Tahar Ben Jelloun's *Labyrinthe des sentiments*: Literary Strategies in Contemporary Moroccan Travel Writing

Richard Oko Ajah[*]

Abstract

Atypical of conventional travel writing that portrays the exotic, Tahar Ben Jelloun reverses his traveler's gaze in his *Labyrinthe des sentiments*, focusing on the Moroccan Diaspora in the Italian city of Naples. The reversal of gaze engenders the mediation of imagination as the writer negotiates between literary borders of facts and fiction, thereby deploying literary strategies that transgress the conventional to embrace the contemporary. This study considers these literary strategies that make *Labyrinthe des sentiments* a Moroccan archetype of contemporary travel writing and enable Ben Jelloun to deconstruct space, to question history and to reconstruct identities. Ben Jelloun's work is a good example of highly politicized forms of travel writing, a kind of *counter*travel writing that pits itself against the dominant Eurocentric model of Euro-American fantasy. It can be described as "the returned look of the colonized," a gaze that reminds the colonizer that the colonized can be a subject as well as an object.

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[*] Richard Oko Ajah teaches French language, literature and literary criticism in the Department of Foreign Languages, University of Uyo, Nigeria.

Introduction

Modern Travel writing provided the means of perspectivising the *terra incognita* for the colonizer who had unparalleled hegemony of cultural representations and the mastery of transport, producing what Mary Louise Pratt calls "an Eurocentered form of global" or "planetary consciousness" (4). The European *imperial eyes* which scanned the universe reflect political and economic aesthetics of modern travels that decree the beauty or sublimity of lands, so in Inderpal Grewal's words, "to call a landscape beautiful was usually to suggest reasons for its domestication and colonization" (43). This informs why early travel literature prioritized the description of flora and fauna, enabling the deployment of maps for the social construction and partition of the world (Wood 22). In the description of landscapes (places, people and objects), the narrator uses Pratt's narrative incident, called panorama (Mills 78) through the mastery of "imperial eyes" of an adventure-hero who sees the futuristic colonization of a given 'uncivilized' country. In essence, the adventure-hero's sight is materialistic and capitalistic because it is his Metropolitan financing organization that conditions and defines its scope, though he becomes a part of Patrick Holland's and Graham Huggan's "unreliable documenters of other people and cultures" in their *Tourists with Typewriters* (xiii).

Aside the older convention of description of landscapes and of narrative figure, travel writing which became a modern form of literature between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries (Duncan and Gregory 5) perpetuates the traditions of narrative structure of adventure, scenes of departure and arrival, intertextuality and parody. However, by this period of the nineteenth century, travels either tend towards the "factual" guide book or the "literary" text, and to demonstrate the way in which external discursive facts structure the format of the text (Mills 84-85), polarized into scientific or philosophical, sentimental or romantic, and colonial styles. Works such as La Condamine's *Brief Narrative of Travels through the Interior of South America* (1745), M. Bouguer's *Abridged Relation of a Voyage to Peru* (1744),

Mongo Park's *Travels* (1799), Humboldt's *Description de l'Egypte*, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Maurice Martin du Gard's *Le Voyage de Madagascar* (1934), and Mary Kinsley's *Travels to West Africa* (1897) have seen viewed in the light of travel theory and its praxis (Pratt 115; Joubert 50). Although contemporary travel writing differs by its "avowedly imaginative accounts of travels" (Duncan and Gregory 1), its "mediating of imagination" (Borm 281), it adopts the traditions of its predecessors.

Influenced by postmodernism and postcolonialism, contemporary travel becomes what David Taylor calls a "hybrid scope of journalism, anecdote, fictional techniques, stylistic bravura and the generic staple of the phantom quest" (199) and a paradigm of "self irony" (Holland and Huggan 5). It is Borm that underlines the rapprochement of contemporary travel writing with the form of modern literary novel by its abandon of conventional "yours faithfully, epic self" narrator and linear narrative strategies, lengthy dialogues, metaphorical use of language, and intertextuality (284-85). In essence, contemporary works of travel writers such as Naipaul, Ben Jelloun, Raban among others transgress traditional conventions of modern travels by their deployment of (post)modern novelistic narrative structures and praxis of postcolonialism. Gabriel Gbadamosi identifies Jonathan Raban's *Coasting* (1986), Bruce Chatwin's *In Patagonia* (1977) and Robert Byron's *The Road to Oxiana* (1937) as postcolonial travelogue, thereby underscoring the paradigmatic relationship between travel writing and postcolonial theory because "travel is a sub-story of the grand narrative of imperialism and a key operation in language and fact that make the colonial adventure possible" (Musgrove 32).

In his "Lagging Behind: Bhabha, Post-colonial Theory and the Future," John Phillips underscores identity and destination as areas of relationship, noting that travel narrative concerns situations in which the stability of the self is often challenged, from where comes the dialectic of identity and difference (64). Through Pratt and Grewal, travel narratives have been read as part of "imperial eyes" and "Euroimperial vision" that reinforced the

epistemological construction of the other world to promote the western myths of power. So, this work uses Tahar Ben Jelloun's *Labyrinthe des sentiments*, as a travel narrative, to describe a sort of polarized labyrinth of relationships between home and abroad, the West and us, and conventional and contemporary travels. Though atypical of conventional travel writing that portrays the exotic, Tahar Ben Jelloun reverses his traveler's gaze in his travel, focusing on the Moroccan Diaspora in Italian city of Naples. The reason for this reversal of gaze is clear; it engenders the mediation of imagination as the writer negotiates between literary borders of facts and fiction, thereby deploying literary strategies that transgress the conventional to embrace the contemporary. This study considers these literary strategies that make *Labyrinthe des sentiments* a Moroccan archetype of contemporary travel writing and enable Ben Jelloun to deconstruct space, to question history and to reconstruct identities.

Creation and Creativity of Ben Jelloun's *Labyrinthe des sentiments*

Ben Jelloun's work is good example of highly politicized forms of travel writing, a kind of *counter*travel writing that pits itself against the dominant Eurocentric model of Euro-American fantasy (Holland and Huggan 21). *Labyrinthe des sentiments* can be described as "the returned look of the colonized," a gaze that reminds the colonizer that the colonized can be a subject as well as an object (Huddart 45). Tahar Ben Jelloun is considered as a hyphenate writer (Wilson 98) because he has moved from the margin to the mainstream, possessing intellectual and cultural heritage of dominant and dominated culture which he shares in his narrative. He is a Moroccan and resident in France where he acquired French education and values, possessing indigenous and exotic cultures which serve as his raw materials for literary creations. Ben Jelloun is widely traveled in Europe, evidenced in his journalistic writings in France's *Le Monde*, Italy's *La Repulicca* and *L'Espresso*, Sweden's *Aftonbladet*, Spain's *El Paìs* and Barcelona's *La Vanguardia*. In essence, Ben Jelloun's *Labyrinthe des sentiment* (1999) can

be regarded as what Lilyan Kesteloot calls "un regard si lucide du journaliste. Celui-ci braque sur les pays traversés un oeil transparent comme un appareil photo" (93). The narrative results from the writer's real travel to Italy in 1989. It was the director of Italian daily *Il Matino*, Pasquale Nonno who invited Ben Jelloun to tour the *Mezzogiorn*o region of Italy under which Naples is located and to pencil down his impressions. *Labyrinthe des sentiments* expatiates on Ben Jelloun's notions about this Neapolitan city, impressions represented as "textes, parus initialement en feuilleton sous le titre commun *Dove le stato non c'è*, sont repris et augmentés deux ans plus tard dans *L'Angle aveugle*" (Zdrada-Cok 92). Ben Jelloun's narrative, *Labyrinthe des sentiments*, metamorphosed from his short story *L'Ange aveugle* and his novel *Auberge des pauvres*; this trilogy is *a posteriori* representation of his travel to Italy.

Typical of modern travel writing, Ben Jelloun's *Labyrinthe des sentiments* interprets and translates his adventure into an "unknown" world. Although he does not battle with savages or undergo dehumanizing experiences, the writer fights inevitably tears as he witnesses firsthand the agony and Calvary of immigrants. As Francesco Melfi (187) confirms it, Ben Jelloun's narrative contains an episode that links *in nuce* his travels through the wonders of an imaginary *Mezzogiorno* to tales of migration, full of horror and hell that immigrants undergo in Italy. The narrative, *Labyrinthe des sentiments*, summarizes the traveler's impression on the Italian city of Naples, structured as a romance that focuses on Moroccan immigrants and their amorous adventure in an exotic space. Ben Jelloun's travel work is a narrative of Wahida and Gharib, two Moroccan lovers in Naples whose flashbacks of love life can be described as a tragedy; it transgresses the autobiographical convention of modern travels as Gharib, one of the major characters, narrates the story and impersonates Ben Jelloun who relegates his narrative position of first-person narrator. As the traveler's alter ego, Gharib guides Wahida to see the wonders of Naples, yet the text reveals that he was also guided to visit different parts of the city. The use of fictional characters

in travel writing distinguishes the contemporary from the conventional, thereby reinforcing the "mediating of imagination" in contemporary travels that parody literary novels.

From Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* to Chatwin's *In Patagonia,* fictionalization of travel narratives has become a phenomenon that explains writers' recourse to imagination as a means of creating ironic distance between the material and textual worlds. Writers such as Ben Jelloun construct their textual worlds with bricks of social and economic events in exotic spaces as a means of creating illusion of reality that is symptomatic of realist art and literature. Such a literary strategy propels a romance between facts and fiction, an intercourse that blends the real with the unreal, binds the known with the unknown and fuses truths with "lies."

Marriage of Facts and Fiction in Ben Jelloun's *Labyrinthe des sentiments*

Through the agency of memory or imagination, Ben Jellun shows the interconnectedness between facts and fiction in creating a travel narrative. He engages in what Ajah (142) calls "la représentation du pittoresque de Naples" that ensures the description of the flora and fauna of the city because the work is seen as "guide touristique" (149). It is a true contemporary guide of discoverers of cities and "comme compilation ou, mais qui, étrangement, ne cite pas ses sources" (Carré 43). Ben Jelloun employs a picturesque discourse because his style of representing Naples shows a revelation of *enargeia* or "évidence descriptive" that emanates from the use of *ekphrasis*, this term, inherited from rhetoric traditions, can "désigner toute descriptive vive, sans préjudice de son objet" (Wanlin 10). However, this travel narrative mixes facts with fiction and reality with unreality as the writer presents the city of Naples; it is realized through a "mediation of imagination" which now characterizes contemporary travel writing (Borm 281), but also problematizes the veracity of postmodern travels.

Indeed, Ben Jelloun's *Labyrinthe des sentiments* describes monuments (Capodimonte, Mont de la Miséricorde), menus (pizza, risotto, mozzarella di

buffalo), streets (Spaccanapoli, la via dei Tribunali, la via Partenope), ports (Ravello, Positano, Amalfi), quarters (Vico San Gaudioso, Posillipo), public places (Pizzeria Port'Alba, église San Gregorio), all recognized and recognizable in Naples that Ben Jelloun visited during his journey to Italy, though he interlaces his description with fictional and mythic stories. As regards characterization, the narrative unfortunately highlights the exotic not the indigenous, giving priority to Moroccan immigrants than Neapolitans. The story turns arounds Wahida, Sakina, Gharib and Laziz, four Moroccans in the city of Naples, though the *dieges* makes intermittent allusions to the Italian Mafia and Camorra of Naples. As a postcolonial traveler, Ben Jelloun addresses the readership of both the Center and the Periphery. He engages in a postcolonial discourse by his interest in identity and displacement. This informs why *Labyrinthe des sentiments* illustrates the challenge of the stability of self from where emerges "the dialectic of identity and difference" (Philips 64). In the text, the narrator-guide describes this challenge in these terms: "nous étions quatre Marocains à Naples, parlant un peu en français, un peu en italien quand il s'agit de vin, et en arabe pour tout le reste" (Ben Jelloun 22). These characters are fictional types who are representational of Moroccan Diaspora, uprooted from homeland. Fictionalization of travels not only permits Ben Jelloun to create human types but also to evoke the otherness of the exilic subject whose identity is now hybrid and ambivalent as we see in the text. To realize this literary vision, the novelist deploys certain literary strategies that are common in contemporary travel writing of Chatwin, Naipaul, Rushdie, among others.

Ben Jelloun's Literary Strategies in Contemporary Travel Writing

As a travel work, *Labyrinthe des sentiments* illustrates the writer's "évidence descriptive" of the city of Naples whose picturesque representation has some cinematographic effects on its readership. Ben Jelloun does not hesitate to describe landscapes, which has been an old tradition of modern travel writing. The writer portrays all parts of the city of

Naples because, unlike his predecessors, Ben Jelloun's description of flora and fauna is not attached to capitalist ideologies nor intended to serve as Western "imperial eyes" (Pratt) or "Euroimperial vision" (Grewal), it is a picturesque representation that, realistically displays the city's "the good, the bad and the ugly." The description of landscapes is used to unveil the city's aquatic cultures, predominant monuments and heterogeneous identity. Naples is rather represented as what Ajah (85) calls a "compendium of complexes," susceptible to multiples interpretations of experience. All characters in the text have dissimilar experiences of the city. For Gharib, Naples is a place of pilgrimage, a Mecca that links him with the memories of his dead lover, nicknamed Gazelle; for Laziz, it possesses a metaphoric figure of abusive and caring Mother who gives you honey and headache at the same time; for Wahida and Sakina, it is a "paradis terrestre," a promised land that is fast turning to a purgatory or a heaven changing to a hell. The displacement of Wahida and Sakina is motivated by adventure of love.

Travel genre is traditionally associated with what Clark (20) calls "licentious wandering." Narrative structure of adventure remains a common denominator of modern travel writing and it is what Ben Jelloun integrates into his travel experience in *Labyrinthe des sentiments* that engages in romantic adventures in exotic spaces. Wahida and Sakina are lured into prostitution due to prevailing socio-economic situations in Morocco. With Samir, these young girls decide to seek for greener pastures in Italy where prostitution rings are predominant, forming Marx's reserve army of migrant labor. This adventure of Wahida and Sakina in *terra incognita* of Naples turns out to be, symptomatic of quest narratives, full of what Northrop Frye identifies as "the *agon* or conflict, the *pathos* or death-struggle" (Phillips 79). Trapped between the Mafia worlds, their life remains in danger; the whereabouts of both ladies are not known as the narrative winds up. This amorous adventure is firstly between Gharib and Gazelle, later between Gharib and Wahida and between Sakina and Laziz; all of them originate from the Maghreb because Ben Jelloun intends to minimize the representation of

the indigenous (Italians) and maximize the representation of the exotic (Maghrebian immigrants).

Parody, Pastiche and Intertextuality

As techniques in postmodern aesthetics, the trinity of parody, pastiche and intertextuality remains predominantly used in subverting history and tradition in postmodern texts such as Ben Jelloun's *Labyrinthe des sentiments*. Agreeing that parody and pastiche are difficult to differentiate, Hannabuss (79) characterizes parodies as devices that "feed off other works, like parasites, and make fun of them, often in spiteful and witty ways" while pastiche "refers to the way in which postmodern works imitate the style of other historical periods" (Hannabuss 88). *Labyrinthe* parodies Western romance whose story according to Murphy (131) "is principally about the course of the love between a man and woman, its ups and downs, and usually its final triumph in the uniting of the two lovers," though there is no happy ending for lovers (Gharib and Wahida or Sakina and Laziz), but rather a painful separation resulting from a redefinition of man-woman love affair. Ben Jelloun deploys postmodern poetics as a strategy in narrating his travel experience in Naples.

Ben Jelloun mythologizes and demythologizes Naples, representing it as a city of classic artworks (monuments, cathedrals, artifacts) which are parodied in the plot of his novel. Postmodern artists like Ben Jelloun "show that those classic representations are not irrefutable truths as they are constantly considered to foreground the fictional status of history, since it is now possible to rewrite it in art" (Moreira 45). In *Labyrinthe*, the cathedrals and statues of Saints that adorn all corners of Naples are primordial sacred spaces, publicly venerated and mythologized as "temples of God." Though a masterpiece, these "holy places" are now profaned and desecrated as the narrator reports that "une femme entraînait son amant au fond de l'église San Gregorio pour faire l'amour debout contre une belle statue, dans le froid et l'obscurité" (Ben Jelloun 88). Gharib, the homodiegetic-autodiegetic

protagonist who also longed to make love to Wahida in a church, calls this provocative attitude of profaning "holy places" a protestation against "trop d'églises, trop de saints, trop de madones, trop de statues du Christ" (Ben Jelloun 89) in Naples. Ben Jelloun's parody consists also in showing how these historical and hallowed places have outlived their usefulness thereby contesting their epistemology and ontology. For example at the Mount of Mercy, the church was constructed in 1601 as where the poor, the sick, the condemned were cared for, pilgrims lodged, and Christian slaves who fell into the hands of pirates reclaimed. As a symbol of the Mount of Mercy's ideology, one of the most beautiful oil paintings of Caravaggio, titled *Les Sept oeuvres de miséricorde* [the Seven Works of Mercy] *is* placed there. Dated 1606, the painting is still visible at the Church of Pio Monte della Misericordia today. The guide who gives this information, quickly adds that "la miséricorde n'est plus gratuite" (Ben Jelloun 76) [mercy is no longer free] today. As postmodern text, Ben Jelloun's novel challenges the sacredness of Neapolitan sacred masterpieces, dismantling the city's myths and traditions. Violence against classic monuments shifts from Christian Cathedrals to artworks that adorn the city of Naples.

Ernest's drawings and paintings suffer mutilation from the public. Among those located at Salita della Grotta, close to the "tombe of Virgile," only *La Femme avec le feu entre les jambes* remains with the head, because "le sexe et les jambes ont été arrachés par des adolescents en colère" (*Labyrinthe* 107) [the sex organ and the legs have been torn off by angry youths], though his works such as *Crucifixion et suaire de Turin* pasted at Largo Madonna della Grazie and *Santa Agata* at Vico San Gaudioso have resisted public mutilation and rain. Others undergo other forms of violence, as reports the narrator: "Ces oeuvres d'art au destin éphémère étaient parfois recouvertes d'affiches d'annonces funéraires ou de quelques publicités demodées" (Ibid. 82) [these artworks of ephemeral fate were most times covered with obituary announcements or with outdated advertisements]. Ben Jelloun's depiction of Naples' monuments, artifacts and artworks, including

Ernest's, which are representations of a historic past, is not only intended to satirize, but also to subvert their essentialism. Neapolitan society is more concerned with deaths of loved ones and everyday news than visual images of art, so mutilation of these artworks explains their fear, frustration and vengeance against history, traditions and myth. Such revision of tradition is more predominant in *Les Yeux baissés* where the myth that would have unlocked the village's hidden treasure whose key is engraved in Fathma's hands, is bypassed, and communal labor is embarked upon to produce water and irrigation that, ironically symbolizes the "hidden treasure" in the narrative. The subversion of tradition gives way to the predominance of high and low cultures which only reveal the "factographics" of Ben Jelloun's novels, another aspect of montage principle or intertextuality. By factographics, we mean the use of documentary materials in the structure of a novel/fiction. The idea about factographics were proclaimed in the programme of "literatura I byt," an association focusing on the use of authentic documentary as the main material of literary texts in Russia. (Huttunen 181-98).

Natij recognizes the fact that Jellounian texts engage in intercultural dialogue, showing the modality of his religious intertext, so sacred book (s) is an omnipresent reference in the writing of Ben Jelloun, by allusion, citation or parody, and constituting a cultural discursive horizon impossible to ignore. For Kameni (8), intertextuality permits the introduction of "relation dialogique au niveau littéraire, par la convocation des textes, par l'allusion à d'autres oeuvres et à d'autres cultures" (dialogic relationship at literary level, by reference to texts, by allusion to other works and to other cultures). It is related to Adejare's "text incorporation" which Ayeleru and Edonmi (151) define as "the use of parts or features of an existing text in the creation of another or new text." In *Labyrinthe*, intertextuality appears like an evocation of high and low cultures through implicit and explicit reference, direct and indirect citation, and visual and referential images, in addition to *factographical* allusions such as Iraqi bombardments and the war of Kosovo.

Gharib compares himself and Wahida to Laurence Olivier and Joan Fontaine in Alfred Hitchcock's film *Rebecca*, both lovers were returning to the same castle where Laurence had lost his lover; that castle is now Ravello where the poet intends to visit with Wahida, after dancing Moroccan music in Laziz's home. Naples' obsession for visual images attracts the attention of Ben Jelloun who refers to "un match de foot" being televised, constituting postmodern chaos and disorder of the Italian city. Aside references to authors such as Stendhal, Rabelais, to Italian artists le Comte Toto (di Bisanzio), Vittorio de Sica and others, the writer-poet cites one of the stanzas of Apollinaire's poem: "*O ville comme un coeur tu es déraisonnable*" (Ben Jelloun 110) where Naples is compared to an "unreasonable heart." Through literary, biblical and Quran allusions, Ben Jelloun interprets the personal exilic experiences of his characters, thereby dismantling and trivializing classic and sacred truths and showing the relationship between parody and intertextuality.

Mixture of Poetic, Epistolary, Novelistic and Artistic Genres

With the flagrant deployment of parody, pastiche and intertextuality and its structure of montage that mixes poetry, prose, letter writing and artworks, Ben Jelloun's *Labyrinthe* can be artistically read as a postmodern text. Montage is credited to the Modernist and avant-garde European painting, inherent now in post/modern texts. Such collage is tantamount to what Valdivieso calls "metaphor of weaving" in Carl Phillips's fiction, whereby "weaving" is done with multicolored treads and without regard to generic boundaries. Ben Jelloun's text of "multicolored treads" violates the traditional borders of literary genres, now combined to create a symphony of complex wholeness. The narrative aspect of *Labyrinthe des sentiments* engages in the discourse of emigration to Naples; the poetry eulogizes the womanhood or Neapolitan women; the artworks are pornographically erotic; and the epistolary part of the work recaptures the past of Gharib, one of the main characters, and his romance with his late girlfriend, Gazelle. The use of

literary montage, like pastiche and parody, problematizes literary authorship as the status of the text as "rambling" and "disconnected" makes "its authorship that much more questionable" (Woodward 584). Besides, postmodern understanding of law dismantles the sacredness of law to idolize rights, making postmodern law as Maisani and Wiener (448) put it "fluctuante, banalisée et étendu, pluriel et souple" [fluctuating, trivialized and extensive, plural and flexible] With postmodern proliferation of authorship through montage, pastiche and parody, it becomes difficult to place the authorship of *Labyrinthe des sentiments*. Is it the Moroccan Tahar Ben Jelloun or the French artist Ernest Pignon-Ernest or both? About 15% of the pages of the novel are consecrated to Pignon-Ernest's drawings and paintings, though Tahar Ben Jelloun acknowledges his authorship of the artworks, he can be regarded as a co-author of the novel. This authorial phenomenon in the novel reinforces Bakhtin's insistence that there are no authors per se, but only author effects and subject positions and David Hayman's notion of the "arranger" or Patrick McGee's concept of the "deranger" (Henke 178). Can it be said that postmodern technique of pastiche, montage and parody resurrects Roland Barthes' "death of the author"?

Conclusion

Ben Jelloun's *Labyrinthe des sentiments* has been analyzed as a paradigm of Moroccan contemporary travel writing. In reversing the traveler's gaze, his work focuses on the margin of the mainstream, the Moroccan immigrant community of the city of Naples; yet negotiates between multicultural borders as it alludes to other African nationals, Europeans and Asians in Italy. Aside the evocation of postmodern poetics, the Moroccan writer extravagantly uses flashbacks to chain past and present events, and dialogues to break the monotony of traditional travel narratives. Ben Jelloun's work can be seen as a model of committed forms of travel writing, a kind of *counter*travel writing that pits itself against the dominant

traditional Western model. As "the returned look of the colonized," Ben Jelloun's gaze can be baptized autoethnographic because he, as a hyphenated writer, combines European idioms and indigenous culture in his intention to dismantle the myth of Europe as a paradise. As a committed writer, he fails to do the bidding of Pasquale Nonno, who had sponsored his trip to Naples in 1989, because the fictionalization of his travel account affords him the opportunity to challenge history and traditions, reconstruct space and question identities. The identities of his characters are rather now transcultural and transnational as their Arab names remain the only inheritance appropriated in exile. However, in his other works such as *Au Pays* which might interest literary critics, Arab names are distorted, mutilated and changed, showing how Ben Jelloun's onomastics is weaved around postmodern poetics.

Gharib rebaptizes his girlfriend Ghizlane to *Gazelle*. The explanation of the poet-narrator, Gharib leads us to the essentialism and ontology of proper names, demonstrating how culture, as a social agency, appropriates the meaning and significance to names. Gharib, associated with the word "ghorba" means exile and loneliness that the poet's life symbolizes in this narrative while Wahida, named by his parents of North African origin, also refers to the abandonment that summarizes the life of this young girl since her birth in Morocco: abandonment of his father, of her landlord in Casablanca who becomes her lover, and of Samir, and later Gharib. "Solitude," "exile" and "abandonment" appear as cultural referential meanings of "Gharib" and "Wahida." The name "Muhammad" is transformed into Gharib and the name "Tanjaoui" undergoes a graphic mutilation to become "Jaoui." This attitude is postmodern because Gharib appropriates the powers social and legal reserved to the parents. For him, name does not matter and therefore is no longer sacred, but reduced to the rank of "tie" and then subjected to the whims of the bearers/wearers. In existentialist way, Gharib emphasizes the existence of wearer/bearer of name, not the essence of the name. This mutilation takes place after Moroccan

independence and questions the cultural authority and gerontocracy from where comes the tradition of names and naming. It equally questions the postcoloniality of Moroccan society that encourages emigration of its indigenes. All immigrants Ben Jelloun are not happy with Morocco, so it is the psychological revenge that leads to violence on proper names, thereby showing a change in attitude and identity in exile.

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