feeling that pervades their lives.

"The Tribulations of A Lonely Woman" opens with the portrayal of a runaway protagonist, Kebir, carrying a bag and taking a shield in "the wilderness and harsh weathers" (p. 75) and "the thickness of the wood" (p. 74), and believing that "If there was any danger, it was going to come from people." He was trying to escape the revenge of his village fellows after having killed Ittu, his girlfriend. Unfortunately, he ended up being shattered by a forgotten mine blast. Kebir did not want to marry Ittu who had slept with him on the ground that she was not a virgin; he considered her a whore; Miluda does not hold the same opinion as her twin brother. She sees love as more important than any other consideration. Kebir denies his responsibility in Ittu's pregnancy despite the medical certificate which proves that. Assu the brother of Ittu raped Miluda as retaliation. He proposed marrying Miluda if Kebir agreed to marry Ittu.

Time and again, nature is depicted as a haven from the hostility of human beings. On her way to claim the detonated corpse of her brother, Miluda was wondering about the reasons that made Kebir head toward the village which is prone to the deadly vices of its people "the wood would have been a better refuge. Why did he have to go that way. No bushes, no shrubs, nothing for a shelter. The Dead village" (p. 91). The narrator is careful to provide a detailed description of the destruction of the body of the runaway which stimulates the joy of most villagers, "nothing was recognizable apart from the head which was still attached to the backbone. The genitals and the bowels were scattered over the place..." (p. 92). In so doing, the idea of return, inadvertently, is associated with hampering hurdles. Displacement seems to be the fate of the protagonists who breach the mores of the village which represents the force of stability, fixity of values, and interplay between territory and identity.

An important part of the dissident worldview of the stories is carried out by Miluda, the university girl who "was a dreamer of a different kind" and "had a liking for literature"; her verbal acts and behavioral decisions go at loggerhead with the stabilizing norms of the village and its caste system. In order to intensify her adopted non-conformist stance, the narrator refers to her voiceless and helpless status in the presence of Kebir "Miluda had no opinion. She did not know what to say. That was something Kebir had to answer" (p. 93). However, his tragic death paved the way for her emergence as a staunch critic of her cultural environment. She took revenge on her rapist using wiles. She arranged to spend the night with Assu under the excuse of celebrating some good news. Under the effects of drugs and her enchanting stories, she marked their buttocks with an "iron bar that was kept for a long time in the fire" (p. 106). Accomplishing such a courageous scheme granted her unprecedented power over their patriarchal authority.

On the day of Kebir's funeral, Miluda displayed a blunt infringement of the village's customs of distancing women from the body that is being buried, which is believed to have "some bearing on Islamic cult" (p.113). Miluda, "the taboo breaker," even goes to show readiness to dispense with both the *fqih* who considers her close presence as "blasphemous" and the few attendees who "feel offended" by her profanity. She openly stated that "he does not need anybody to meet his God. He was an outcast."

Her love for her brother emanates from their being both "arrogant and rebellious." Yet, she resented his patriarchal stubbornness to "assert his masculinity. His manhood" (p. 116) which overshadows "her capacity to assert her personality; defend herself against abuse." Her stream of consciousness which takes the form of meditation during the funeral reflects her postcolonial feminist awareness and sympathy with all the abused women; "she was sad for all the girls, who, like her, had to support brothers like hers; sad for all the girls who had to undergo double rapes: moral and physical... it was all to be blamed on the French. Forgot to clean their mess when they left" (p. 117).

Being so adamant about defying the village's superstitions, the villagers' conspiracy and hypocrisy, Miluda was reluctant about offering a funeral dinner for her brother to his detractor villagers who were "hounding him like a rabbit (p. 117). Miluda exercises a great power on the *fquih* and the gravediggers. After the funeral they headed toward the deceased's house to get paid by his brother Bassu, but "when she saw them she turned around and they cowered away heads down. Bassu could not understand the reason for this sudden power" (p. 123). Later, she defiantly handed the money to the gravediggers and ignored "the *fquih* {who} felt the humiliation deep in his bosom" (p. 124).

Another manifestation of the revolutionary character of Miluda is the usurpation of her house's door when welcoming the invitees for the funeral dinner. "Bassu was also by the door, but his presence was eclipsed; customs has it that he should be receiving the guests...but that role was usurped now" (p. 137). From her position as the door host, Miluda usurps the traditional masculine power of staring at her male guests. Normally, in patriarchal societies women's backs are subject to males' erotic gazes. However, by her dissident profile, Miluda disrupts such sexist mindset which relegates women to sexual fetishes or objects. For instance, when the *fquih* was entering the house, "Miluda kept looking at his back and he felt embarrassed. Miluda stripped him with her looks. He was naked, his bum exposed to the winds" (p. 137). The other invitees who consider themselves VIPs could not escape her derogatory gazes as their bums were all marked by her hot iron bar. "VIPs! She knew them one by one; she enjoyed looking at them from the back. They looked naked from the back. She was wondering how their wives made love to them. She would have felt they had known" (p. 138). Her staring power does not spare even the village chief; "when he saw her, he stubbed the butt, bent down his head...the smoke swirled into a cloud; smoke of burnt flesh coming out of the big iron bar being applied on the flesh..." (p. 138).

Her feminist consciousness is so deep that she does not mind the village's women's resentment of her non-conformist attitudes and deeds. "They all treated her like a whore, a witch and a fool; but she did not mind. She knew they were all indebted to her. She could pull the plug out and cats would be running in the streets..." (p. 140). She believes that ruses are more effective than force when it comes to struggle for recognition. She learns the lesson from "her brother {who} had tried force and died of it. Force is double-edged, the brain has all the wit" (p. 140).

Despite her invincible sway over the village's patriarchs, Miluda decides at the end of the story to get displaced elsewhere to rid herself of the troubles of surviving the misogynous hatred of the villagers who are against her transgressing of the gendered organization of space. Significantly, the book closes with her statement addressing Bassu, "Find a buyer for the house, anywhere else would do." Displacement is imagined as the most viable solution to eschew the stabilizing forces of tradition. It is the key to opening new possibilities for seeing the world in different terms.

4. Conclusion

In its entirety, all the stories of the collection feature protagonists who are on bad terms with the myopic stand of the village which is grounded on the interplay between belonging and territory, opposition to change and newness, and oppression of women. Migration and movement are understood as postcolonial legacy which is both emancipatory and complexly disorienting. The outward penchant for restlessness is associated with perilous outcomes for those who resort to returning to irrevocable homes. Nonetheless, this inclination for restlessness promises empowering moments for those who prefer the continuity of mobility to the stability of tradition.

The collection as a whole is deemed as a decent contribution to postcolonial literature written in English. It further instantiates that postcolonial scholarship is marked by a specific diversity that refuses to yield to colonialist reductive categorizations which essentialize the postcolonial experiences of the formerly colonized countries after the orientalist representational fashion (Porter, 1993; Loomba,

1998). The narrative perspective from which the stories is approached does not allow a certain intellectual stand to stand out, nor does it impose on the reader a definite sense of allegiance or a reading position to assume. The physical, intellectual and generally ontological displacement wrought by colonial contact is thought to enable the cultural critique of stereotypical and superstitious customs inherent in the discourses of tradition and stable identification. It also illuminates the destructive repercussion of colonialism on local natives whose line of continuity with conventional norms is severed and fatal disorientation becomes their fate to endure.

References

- [1] Appiah, A. (2001). "Cosmopolitan Reading." In *Cosmopolitan Geographies: New Locations in Literature and Culture*. Ed. Dharwadker, Vinay. New York: Routledge, pp.197-228.
- [2] Bammer, A. (2005). "Between Foreign and Floating Signs: the Language of the Migrant Subjects." In *Migrant Cartographies: New Cultural and Literary Spaces in Post-Colonial Europe*. Eds. Sandra Ponzanesi and Daniela Merolla. New York: Lexington Books, pp. 151-164.
- [3] Bhabha, H. (1990). *Nation And Narration*. London and New York: Routledge.
- [4] Brah, A. (1996). *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*. London: Routledge.
- [5] Braziel, E., & Mannur, A. (2003). Eds. *Theorizing Diaspora: A Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- [6] Chambers, I. (1994). *Migrancy, Identity, Culture*. London: Routledge.
- [7] Dellal, M. (2007). "When the Wind of the Atlas Blows." Oujda: Imprimerie Chark.
- [8] George, M. R. (1999). *The Politics Of Home: Postcolonial Relocations And Twentieth Century Fiction*. California: University Of California Press.
- [9] Hall, S. (1996). "Minimal Selves." In *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader*. Eds. Houston A. Baker, Manthia Diawara, and Ruth H. Lindeborg. Chicago: Chicago University Press, pp. 114-119.
- [10] Herrera, O. (2011). *Cuban Artists Across Diaspora: Setting the Tent against the House*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- [11] Huggan, G., & Tiffin, A. Eds. (2015). *Postcolonial Ecocriticism Literature, Animals, Environment*. London and New York: Routledge.
- [12] Huggan, G. (2009). Postcolonial ecocriticism and the limits of Green Romanticism, *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 45:1, 3-14, DOI: 10.1080/17449850802636465
- [13] Huggan, G. (2008). *Interdisciplinarity Measures: Literature and the Future of Postcolonial Studies*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.
- [14] Kandiyoti, D. (1994). "Identity and Its Discontents: Women and the Nation." In *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory: A Reader*. Eds. P. Williams and L. Chrisman. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, pp. 376-391.
- [15] Kaplan, C. (1987). "Deterritorialization": the rewriting of Home and Exile in Western Feminist Discourse. *Cultural Critique* 6 (Spring), 187-98.
- [16] Loomba, A. (1998). *Colonialism/ Postcolonialism*. New York: Routledge.
- [17] Minnaard, L. (2008). *New Germans, New Dutch: Literary Intervention*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- [18] Ponzanesi, S., & Merolla, D. (2005). "Introduction." In *Migrant Cartographies*. Eds. S. Ponzanesi and D. Merolla. New York: Lexington Books, pp. 1-53.
- [19] Porter, D. (1993). "Orientalism and its problems." Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, eds. *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory*. Cambridge: Harvester Wheatsheaf, pp.150-61.
- [20] Robinson, H. Ed. (2024). *Language, Diaspora, Home: Identity and Women's Linguistic Space-Making*. New York: Routledge.
- [21] Shamma, Y., Ilcan, S., Squire, V., & Underhill., H. Eds. (2022). *Migration, Culture and Identity : Making Home Away*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- [22] Spivak, C. (1994). "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*. Ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, pp. 66-111.
- [23] Trodd, A. (1991). *A Reader: Guide To Edwardian Literature*. Alberta: University Of Calgary Press.
- [24] Walder, D. (1998). *Post-colonial Literatures in English*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

[25] Walters, W. (2005). *At Home In Diaspora: Black International Writing*. Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press.