

Political Contesting of Migration and Multiculturalism in Hafid Bouazza's "The Crossing"¹

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Abstract:

A crucial justification for the hyped reception of Hafid Bouazza's *Abdullah's Feet* in the mid-nineties is the overestimated celebration of multiculturalism by the Dutch establishment. Because of the stories' apparent embedding in the native background (Moroccan exotic village), the writer was hailed as a successful model for the Dutch multicultural society that was based on the policy of integration. This paper argues that his exotic prose is embedded in the culture of routes rather than the rhetoric of roots which is centered on otherness and ethnicisation. The narrative structure of the author's debut book disrupts the centripetal forces pushing toward unified autochthonous belonging. It is suggestive of the precariousness of the migrants' homes and their sense of origins. More importantly, Bouazza's "The Crossing" is produced in a context dominated by the New Right nationalist demand for sameness and critique of the pluralist discourse of correctness. Nevertheless, it is contended here that in displaying a persistent accent on migratory experience and full incorporation of foreigners in society as equals rather than identical, the short story maintains the tenacious immersion of the writer in the poetics of homelessness.

Key words

Multiculturalism, roots, routes, diasporic homelessness, transnationalism

Introduction

"The Crossing" was written six years after the publication of Bouazza's debut in 1996. Given its grounding in identical cultural and geographical background, this short story appeared as the ninth story in the revised edition of *Abdullah's Feet* (2002). This paper argues that Bouazza's "The Crossing" can be approached as authorial interventions to guide the reading of his book. Said differently, the author seeks to reorient the consumption of his prior texts through the unremitting allusion to the experience of migration and the trope of homelessness, as persistent thematic features that defy the "othering" machine managed by the dominant culture. Central in this appended short story is a consistent reference to migrant characters searching for

¹ Some ideas and language forms are partly reproduced from the author's article published under this reference entry: Abdellah Elboubekri (2014 b): Tenacious diasporic homelessness in Moroccan Dutch writing: A. Benali's 'May the Sun Shine Tomorrow' and H. Bouazza's 'The Crossing' as a case of study, *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal*, DOI: 10.1080/17528631.2014.966954

improved economic situations. Moreover, these characters are not only employed as literary devices to amplify the vicious repercussion of global capitalism, but they can also be associated with the discursive representation of “the border experience,” which, Clifford (1997, 37) believes, “is made to produce powerful political visions: a subversion of binarisms, the protection of a ‘multicultural’ public sphere (versus hegemonic pluralism)”.

Hence, the paper will discuss the writing of Bouazza as a political response against the migration policy of hegemonic multiculturalism and the racist assumptions of the new nationalists. Besides attempting to re-determine that the book is intended to a Dutch readership besieged by the fallacy of multiculturalism (Minnaard 2009), the short story reflects the literary and thematic maturity of the author whereby he develops a transnational cosmopolitanism that criticizes the unequal power relationships between the North and South, churned primarily out of Western late capitalism.

The dislocation of migrant otherness in *Abdullah's Feet*

Being opposed to the new current of nationalist revivalism and the quest for purity, collective origin and homogeneity, Bouazza embraces the magical realist style in his debut *Abdullah's Feet* to produce interruptive and disruptive moments in the discourse of exclusionary culturalist narratives. His light-hearted treatment of some characters and their roles in the general plot of the stories suggest his undermining of the readers' biographical interpretation of his text. With a tongue-in-cheek tone, he portrays the Islamic belief system of his native village leaving the readers unsure about their ethnic categorization of the narrator. For instance, the victorious homecoming of the feet from a holy war, in the story “*Abdullah's Feet*,” represents a vivid illustration of the fusion of fact and fiction. Besides underlining the fallacy of biographical and realist representation, the use of such magical realist scenes helps the narrator deride both the social contexts of his birth and that of his residence, thus marking his distance from both backgrounds. This is shown through attending to the possible meanings of the feet. Given the postcolonial background of the author, it is likely to read the feet as synonymous with movement.

The narrator seems to associate the return of the feet with victory. They are welcomed with jubilation; the imam's sermon is devoted to the triumph at war (a subtle reference to jihad) and the eminent ranks for martyrs in paradise. Likewise, the bleakness at the narrator's house is replaced with cheerfulness. Yet, as has been interpreted above, the returning feet symbolize restlessness and loss. Such an antithetical situation suggests a dislocation of the discourse of otherness. Put clearly, the narrator at once deflates the momentum attributed to jihadi culture and amplifies the lessening of the migrant's value by the Dutch migration policy. He also questions the assumption of pleasure derived from the migrant's return, both physically and emotionally, to homeland culture, and mocks the sense of accomplishment that is connected with retaining autochthonous identity.

The returning feet are not only comprehended as a metaphor of continuous travel, but they also add a fantastic and fabulous touch to the supposedly realist setting. As such, they can be read as an “expression of the aimlessness of literature, of its

unwillingness to be complicit in identitarian discourse...in other words, the text's self-awareness of the stereotyping and thus fallibility of literary representation" (Gilleir 2007, 261). This being the case, the figurative worth of *Abdullah's Feet* and the other similar diasporic texts call for abandoning the parochialism inherent in the identitarian perception of minority literature while enhancing at the same time "an awareness of literature's resistance against reading as a confirmation of what one knew already" (Gilleir, 266).

Contrary to the autochthonous discourses –which overlap identity with place –the diasporic imagination of Bouazza sees the construction of identity as not conditioned by the preexistence of original homeland. The process of de-territorializing the human subject can culminate in creative re-territorialization (G. Deleuze and F. Guattari 1987, 381). Michel Bruneau notices in this regard that in diasporic discourse "identity pre-exists place and tries to re-create it, to remodel it, in order to reproduce itself" (2010, 49). Pre-existing here means that identity is not constructed in close relation to a specific place over a particular period of time as it is understood in the autochthonous model.

Therefore, the author's risible revisiting of his homeland is motivated by his intention to recreate a new identity that is not predetermined by biographical history. He exonerates himself from the charge of Moslem otherness which impedes his ascendance to Dutchness through satirizing the Islamic superstitions in his homeland. Equally, he revisits his native village to ridicule the Dutch identitarian discourses which reduce its collective identity to allochthonous belonging. In short, he is looking to reinvent an identity that is innovative and liberated from the constraint of belonging to one place.

In this regard, Bouazza envisages healthy multiculturalism as a matter of maintaining gender equality, abating Islamic fanaticism and mobilizing the Dutch's sensitivity towards their cultural and linguistic tradition. He dreams of a model of multiculturalism in which women are not abused by Islamic fundamentalism and where the Dutch traditions of 'tolerance' and openness are not endangered by the parochial superstitious beliefs of migrants. Put plainly, Bouazza supports a sense of belonging to Dutchness as a collective and constructed identity. He is against both predestining his identity to an immovable exotic homeland as well as complying with the rigid closed definition of nationalist Dutchness.

A tentative reading of the stories corroborates Bouazza's pronounced declaration that he does not see Morocco as his home. He performs a fierce resistance against the Dutch purist discourses which tend to reduce his literary creativity and enslave his identity within his biographical circumstance. He fervently opposes the idea that ethnicized categorization and migrant literature in general would foster the ideal of Dutch multiculturalism. It is true that the stories contain some traces of his motherland, but there are no signs that he shows any sympathetic adherence to his roots. Disparaging Islam would set him as a model of orientalist_writer rather than promoter of cultural understanding.

His excavation of memories is not driven by a desire for cultural revival. The surrealist evocation of past lives should be understood in the context of cosmopolitan awareness that Bouazza develops in Metropolitan Amsterdam. In spite of his

enthusiastic request to be taken seriously as a Dutch author, one can still claim that such sought Dutchness came as a reaction against the ethnicisation of his debut and imposition of a certain identity category on him. He arguably belongs “at one and the same time to several ‘homes’ (and to no one particular ‘home’) (Hall 1993, 310).

Generally speaking, it can be said that Bouazza’s literary worldview is shaped by intertwining cultures and histories. *Abdullah’s Feet* can be classified among hybrid transnational writings in the sense that the re-rooting of original homes is interlocked with a tendency to emphasize the interconnectedness of distant homes and present ones. That is to say, the Moroccan-Dutch temporal and spatial geographies are re-routed now and again to foreground the cosmopolitan standing of Bouazza. The two stories “Appoline” and “the Prodigal Son” that are set alternately in the Netherlands and Morocco are a salient testimony for such a transnational dimension. They allude to the loose attachment of the narrator with both worlds. They can be read as reinforcement to his refutation of the biographical misconception in the sense of their displaying authorial alienation and homelessness. This runs counter to the claim that in the nineties “young Dutch-Moroccans began to feel they were transnational citizens, not living between two worlds but in two worlds ” (Obdeijn 2006, 29). The act of the narrator’s commuting between two cultural territories while retaining an ironic distance encourages the process of approaching the stories as hybrid constructions that refuse easy categorization. The narrator is a migrant who is akin to rhizome rather than root. He is for a Dutch identity that is based on collective and constructive belonging. All forms of nationalist ideologies advocating for reclaiming authenticity are thwarted in the choice of living as a rhizome connecting a variety of cultural geographies.

To be at once the same but different (in, yet, out of Holland) yields an uncertainty that annoys the strength of homogenous traditions. In this perspective, Louwse (2007, 32) asserts that “The bicultural author remains outside even on the inside. Their ambiguity, their sameness yet difference, poses a challenge, maybe even a threat to the comfort zone offered by the idea of a stable center.”

Bouazza seems very strident in his repudiation of the label migrant/allochthonous. The textual analysis of his debut *Abdullah’s Feet* would demonstrate a predilection of the narrator to vociferously reject any anticipatory ethnicisation of his writings and rejoice in the virtues of hybrid belonging. The narrative is dotted with authorial interferences pinpointing the shortcoming of memory to bring back previous experiences. In so doing, Bouazza forewarns his readers of taking his debut as a biographical account. The incorporation of some magical realist scenes undermines the historical orientation of the text as it runs against the claims of realism, which constitute an indispensable component in autobiographical narratives.

The sharp strictures of Islamic culture are also read as a tactical disclaimer apropos of Bouazza’s exclusionary tagging as a Dutch writer of Moroccan origin. Quoting Louwse, Hoving (2010, 114) believes that “‘his writing destabilizes through an engagement with flux and hybridity’. It keeps on deconstructing until ‘the fixed has come unhinged’.” As such, he maintains a fluid position that is at loggerhead with dichotomies and singular enforced Home.

“The Crossing”: a dream for relocation or reorientation?

It was surprising enough that Bouazza would go back to the theme of exotic homeland in an inconvenient historical context when it became “politically correct to be against multiculturalism” (Krebbers, 2004). The year 2002, particularly after the murder of Pim Fortuyn, registered the beginning of serious debates of ‘forced integration’ in parliament and media. Stricter measures were proposed to ‘civilize’ the ‘barbarian’ immigrants.

Normally, in such a ‘patriotic’ atmosphere, the readers would not be enthusiastically attracted to reading about foreign cultural geographies as in the hyped celebratory multiculturalism of the nineties. The dominant establishment shifted the attention to themes fundamental to the Dutch tradition and autochthonous culture. Nonetheless, the transportation of Bouazza’s memory to former native exoticism should not be read as a nostalgic quest for the debut’s fame. The return to the subject of migratory experience can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, the author could have expressed a wish to alter the intentionality of the previous texts in the light of the changing context and views towards immigrants. Minnaard (2008, 114) adopts this argument and thinks that the added story tends to redirect the interpretive practice in the Dutch readership. She believes that “The Crossing” involves a revision of meaning and understanding for other stories: “the revision can count as a literary comment, a form of writing back (...) an impetus to modify the common (exorcising) reading of Bouazza’s literary debut.” On the other hand, regarding the author’s public denunciation of Islam’s presence in Holland and his patriotic love of the Dutch language and culture, one can conclude that the return to exotic references signals his desire to stand between cultures and to evade being melted in the hegemonic culture. This hybridity-based interpretation is coupled with unveiling the dramatic situation of immigrants, particularly the ‘illegal’ ones, in a time of the worsening of their picture.

Where Minnaard resorts to this argument to support the claim of Bouazza’s eagerness for Dutch national identity, it is suggested here that Bouazza insists on his hybrid positioning and subversion of interpretation that reduce him to one side of the hyphen. Why can Minnaard not see this unexpected going back to homeland as a possible defiance to the new policy of forced integration? The realignment with native home is usually mobilized in times of cultural othering and racism. Thus, if at times of ‘hegemonic pluralism,’ the collection of short stories tended to lend themselves to a reading that is resistive to the biographical confinement, at the later period of conservative assimilation, the short story performs a rebelling reaction to the leading policies vis-à-vis immigration. It revokes the same old indigenous scenes of sheiks, Imams and village landscape which the rising public discourse wanted to exterminate from the imagination of the Dutch citizens who were suddenly required to speak about Dutch values and local history. The interlocking of Bouazza’s voice/memory with the third person narrator of “The Crossing” insinuates the identification of the author with the miseries of these immigrants. Furthermore, consistent with this hybridity is the overarching literary motifs of mobility and displacement, which in a way designates a tendency to normalize and historicize the intercultural fate of human beings.

“The Crossing” is a very concise portrayal of an obviously wretched family in their final stage prior to a dangerous traversing of the Mediterranean. The story draws the attention of the reader immediately to a human trafficker guiding an exhausted family (miserable father and mother, and “a bunch of children,” (120) who have just reached the seashore accompanied with their donkey. The author gives no details about their background. Their anonymity construes them as representative symbols of all potential clandestine immigrants. The brief conversation of the surveying sheikhs, sitting under the olive tree on the hill that overlooks the seashore, allows the reader to easily identify the leader of the human trafficking: “look (...) where are they going?” to which his interlocutor responds by pointing with his hand toward the other side of the sea saying “if they survive the miracles of the sea” (120).

Indeed, the author attempts to open the eyes of his readers to such repeated scenes of the – risky crossing of the sea made by undocumented migrants. In so doing, he disclaims the orientalist stature to which his debut had been subjected (that is, his fiction has been understood as replicating the eroticizing and exoticizing tropes connected with Orientalist writings), and claims for a thought-provoking assessment of his writing and some engagement from the part of uninvolved readers. If the latter were enticed by the dominant immigration policy makers to keep a detached stance from the ‘weird’ incidents in the imaginary Bertollo village, they are now emotionally stirred by the despairing reality of this migrant family. As such, the text invalidates the intolerant rationalizations propounded by the proponents for the expulsion of undocumented immigrants in Holland.

“The Crossing ” vehemently opposes these inhuman apologetics that are informed by the nationalist stress on origin and homeland as eternal places of belonging for distinct races. Thus, if the whole family spends all its possessions for the grave dream of relocating to better landscapes, does not this embody an interrogation to the culturalist assertion on the ahistoricity of nations, races and ethnicities? By means of dramatic traumatizing of the family’s resolve to abandon homeland, the story re-aligns its intentionality with the de-nationalist assumptions that belonging categories are imagined more than primordial and natural (Benedict Anderson 1983). Thus, it can be argued that the author reaffirms the fallacy of rooting his prose and the arbitrariness of allocating allochthonous identity on him. The centralization of the story on the act of dislocation invites the readers to see the transnational dimension in his identity which is implicitly extended to the preceding stories.

The debut collection of stories demonstrates the intertwined experiences of migrant memory both in Morocco and Holland through the changing settings of the stories. This can be read as highlighting the embedding of the stories in routes and transnational globality. “The Crossing” accentuates such transnational interconnection between the sending and hosting countries. This is done through the intersecting of the present actual endeavors for crossing to the prosperous fortress of Europe and the spontaneous past memories of the author’s returning journeys to Morocco. Such transnationals emphasize the historicity of routes and travelling cultures in human civilizations where “intercultural connection is, and has long been, the norm” (Clifford, 5). Moreover, the textual foregrounding of the transnational

backward/forward migrations articulates a resistance against the advocates of cultural absolutism and coherent identities. For as Clifford asserts, "the practices of crossing and interaction trouble the localism of many common assumptions about culture" (3).

The sudden infusion of authorial memories of personal involvement in the act of migration underscores his intention of circumventing the assimilationist ideologies and ethnic localism propagated by the rising New Right, rather than suggesting a biographical referentiality. The heartbreaking image of the migrant family, seemingly enjoying the warmth of their last dinner, stimulates a similar picture of Moroccan migrants going back to their homeland. The author inscribes his past recollections of such trips into the tiny body of the story. In a flashback style full of hallucination and fragmentary remembrance of childhood, the memory of the author-narrator travels backward in time to evoke comparable suffering and exhaustion undergone by the returning migrants:

A familiar scene! How often did I see similar people in later times, enjoying a little more comfort, in their going back home, at the side of the road resting and eating. The cars are overloaded, curtains on the window glasses, the doors opened so that the afternoon breath can enter and the fake leather can respire –these cars look like houses on the wheels, overloaded like the mother, patient like most of us; (...)The men who raised their heads from under the car engine just to bend them again toward the car hood, the neck stretched out like Scheherazade's under the blade of the rising morning. The shame trickled in the sweats, the sleep that could never and nowhere be a consolation. And the car which did not want to turn on.

With a little comfort, in the sense that there is no fear and no illegality, the fatigue remained the same. The car which had to be pushed, the guys who were joking around; the donkey that had to be pulled, the passersby who offer help ("are you going to the market?") (122).

This intervening passage contains significant insights about Bouazza's viewpoint in relation to migration. He compares the family's feeling of tiredness to the returning immigrants'. The comfort that he sarcastically refers to is derived from the sense of security and legality. The implied message is that the situation of the immigrants is degraded both in the past and present, and no hope for the future can be envisioned. In ironic expressions, the mother is likened to the immigrants' travelling vehicles in the sense that she is overloaded too with her children and traveling necessities. That said, the author reinforces her loss of human subjectivity. This fact accords with the objectification mood that frames the dramatic picture of the family.

Ingrained in the author-narrator's memory is the image of the tired cars brought by the immigrants. This hints to their poor economic status in contrast to the common belief that they are richer in the host country. They spent a long time with their heads under these cars. Their bending necks are equated to Scheherazade's as far as their weariness is concerned. Importantly enough, the image of Scheherazade invokes the

Orientalized world for which the Western audience has been always seeking in migrant literature. Again, the vocabulary that is used here is very suggestive for the victimization and oppression of the migrants. The author imagines the heads of the migrants under the hoods of derelict cars much as Scheherazade's head under the blade of her executioner. Like Scheherazade, their existence depends on their power of narration and satisfying Shahryar's (the readers) whim for exoticism. At this junction, the author can be said to both foreground the low-graded status of the immigrants and destabilize the exclusionary agendas underpinning the different migrant policies in Holland. In both cases, he seems to maintain a notion of identity that is transnational, and that triggers the reader's sympathy with regard to the plight of the immigrants.

If the documented immigrants have to keep on speaking out their oppression and unrecognized rights, the undocumented ones are doomed to a thorough muteness. Added to the deliberate effacement of the latter's historical background, the family is denied any narrative voice in the story. Even at the time of final transaction between the guide and the father, the latter is not permitted to speak about his worries. All he has to do is to follow directions and pay the agreed-upon fees: "the father, afraid, pointed toward the obscurity in the sea, trying to talk, held his hand up to his breast pocket -but the leader shook his head and consoled him: 'don't be afraid. Another man will come to get you. I will take you to the boat and from there God may be with you.'" (121) The immigrant figure is prone to the dehumanizing business of human trafficking networks, itself a consequence of global capitalism. This argument is powerfully sustained by the character of the trafficker who stands for the capitalist greed for money and exploitation of the poor. In the text, he is described with some shady traits such as extreme vigilance, absence of emotion, and his suspicion of the people he deals with: "In his eyes we could read that mistrust inherited from his work and his origin (extreme north of the country). He had learnt to mistrust, not only the people he dealt with, but also the weight of his purse on his bony hand: he again and always recounts." (120) Likewise, when he woke up the next day, "he immediately jumps and puts his hand on his purse" (125). One can also consider his sense of privacy and individuality as iconic for his representation of greedy exploitation of people's miseries. This is shown in his refusal to bond with the seemingly disgusting sheiks who "slurp and suck. Tarik refused their pipe, preferring his own" (123).

Arguing for the indeterminate identity of Tarik ("his being almost the same but not quite"), Minnaard interprets his repudiation of the sheiks' manner of smoking hashish as a way of distancing himself from their North African culture. The text undermines this kind of reading, for if Tarik repudiates the sheiks he would not then drink with them the tea that the miserable family made or "slept next to them on the ground" (125). Minnaard sees Tarik's indeterminacy as justified by the textual emphasis on his extreme north origin and the etymological connotation of his name with the 'Arab' conqueror of Iberian peninsula in the eighth century, and consequently his association with Gibraltar. She contends that this indeterminate Arab/Berber origin of Tarik "disturbs any simple opposition between Arab and European Identity." (119) But this reading is disturbed by the fact that the text emphasizes his north African origin, and is thus corrective of the misconception of his identity. As such, the text seems to deflate

the Dutch mounting anxiety over the Arab Muslim takeover of Europe. In this regard, Anouar Majid (2009, 3) talked at length about how the West is striving to consolidate the founding ideologies which have conferred them absolute supremacy since 1492. He said: "since the defeat of the Moors in Spain and the conquest of the new world, Euro-Americans have simply not had to worry about their racial and cultural hegemony. Now that they do, they are beginning to sound like the conquered and colonized of yesterday."

"The Crossing" seems to abate this Western xenophobic premonition of Moslem invasions by bringing to the fore a stranded family venturing on a scary trip with an uncertain destiny. Tarik represents the local "businessmen" who assemble fortune out of helpless souls in the same way late capitalism impoverishes famished countries in its quest for domination and exploitation. Nothing in his portrayed character indicates his association with the glorious conquests of Tarik Ibn Zayad. He is also a mere intermediary in the transaction of traffic rather than being involved in the actual action of crossing. Bouazza's Tarik reassures the Dutch xenophobic population and powerfully shifts their attention to the inequalities of a global economic system which would carry on spinning the wheel of clandestine migration even for unrealizable dreams.

The second authorial interference in "The Crossing" appears to support the sympathetic representation of 'illegal' immigrants and counteract the nationalist fear. Again in a delirious recollection, Bouazza, affected by the family calamity, attempts to weave a phantasmatic colorful alternative destiny for them. He addresses the human shared consciousness wishing for betterment in the conception of migrants. Thus, seeing the pitiable family getting aboard the 'death' boat, he vents a visionary torrent to redeem the tragic climax of the story:

They are within reach now. My light is getting brighter. See them sailing on the reefs of my lines. It is a vague rock towards which they are rowing. Gibraltar is just a stain in my memory and I can strain myself however I want, no dawn is willing to break in colors. A black cliff, the silhouette of a black cliff I see, and I would so much, with mauve and pink magic, want to erect for them a city of clouds and light: the words of welcome of hospitable places, the bright visions of new countries that sharpen the senses so much and in which everything seems so much out of place: the shadows falling on the wrong side of the streets, the trees growing from paving, it is so silent over there, the windows catching the sun that has set on the wrong side, the body renewing itself, other air filling the lungs, the blood producing other cells, the brains confusing their crosswise functioning, everything spinning, cracking, merging in a crazy kaleidoscope – all this I would want, completed with a wagon for other crossings.

And then a darkness swoons me, a bed of waves buries me: how long this sea journey takes, the ferryman is rowing imperturbably, patient. There is no light guiding them now (124-125).

This passage plainly testifies to the poetic imagination of Bouazza and its susceptibility to the agony of the migrating family. It corroborates the assumption that the text is politically engaged for the purpose of negotiating a better reality for the immigrant minorities.

The author-narrator openly acknowledges the limitation of his textual literary enterprise. There is a simultaneous movement of actual crossers toward Gibraltar and its imaginative substitutes drawn by Bouazza's reconstructive memory. No matter how earnestly he tried to sketch a lively destination, he failed finally to change their fate. The words used to illustrate dreamy visions are couched in symbolic metonymies. Instead of heading toward the surely inhospitable "black cliff," he envisions "a city of clouds and light," welcoming, "hospitable places," full of shadowy "trees growing from paving," "silent" "crazy kaleidoscope" landscapes: all these features are metonymically conjuring up Holland. Yet, "darkness" in his memory would not allow "dawn" to spread its sparkling "colors." The light that is getting brighter in his memory is absent for the ferryman who is sailing in "darkness" and "no light guiding" him, an indication for the pessimistic destiny of the family.

The author-narrator's dreamy responsiveness is not an unfamiliar literary style in the previous collection. On many occasions, Bouazza underscores the unreliability of his memory in resuscitating past experiences in Morocco. The failure of his memory to crayon a happy ending to the crossing attests to its limitation. More than that, this memory is coupled with a strident appeal for humane reaction. Instead of exoticizing Bouazza's fiction, memory raises the readers' awareness to the uncivilized mistreatment of the migrants.

Overall, the leading argument here is the tenacious homeless condition in Bouazza's writing. "The Crossing" forecloses the promise for exotic entertainment implied in the previously portrayed scene where his debut was set. It seeks a reconfiguration of the premeditated intentionality of the imaginative crossing to homeland that Bouazza made in the mid-nineties. The readers are requested to ponder the cosmopolitan sphere suggested in the backward/forward crossing. In foregrounding the flaws in both crossings, the author pleads for a hybrid positioning that enables him to criticize the cultural ills and sightlessness in both native and host countries.

If in the initial crossing (the act of writing and actual return of immigrants) the Islamic dogmatism was ridiculed to undermine its absolutist teaching as well as to subvert the ethnic categorizing of his work, the later crossing extends critique to the overarching oppression and exploitation engendered by the global unequal distribution of power and particularly to the New Right racist handling of the issue of immigrants. Bouazza maintains in both crossings a sense of homelessness and distancing from cultural rooting and its exclusionary legacies. The transnational hybridity that he seems to inscribe as a suitable home contests the gated mentalities erected by the rising nationalists in Europe which are determined to antagonize the ex-colonized communities by shutting them off steeled borders.

Memory figures as a crucial tool in rememorating the Dutch and Moroccan transnational commutes in the near past. It testifies to the pivotal fallacies of rooting Bouazza's migrant prose and hence overturning his nomination as a representative model for the Moroccan community in Holland. The namelessness of the travelling family and the relative anonymity of the setting itself suggests excising the factual referentiality from the Dutch interpretive paradigms. By the same token, the realistic representation – that would necessarily consolidate the ethnicizing reading frame – is as well discarded through the magical realist reappearance of the fisherman mermaid, and by the authorial memory and its phantasmatic interruption of quasi-realist portrayal of the family's misery.

Bouazza dismissed the seemingly realist connotation of "The Crossing" with the actual traumatic experience of 'illegal' immigration, as described in media, in his next more successful novel *Paravion* (2003). The crossing is undertaken on a flying carpet and the setting is an indeterminate desert village by the valley of Abqar. Migration is a sustained topic in *Paravion* and both the old home and new one are subject to continuous alteration due to the unstoppable processes of departure and arrival. Although Minnaard read the novel's discourse as fitting "Bouazza's essayistic warnings for Islamic fundamentalism" (138) and the positive impact of the sociopolitical circumstance in the positive reception of the novel, the transnational entanglement of the destiny of the sending and receiving countries cannot be overlooked. The persistence of the themes of migration and transnational mobility translates the persistent resolve of the author to engage in contemplative celebration of homelessness.

Conclusion

In his literary writings, Bouazza keeps on dramatizing the process of crossings and migrations between the North and South in a style full of poetic exoticism that reminds us of Arabic fairytales. As such, it can be said that he enunciates a diasporic transnational position which resists social exclusion and sees dialogic cosmopolitanism as an adequate home for identities that are constantly in the process of emerging. He has exhibited dogged diasporic homelessness which the Dutch readers – guided by an ethnicizing approach – had overlooked in his debuts. In accentuating the perpetuity of international migration in the past, present and future, the short story "The Crossing" pleads for considering the cosmopolitan orbit it mediates. The author's hybrid positioning helps in contesting the ills of racial politics, and slackening the cultural and religious dogmatism in both host and source countries.

More importantly as well is the political engagement Bouazza seems to convey. This appears in his criticizing the economic system of inequality, the greed and dehumanization of global capitalism. He counteracts also the nationalist xenophobic attitudes towards ethnic minorities. Instead of solely catering to the exotic expectation of Dutch readers, through orientalizing his texts, the author attempts to arouse their sympathy and emotional involvement with the predicament of the migrant. He seems to address the human collective consciousness. Last but not least, the analyzed short

prose tends to be corrective and re-directive of the biased exoticized consumption of Bouazza's debut. It defies the normalized habits of making association and prediction, particularly about others, in the reading process.

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