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## Transgressing borders or bodies, deconstructing geographies in Tahar Ben Jelloun's "Partir"

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**Abstract:** The pictures of paradisiacal Europe and images of hellish Africa form the raw materials for the configuration of dreams of displacement and dislocation of an African migrant. Incidentally such pictorial conceptualization of Abroad defines as well the architecture and ambivalence of his/her hopes of departing from his/her Home. With the politicization of space and time, his/her 'faux papiers' or 'sans papiers' cannot assure the possibility of entrance, s/he is confronted with the impenetrability of enclosed borders and boundaries. Europe, now symbol of a female body, must be consummated, after amorous conceptualization. Though the boundary (body) is hermetic, it could be penetrated or violated forcefully. Focusing on Tahar Ben Jelloun's *Partir*, this paper attempts to show how/why Maghrebian migrants transgress borders in order to reach their conceptualized and idealized European countries; this is analyzed in relation to the discourse of female body. It argues that romanticized idealization of the exterior propels its forced penetration or transgression of its borders. The paper also opines that the transgression of space permits the writer to deconstruct global geographies that have been highly politicized through the Eurocentric power of map.

**Keywords:** Maghreb, fiction, Tahar ben Jelloun.

### INTRODUCTION

Mobility and movement has characterized the postmodern man since his world has suddenly become what Marshall McLuhan call a global village.

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The possibility of this phenomenon is anchored on the global collapse of space, distance and time through technology and popular culture. Radio, Television and Internet or Holland & Huggan (2000: 2) refer to as "travel vehicles" are agents of sensitization and tantalization, encouraging unconsciously and consciously migration and emigration, producing as well both real and virtual travelers/tourists who are potential emigrants. For Audrey Yue (2000), migration is a process where people leave one set of social, geographical and historical circumstances and move, or are moved, to another; as an episteme of dislocation, migration is also a critical position of translation. Immigration and its psycho-social ramifications constitute a recurrent theme in contemporary Maghrebian fiction written in French (MEHTA 1994: 79). Moreover, statistical information has shown the high mobility of Africans in general and *maghrebians* in particular, who migrate through the desert or ocean to Europe for proverbial greener pastures (See Yehudit RONEN, 2001). Moroccans are believed to be the largest migrant nationality among Maghrebian and North Africans in Europe. The total number of Moroccans in Europe is about 1.323 million.<sup>1</sup> Pictures of paradisiacal Europe contrasted with images of hellish Africa form the raw materials for the configuration of dreams of displacement of an African migrant, legal or illegal. Incidentally such pictorial conceptualization of Abroad defines as well the architecture and ambivalence of his hopes of departing from his Home. With the politicization of space and time, his/her 'faux papiers' or 'sans papiers' cannot assure the possibility of entrance, s/he is confronted with the impenetrability of enclosed borders and boundaries. But his penetration is a social obligation, despite the fact that many developed countries have equally taken extraordinary measures to checkmate this influx of men and women from developing nations of the world, especially those who clandestinely cross borders and boundaries in a bid to escape economic and political woes of their states of origin. Traveling, to them, becomes, in the words of Sara Mills (36), "an escapist movement". The expropriation of 'here' means the appropriation of 'there'. Unfortunately psychological appropriation does not imply acceptance by host country that has immigration laws to checkmate influx of migrants.

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<sup>1</sup> The comparative study reveals that Morocco has the largest number of nationals in Europe. For population of other countries, see Ayman Zohry. "Migration Without Borders: North Africa as a Reserve of Cheap Labour for Europe" *Migration Without Borders Series*, SHS/2005/MWB/7, UNESCO, January 19, 2005, p.6.

The trend in out migration to Europe accelerated in 1960, and continued until European States themselves placed brakes on the movement in 1974. Emigration reduced unemployment then, a part from existing and potential economic contribution of the remittances to the developing economies. Thus the worker at home was a potential commodity and the expatriate a source of income (BRAND, 2000). Except for the last century, migration was without physical borders, and the movements of individuals from one place to another were not restricted by national or regional borders, visa systems, or national security fear. Subsequently, illegal migration can be explained as a reaction of closing doors in front of immigrants (ZOHRY, 2005: 1,5). Introduction of border control was a political means of territorializing hegemony, through the conceptualization of Eurocentric differentiation between “Us’ and ‘Other’, and ‘here’ and ‘there’. Hunter (2002: 33) explains that passports limit the implicit ownership rightfully assigned to the imperial subject of Other Places – and turns this back on the traveler himself. That is, passport is not only an indication of the loss of authority of the traveler, but also the imposition of the authority of the State. The politics of visa has been fortified by the primordial power of map that enabled the Eurocentric construction of global geographies; maps as a social construction divide the world (WOOD, 1992: 22). Entry into developed countries of the world becomes increasingly difficult because spaces, borders and boundaries are highly politicized and gendered. Yet clandestine movements have not been aborted because prospective migrants feel *unhomely* and ‘spaces’ are being reasserted.

Prospective migrants live in their home, yet suffer what Homi Bhabha calls *unhomeliness* and exilic experiences. Allatson and McCormack (2), quoting Amy Kaminsky, say that exile may be lived or dreamed, it is innately instable; a process rather than a singular state. This is what they call internal exile which may be manifested as a form of social death through social conditions such as enforced or prolonged unemployment. Coly (2002:34, 35) attributes the mass exodus of African youths toward Europe to the ‘Collapsing Homes’ of Africa which cannot shelter or anchor its sons and daughters, resulting from high unemployment, high poverty, hyper inflation, hideous wars and conflicts, and general insecurity. Quoting the French phenomenologist Gaston Bachelard, the critic defines home as the crucial site of one’s intimate life and a refuge, and uses ‘*espace heureux*’ (felicitous space) to designate home. For him, home is the anchor without which men and women become fragmented individuals.

When the home or nation loses its functional comfortability in the periphery, the exploration of the center becomes an obsessive dream. The sensitivity of unhomeliness or homelessness provokes the aspiration for dislocation, giving rise to the high mobility of the *unhomed* in textual and extratextual worlds. Ironically, the state of homelessness is not healed by simply arriving to the host country; it becomes a social and psychological continuum in the life of the immigrant. Racism, xenophobia, exotic cultures, professional exploitations, social barriers, or clampdown on illegal immigrants trigger off the second sensitivity of homelessness abroad. Homelessness can also occur through the feeling of alienation from family, home, and the nation, as admitted by Subhash Chandra (2008) in his review of *Interpreting Homes in South Asian Literature*.<sup>2</sup>

In his article, 'Writing Travel and Mapping Sexuality: Richard Burton's Sotadic Zone', Richard Phillips (1999) argues why Burton's sexuality and geography are dynamic and open, manifesting an open disdain for the absoluteness of fixed points and rigid boundaries. His Sotadic Zone is characteristic and endemic of sexual transgressions such as pederasty, homosexuality, prostitution, bestiality, debauchery, and erotic perversion, propelled by 'animal passions' inherent in the zone. Problematic and polemical Burton's arguments may be, Morocco, geographically situated in this zone, appears to manifest such characteristics in Ben Jelloun's *Partir*. In this text, we attempt is to trace a paradigmatic relationship between Burton's sexually mapped zone and Ben Jelloun's characters' passion for migration to Europe while analyzing why African emigrants must contravene protected borders and space. Our essay argues that a prospective migrant's obsessive willingness to transgress fixed spaces and borders is premised on his sexual conceptualization of Europe as a female body. Fantastic news from abroad, testimonies of immigrants, foreign films and documentaries are foundations for prospective migrants' 'foreplay' which eventually leads to aggressive consummation of a disinclined 'body'. In essence, forcible 'penetration' of the interior is propelled by idealistic romanticization of the exterior. Every act of rape starts from that point of romanticization, since men generally appear to decode the 'language of the female body' (CIXOUS, 1975).

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<sup>2</sup> A collection of essay, edited by Malashri Lai and Sukrita Paul Kumar, New Delhi: Pearson Longman, 2007. It will offer insights into the concept of home, so is recommended for further reading.

The Moroccan writer, Tahar Ben Jelloun needs a little or no public presentation. He is seen as the most prolific and best known contemporary francophone North African writer (OUZGANE, 1997). Maya Jaggi (2006) considers him as one of the France's most feted writer and most prominent author from the Maghreb, and he remains the most translated francophone writer in the world. (*Wikipedia*) With more than 25 novels and short stories, 3 plays, 5 poetry collection, and nonfiction works, Ben Jelloun remains undoubtedly the most resourceful Maghrebian and black African writer of contemporary period. Most of his works are widely read and have been translated into more than forty languages. The author started manifesting his literary skill in the University of Morocco, Rabat as he participated in the publication of Abdellatif Laabi's radical political review *Soufflés*. Though he had won several literary awards, including the Prix de l'Amitié Franco-Arabe, his literary and public fame occurred when he became the first African Arab writer to be awarded Le Prix Goncourt, the most prestigious French literary prize, for his novel *La Nuit sacrée* published in 1987.

The diasporic writer presents the exodus of young Moroccans to foreign land in *Partir* (2006). It is a novel that tells the story of an uncommitted Muslim Azel, a Moroccan jobless law graduate whose ultimate dream is to cross over to Europe. After several attempts, he finally travels to Spain through his contact with Miguel, a Spanish homosexual lover and resident in Tanger. Azel can not fit into the homosexual codes of conduct as demanded by his benefactor and lover. As a heterosexual, he does not derive pleasures in his gay escapades. His heterosexual life fractures his relationship with Miguel who incidentally marries his only sister Kenza, after his purported conversion to Islam. This marriage is only a metaphor for Kenza's relocation to Spain and Miguel's eventual possession of his adopted children in Morocco. Azel separates and departs from Miguel's apartment. He suffers extreme poverty and misfortune, lives a life of debauchery and vagabondage, and sees imprisonment and eventually becomes a secret agent of the Spanish Police. He is however assassinated at the zenith of his self-discovery and self recreation. Kenza, now Spanish citizen by marriage, falls in love with her Turkish lover, Nazim who disappoints her. Healed of sentimental illusion, she becomes recreated and emancipated from social conditionings, and decides to relocate to Morocco, her country which was not a home before departure.

## WHEN HOME IS NO LONGER A HOME

In Ben Jelloun's works generally including *Partir*, there is a subtle attempt to redefine nationalism and nationhood in his postcolonial Morocco. The writer uses the paradoxical figure of a madman, Moha in *Moha le fou, Moha le sage* (1978) to critique his disillusioned society, underlining its social malaise which culminates into failed dreams and aborted hopes of the oppressed, the poor and the disenfranchised. The geometric social and economic effects of the foolish/wise man's evaluation of independent Morocco are now felt in Tahar Ben Jelloun's *Partir* whose title is a subtext that summarizes the obsession to cross the border. Unlike Moha, the protagonist, Azel has no air of foolishness; he is a law graduate who suffers like majority of Moroccan educated youth from acute unemployment and poverty. Le Café Hafa, situated in Tanger, remains a melting pot, a haven for all unemployed able-bodied men who come only to look at the sea, take tea and smoke hashish. Some girls, comprising students, the unemployed, young secretaries and divorcees, are part of madam Khaddouj's popular prostitution ring (JELLOUN, 2006: 39). Azel believes that these girls are not prostitutes, but only what he calls "cas sociaux" (social cases). In essence, like him, they are victims of societal failure. He did not hesitate to tell them: "J'ai vingt-quatre ans, je suis diplômé, j'ai pas de boulot, pas d'argent, pas de voiture, je suis un cas social, oui, moi aussi je suis à la dérive..." (I am 24 years old, I am a graduate, I have no work, no money, no car, I am a social case, yes of course, I am drifting...) (41) Inherent in Azel's demoralizing and disenchanting dialogue is a socio-economic melancholy of Moroccan youths, who already have exilic experience in their homeland.

Unemployment, inflation, poverty and insecurity are sources of internal exile in a homeland. Internal exilic experience results from and leads to Moroccans' sensitivity of homelessness or *unhomeliness* and high mobility in Ben Jelloun's work. Space in *Partir* is either politicized or gendered. Shonu Nangia (2003: 31-32) acknowledges that, in Maghrebian literature, home or harem which is closed and restricted defines feminine space contrary to streets that define masculine space which is open and limitless. Homelessness in *Partir* leads to the deconstruction of spatial dichotomy; all modern characters are mobile and moving. It appears that Ben Jelloun's feminine characters like Siham, Kenza, and others internalized the feminist admonition of Helene Cixous (1997: 351) that women should break out the snare of silence, therefore they should

not be conned into accepting a domain which is the margin or the harem. Siham's high mobility explains her life of whore and her tall ambition to migrate to Europe. Her lovemaking with Azel is spiced with western tactics and techniques, showing her vast knowledge of erotica. Sexual commerce in Ben Jelloun's work does not only reveal the high level of homelessness in Moroccan society, but also the fluidity of a depoliticized and deterritorialized space. The female body of a prostitute is mobile, mobility determined by the geographical location of her clients. In addition, her home is also mobile, because her movement determines her home. That is, multiplicity of home could be a metaphor for unavailability of home or unhomeliness. Masculine characters like Azel have a ceremonial fixed home, but make cafés, brothels, open spaces their haven for pleasure. The plot of the novel is structured to reveal this deficiency. In few occasions, Azel is seen in his maternal home, because his home is not "espace heureux" (felicitous space). The contemplation of his poor mother is both an affliction and a trauma. The woman catered for him and his sister Kenza singlehanded after the demise of their father. Azel is haunted by social culpability of his financial incapacitation and unending parental dependence. He cannot cater for his mother for lack of employment. The inability of home to be a haven provokes the romantic obsession for abroad in *Jellounian* characters. The purposefulness of their youthful adventurism epitomizes Freud's notion of travel as an escape from the father. But father/fatherhood now is metaphorical of fatherland. Clark (1999) calls such phenomenon "oedipal resonance to the journey: the moment of departure represents the son's refusal to stay within the *oikos* or household and so defy paternal authority by embarking on a rite of passage from adolescence to adulthood. (19) In essence, Ben Jelloun develops the trope of a Moroccan in love with the idea of Europe in his oeuvre.

#### WHEN ABROAD BECOMES A FEMALE BODY

At the time of conquest, land was conceptualized as feminine, a territory to be penetrated and governed by masculine rule (MIGNOLO & SCHIWY, 2003). Volumes of travel books described the flora and fauna of unknown lands to suggest European penetration and domination. With the help of literature and its sentimental language, the geographical anatomy of Africa

was discovered and denatured. In colonial discourse, female body becomes a metonymy of foreign land. Socially speaking, it can be said that the female body has a language that can be simply comprehended and communicated to onlookers and admirers. That explains why woman's body has been a subject of polemic and discourse in recent times, leading to varied and variegated interpretations. Nathalie Etoke (2006: 41) admits that female figures are being critically reasserted; rather than being a stable signifier of female oppression and resistance to patriarchy, the woman's body signifies a number of potentially conflicting political projects and positions in postcolonial Africa. That is, the body becomes the figure through which many political and social claims are mirrored and mediated. In Tahar Ben Jelloun's *Partir*, the writer appears to use the metaphor of female body in connection with premeditated penetration of borders by both Moroccan legal and illegal emigrants. This migratory activity is premised on the contemplation of abroad as a female body. Europe as the feminine Other to be penetrated consensually or non consensually spices its body language through popular culture, mass media and nature. She plays a passive role. Luce Irigaray (1977) affirms that a woman takes pleasure more from touching than looking and her entry into a dominant scopic economy signifies, again, her consignment to passivity; she is to be the beautiful subject of contemplation.

The Mediterranean Sea and Atlantic Ocean separate Morocco from Europe. Morocco's proximity to Europe and Spain particularly creates this irresistible panoramic contemplation that becomes romantic, erotic and psychological in Ben Jelloun's *Partir*. The esplanade of Boulevard Pasteur which gives an aerial view of the sea provides the protagonist with this experience of amorous 'foreplay' through the contemplation of "les lumières de Tarifa". Aziel takes a promenade along the coastline; he watches the vessels embark and disembark, likes to listen to engine noise and shouts from sailors, and plunges into reveries. Like her neighbor Azel, Malika visit also this "terrasse des Paresseux" from where she observes the port and the Spanish coasts before going to school. Although sick and living with her sister, the dream of crossing the Mediterranean remains immortal in Malika. She still locates a little terrace that gives overview of the sea. From this platform, she experiences a 'homosexual relationship' with Mother Nature:

Malika s'y installait et fermait les yeux. Le vent caressait ses cheveux qu'elle lâchait, elle se laissait emporter le plus loin possible sans faire d'effort, sans



prononcer un cri ou un mot. Elle était heureuse de planer au-dessus d'une mer d'un bleu limpide (124).

Malika was always there, eyes closed. The wind caressing her loosed hairs, she allowed herself to be carried away to faraway land, effortlessly and without a shout or a word. She was happy to fly over the sea of transparent azure (Our translation).

The female character's body shows passivity as the receiver of the action of 'caressing' and 'carrying'. Without resistance, Malika reveals possible permission and evident gratification. The morpho-syntactic permutation is romantic and erotic, culminating into an idyllic reverie of imaginary transition and relocation. The sea wears a coat of polarized ambivalence, creating culture of hope and hopelessness, becoming a bridge to heaven and hell, reducing and elongating the distance to Spain at the same time. Other faceless characters engage in this romantic contemplation, like those found in le café Hafa (JELLOUN, 2006: 11-12). This quixotic observation without 'penetration' is analogous to possible admiration of a beautiful female body without touch. It leads to psychological and emotional torment of observers, and culminates into premeditated rape of the fantasized European body, symbolic of illegal penetration of European borders. They now avoid le café Hafa's platform that gives rise to this unrealistic and unconsummated romanticization of abroad; to them, Europe is a "territoire interdit" (forbidden territory) (62), or blocked boundaries with electronic surveillance. When a border or body is enclosed, it acquires a nature of impenetrability and a risk of forceful penetration.

The depoliticization and deterritorialization of space makes, as we have earlier underlined, female characters mobile, but also transgressive. In Ben Jelloun's *La Nuit Sacrée* (1987), Zahra's transgressive penetration of a road path, a highly gendered space in the Maghreb, results into a rape. The rapist's blasphemous ode to God is full of tantalizing and fantasizing idealization of the female body, a prelude to actual but forceful consummation. Like in *Partir*, Azel's homosexual rape in the Police Station precedes the admiration of his male body. The two policemen said to him: "T'es mignon...t'as joli cul..." (You are pretty...you have a pretty bum...) (68, 69) Rape is a non-consensual sexual intercourse, unlawful consummation of female/male body. However transgressive as it may look, it is the only way of penetrating a hermetic body. In effect, the continual tantalization and impenetrability of abroad leads to

transgressive penetration of European borders through the Mediterranean Sea and the Strait of Gibraltar by obsessive Moroccan youths. In essence, this transgressive penetration of Moroccan-Spanish borders is metaphorically analogous of rape.

Sexual relationship, heterosexual or homosexual, strives in reciprocation, despite the concepts of passivity and activity. It remains a center of extra-romantic negotiations. Siham's request for the possibility of leaving the country with Azel would only be made after lovemaking. The Spanish immigrant, Miguel's homosexual contemplation of Azel's sleeping masculine body will only be consummated after facilitating the entrance of the latter to Spain. Azel, now in Europe, has to use his body to grease the wheels of his homosexual relationship with Miguel Lopez who provides him with shelter and other necessities of life. Kenza, his sister can only join him after an ambiguous marriage with the same Miguel. This arranged marriage assures Kenza's Spanish citizenship and Miguel's possibility of regularizing his adopted Maghrebian twins, Halim and Halima. Unfortunately, her citizenship is sealed through divorce which enables her to remarry her Turkish lover. Nâzim shows an artistic eroticism on Kenza's body, unveiling his mastery of body geography and anatomy. Understandably, the force behind this sentimental adventure is his premeditated plan to use his secreted marriage with Kenza to regularize his immigration papers. His marital status remains undisclosed to Kenza who experiences the euphoria of ambivalent love. In this labyrinth of sentiments, it is difficult for prospective and real immigrants to experience true love, as sexuality becomes a domain of political and economic negotiations or permutations. The politics of love is beclouded by individual dreams and desires that can be achieved through sexual exploits.

Sexual vices that characterize Burton's Sotadic Zone justify the location of Morocco in his map of sexuality in Ben Jelloun's *Partir* and other works. Miguel can be seen as a pederast, as there is a generational gap between him and his younger male sexual partner, Azel. Pederasty has been rampant in literary works on Maghrebian space. In André Gide's *Immoraliste*, Michel, a French tourist practices pederasty with pubertal Moroccan boys such as Bachir, Ashour and Lassif. In *Partir*, El-Haj's episodic relationship with Moroccan girls is described. (38-41) He praises their tantalizing female body, eulogizes their unparalleled sexual expertise and acclaims the animal passion that controls

their availability, and guarantees their accessibility. Other sexual perversions abound in the work. Girls, single and married, engage in prostitution (Khaddouj and her members); highly eroticized heterosexual sexes (Azel/Siham, Nazim/Kenza), homosexual and anal intercourses (Azel/Miguel, Azel/Police-men) are fully depicted. The Zone's animal passion does not only manifest in sexual activities but in the Moroccans' haunting desire for Europe. Deaths in the Mediterranean Sea do not quench this animalistic passion for life abroad. The Moroccan youth's obsession for Spain and other European countries is not only fuelled by economic and geographical factors, but also by postcolonial reassertion of public space and questioning of Eurocentric maps.

#### WHEN GEOGRAPHIES BECOME IMAGINARY

Modern scholars have questioned the concept of nation and nationhood, resulting from postmodern and postcolonial realities. It is seen as "a daily plebiscite" (RENAN, 1990: 19), "an imagined community" (ANDERSON, 1991: 6), and "a contested construct" (YEWAH, 2001: 45). Other scholars such as Cobhen, Paredes, and Esonwanne have identified this concept with certain modes. However, most of whom identify it as some kind of an assemblage of disparate alignments covered by the will of the people. (OKOYE, 2) The common denominator of all multifarious interpretations of nation is the need for reconceptualization of its defining elements, especially as the concept of home is being challenged in travel and emigration writing. If home is given a different form and meaning, it shows that space is being reasserted and reappropriated. This phenomenon is a postcolonial consciousness, because all geographies are imaginative and arbitrary (SAID, 1979: 54-55). Geographies have now become imaginary since man has understood that "maps work by serving interests" (WOOD, 1992: 4). The West has used primordial and modern maps to construct the world, linking its past and present; territorializing centre from periphery, and configuring masters from subjects. In Ben Jelloun's *Partir*, characters see borders and boundaries (geographies) as imaginary so they must be deconstructed.

The characters' terraces permit them to see the Spanish lights or coasts, not even borders and boundaries. These viewing points enable them to collapse space and time, and to appropriate European Spain as an extension of African

Morocco. The panoramic view of the Mediterranean Sea and Atlantic Ocean reinforces the imaginariness of geography and enforces its novel conceptualization. Ernest Renan (18) does not see mountains and waters as natural frontiers as Eurocentric maps claim, he however accepts that mountains separate, but the rivers tend to unify. The borders and boundaries between the Maghreb and Europe are deeply imaginary, socially and culturally constructed through the Eurocentric power of maps. The anonymous North African immigrant in Spain who labored to convince Azel to join the Muslim brotherhood, said: "Tu comprends, mon frère, nous sommes ici dans le pays de nos ancêtres..." (You understand, my brother, we are here in the country of our forefathers...) (286) This assertion comes from a short historical discourse on the conquest of Spain, emanating from North African alignment to Arab heritage. That revelation appears to be a historical justification for emigration to Spain. These Moroccan immigrants see Spain as their place. Such spatial appropriation looks probable because 'place' is imagined when people lay claim to a territory, construct and reconstruct the meaning of 'place' (YUE, 2000).

In Ben Jelloun's *Partir*, illegal movement of Moroccans to Spain can be perceived as a revolutionary and unapologetic process of counter-emigration. The words of Abbas, a Moroccan immigrant, reveal that before Moroccan independence, the Spanish were in Morocco as beggars, barbers, street sweepers, bus drivers, all badly dressed worse than Moroccans, with immigration papers. Few years after independence, Abbas was refused visa without any tangible reason despite long queue and indiscreet filling of documents in Embassy. He said: "Alors, là, je me suis enervé, j'ai juré d'entrer dans leur pays sans aucun papier, anonyme, comme Superman..." (So, there, I got offended, I swore to enter Spain without document, anonymous, like Superman...) (190) Though economic sfactors are generally behind mass movement of people, Abbas' emigration can be termed revolutionary and revengeful, apart from being escapist and solipsistic. The epistolary subtext of the novel justifies this revolutionary exodus towards Spain and other European countries. Miguel's father narrated in his diary how they ended up "quitter clandestinement l'Espagne pour le Maroc" (leaving clandestinely Spain for Morocco) (247), without passport or permit in 1951. He praised the city of Tanger for its cosmopolitanism and splendor, because it was a melting pot of all peoples: Americans and Europeans inclusive. The discovery of Miguel's

father's journal appears to be a moral sanction for clandestine emigration of Maghrebians. Why? It should be recalled that early Europeans explorers and missionaries did not need visas to come to Africa, but only the will of their scientific and missionary organizations. However, the apparent authorial justification (?) of underground mass departure creates in his characters moral ambivalence, obvious in their unconscious internalization of what Porter calls the "notion of guilt and duty, desire and transgression" (Quoted in MUSGROVE 1999).

## CONCLUSION

The "Collapsing Homes" of Moroccans create economic and social lacuna that can only be filled through emigration to Europe. Like highly libidinous males who can only be assuaged after consummation of female body, these young Moroccans' travel mania can only be healed by European atmosphere. Europe is paradigmatic of earthly paradise for jobless Africans and Maghrebians. Azel's only sister, Kenza is an example of miraculous exilic transition and transformation, concurring to the fact that European environment has some therapeutic values. Exile engenders search for and recreation of identity which sooner or later becomes hybrid and crisis-ridden. Unfortunately, these immigrants abandon Islamic religion that would have helped in shaping their identity, faced with rough economic and political realities of their host country. The depraved life of their disillusioned country, life of hashish and sexes, is transferred to Spain, their host country. At the end, these young Moroccans are "neither here nor there", their life of alienation, homelessness and hopelessness remains a continuum. Azel was tragically murdered in cold blood. Other Moroccan immigrants have an appearance of the living dead in their quarters that remind them of home. To them, "l'exil était le révélateur de la complexité du Malheur." (the exile became the revealer of the complexity of misfortune) Ben Jelloun (2006: 299) With botched imaginings and aborted optimism of an immigrant in his host country, Europe becomes a much desired object that comes into view; but its unveiling is both the climax and the beginning of anticlimax. At that point begins the familiarization of the desired thing, its conversion from rare to common (KERRIDGE, 1999: 175). Before the three cycles of Van Gennep's rites of passage are completed, Europe loses its

characteristic mystique; the immigrant character (Azel) struggles to protect himself/herself from the consequence of this loss. Eventually, he/she becomes a postmodern personality, a *flâneur* and vagabond (to borrow from Benjamin). Having experienced what postmodernists call de-realization, his/her sense of identity, constancy, and essence is upset or dissolved. In all, it looks like all Jellounian characters become what Bhabha (quoted in John Phillips 1999:75) calls "Marx's reserve army of migrant labour who speaking the foreignness of language split the patriotic voice of unisonance and became Nietzsche's mobile army of metaphors, metonyms and anthropomorphisms." In the end, they are modern victims of sensational tales of survival and suffering, marvels and monsters that reappear as a genre in a new guise, this time at the metropole's own borders (PRATT, 2006: 239).

**Resumo:** As imagens paradisíacas da Europa e as imagens de uma África destroçada formam a matéria-prima para a configuração dos sonhos de deslocamento de um migrante Africano. Tal conceituação pictórica do estrangeiro, do de fora, define bem a arquitetura e a ambivalência de suas esperanças de partida de sua terra. Com a politização do espaço e do tempo, o seu "faux papiers não pode garantir a possibilidade de entrada; o migrante é confrontado com a impenetrabilidade das fronteiras fechadas e dos limites. A Europa, agora símbolo de um corpo feminino, deve ser efetivada. Embora o limite (corpo) é hermético, poderia ser penetrado ou violado de forma enérgica. Focalizando *Partir*, de Tahar Ben Jelloun, este trabalho tenta mostrar como e porque os migrantes magrebinos transgridem fronteiras a fim de atingir os seus conceitos e idealizações dos países europeus, o que é analisado em relação ao discurso do corpo feminino. Este trabalho foca a idealização romântica do exterior impulsionada por sua penetração forçada ou transgressão de suas fronteiras. O autor deste trabalho entende também que a transgressão do espaço permite ao escritor desconstruir geografias globais que têm sido altamente politizados através do poder eurocêntrico do mapa (mundi).

**Palavras-chave:** Magreb, ficção, Tahar ben Jelloun.

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