(Im)mobility and Mediterranean Migrations: Journeys "Between the Pleasures of Wealth and the Desires of the Poor"

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Abstract

Foregrounding (im)mobility to engage with experiences of human displacement, this study seeks to disrupt and mark a change of emphasis in current debates about migration in literary and cultural studies. It engages with Laila Lalami's *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* (2005) and explores the novel's representation of Morocco-Europe migration, the journeys between what Badiou aptly defines as 'the pleasures of wealth and the desires of the poor' (2008). Through reading the stories of Murad and Halima – the two characters in the novel who fail to make it into Europe – this paper draws on anthropological studies of contemporary migration and examines the ways in which failure and (im)mobility stimulate fruitful transformations. It explores the complexities at the heart of migratory projects and the role that both mobility and immobility play in shaping the characters' lives, and problematizes understandings of migration which privilege mobility and border-crossing. A focus on immobility reveals cultural and social processes which would otherwise remain obscured by an increased focus on narratives of mobility; through an insight into experiences of displacement beyond mere movement, this paper identifies acts of resistance, empowerment and agency activated by what Carling calls forced, 'involuntary immobility' (2002).

Keywords: Postcolonial Literature, Migration, Mediterranean, Morocco, Mobility, Immobility.

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Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits (2005) narrates the trans-Mediterranean migration and captures the divisions, contradictions, dispossessions and denied hopes which lie at the heart of these journeys; it offers readers a new perspective on the realities of human displacement. Lalami's novel functions as a critical tool to challenge dominant and homogenizing accounts about migration; it develops a counter narrative which reaffirms the political and social subjectivity of individuals. By focusing on forced immobility this study seeks to disrupt and stir the debate about migration in literary and cultural studies. *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* narrates the stories of four Moroccans – Faten, Halima, Aziz and Murad – who cross the Strait of Gibraltar, along with many others on an inflatable vessel, to seek irregular entry into Spain. Laila Lalami's novel posits itself amid a prolific terrain in Moroccan literature concerned with contemporary migration. Abderrezak terms this field 'illiterature' (2009, p. 461);[1] making a 'deliberate compression of ''illegal'' and ''literature'' to re-appropriate illegality, [...] this sub-genre draws attention specifically to its characters' circumvention of criminalizing migratory laws' (461-462). *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* contributes to a burgeoning literary *milieu* which counters dominant accounts about 'mass migration'.[2] Written originally in English, this novel also figures among Anglophone Arab women's writings, and places Lalami as a transnational author.[3] Besides individualizing and heterogenizing migratory experiences – in what Sarnou defines as a 'major language – English – and as an international discourse' (2014, p. 80) – this text distinguishes itself in the field also for its attention to women's and children's experiences. As Mehta points out, Lalami's novel provides a 'woman-centred intervention in a predominantly masculinist discourse' and 'humanize[s] the "clandestine" Moroccan migrants' (2014, p. 108-115).

Through considering the stories of Murad and Halima – the two characters in Lalami's novel who fail to make it into Spain – this paper aims to illuminate contemporary debates on migration in literary studies by introducing an innovative approach which explores immobility. Literary and cultural studies are increasingly concerned with narratives of migration, as our contemporaneity is characterized by mobility. However, as Bauman points out, 'mobility has become the most powerful and most coveted stratifying factor' (1989, p. 9), it is a privilege for some, but it entails forced, involuntary immobility for others. 'There is the proliferation of places, technologies and "gates'" that enhance the mobilities of some while reinforcing the immobilities, or demobilization, of others' (Hannam *et al.* 2006, p. 11); hence, unequal power relations 'unevenly distribute motility, the potential for mobility' (15). Carling has termed this the 'age of involuntary immobility' (2002, p. 5). Anthropological scholarship has seen a shift in approach to the study of human displacement: 'anthropology has come a long way from its image as a marred discipline, marred by an excessive fixation with the mobility of the West, which underplayed and invisibilised the mobility, and facilitation of the immobilisation, of the rest' (Nyamnjoh 2013, p. 656). This paper draws on these most recent developments in anthropology, and approaches mobility and immobility as key factors in shaping migratory experiences. Departing from what Lazarus calls a 'rapt interest of Western academics in migrations and exiles' (2004, p. 73), I focus on failure (to migrate) and (im)mobility in the context of migration for 'the rest'.

Mobility stands as the badge of modernity, its sacred text, as it it distinguishes the privileged from the unprivileged and is enmeshed with ideas of freedom, travel, leisure and socio-economic development. On the contrary, immobility holds negative connotations; it is perceived as the opposite of movement, as inaction, 'invoking metaphors of blocked cultural and psychic development for communities' (Salazar and Jayaram 2016, p. 97). However, a focus on immobility can reveal cultural and social processes which would otherwise remain invisible. Deleuze and Guattari remind us that the opposition of movement brings about images of immobile movement which can occur in one place, 'some voyages take place *in situ*, are trips in intensity. […] the journey is a motionless one, even if it occurs on the spot, imperceptible, unexpected, and subterranean' (1985, p. 146). This study examines the complexities at the heart of migratory journeys and the role that both mobility and immobility play in shaping the characters' lives; it questions an accepted understanding of migration which privileges mobility and border-crossing. The first section of this paper outlines a context by exploring Lalami's depiction of the Mediterranean as a borderland, and its significance in the contemporary diaspora; it also discusses the novel's representation of Morocco-Europe migrations, what Badiou aptly defines as the journeys between 'the pleasures of wealth and the desires of the poor' (2008, p. 38).

Mediterranean Dreams: One Sea, Two Universes

The novel's opening paragraph asserts distance and division and sets the scene for a narrative unravelling across shores, which seeks to bridge two worlds and to tell of lives lived in between.

> Fourteen Kilometers. Murad has pondered that number hundreds of times in the last year, trying to decide whether the risk was worth it. […]. He spent hours thinking about what he would do once he was on the other side, imagining the job, the car, the house. Other days he could think only about the coast guards, the ice-cold water, the money he'd have to borrow, and he wondered how fourteen kilometres could separate not just two countries but two universes. (Lalami 2005, p.1)

Murad, the novel's narrator, is a gentle man, a graduate in English literature who lives with his mother in Tangier, jobless and without hopes or prospects – he spends his time hustling tourists and wondering about his future. His 'frustrated expectations and consequent struggle against social marginalization [are] emblematic of his generation. He has become one of les *diplômés-chomeurs*, the unemployed diploma-holders' (Alami 2012, p.146). After years of unemployment, humiliations and denied visas to travel to Europe in search of better opportunities, Murad thinks about his destiny. From Tangier he contemplates the Spanish coastline – only a short distance to a better life – and fabricates a narrative of enrichment, a different existence for himself. Yet, this imagined future is troubled by the fear, obstacles and challenges that crossing to the other side entail. As a poor, albeit educated, Moroccan man, Murad's only chance to get to Spain is via irregular entry: crossing the sea as an 'illegal' migrant. The EU immigration apparatus is such that in order to obtain a visa to the EU, citizens from developing countries must provide – among other things – proof of steady finances and established contacts in the country of destination.

Designed to discourage economic migration, the system itself produces 'illegality' (De Genova 2002): denying opportunities to putative border crossers through a selective process which privileges the privileged, it provides the conditions for irregular migration and imposes immobility.[4] The figures of the clandestine migrant, the 'boat people' are indirect outcomes of EU border regimes aimed at curbing and regulating migration.

Besides the official triaging system at embassies and consulates, there exists a more overt, more violent and exploitative system which 'regulates irregular migration'. Though oxymoronic, this phrase encapsulates the paradoxes of our present, whereby allegedly 'illegal' migratory movements from Africa (and the Middle East) into Europe are governed by a vast industry which profits from every aspect of migrants' journeys (Andersson 2014). Murad is very well aware that the short trip across the sea – which could take as little as half an hour – costs vast sums of money, life-savings for ordinary people, impossible sums for somebody in his circumstances. The 'cold water' is a metonymic reference to death at sea, to the countless images in the media of capsized boats, tragedies in the Mediterranean, of bodies washed ashore, of today's 'migration crisis'. This waterway is a liquid border – repository of histories and memories, dreams of hope and wealth, but also death and denied futures. Lalami's novel effectively captures the multiple significances attributed to the Mediterranean for those inhabiting its southern shores. The sea stands between Murad and his future, only14 kilometers – often placid and navigable.

> After leaving the Café La Liberté, Murad headed back toward the beach. He found a spot near the Casbah where he could get a view of the Mediterranean. It was getting dark. In the distance, car lights from the Spanish side looked like so many tiny lighthouses, beacons that warned visitors to keep out. (Lalami 2005, p. 101)

This passage is very evocative as Murad leaves the café where he met the smuggler and tried to orchestrate a new future for himself. The name Café La Liberté ironically evokes freedom, but Murad leaves it behind and makes his way to the beach to confront his future: Spain is so close but its lights for Murad are hostile. His hopes are floating across the waters, inspecting the horizon, exploring that familiar, yet alien, coastline.

Murad's observation about 'not just two countries but two universes' draws attention to the divisive nature of this stretch of water. Despite Morocco's closeness to Spain, the strait does not entail proximity, but a significant division between Africa and Europe, South and North. The stark North/South dichotomy is a valuable tool here to explore Murad's poignant view of 'two universes'. As Europe is increasingly preoccupied with maintaining, patrolling, policing, militarizing, externalizing and re-drawing a border in the Mediterranean, this waterway is a divisive space and not the space of nuanced and complex connection that it is often depicted to be. Badiou observes that 'the "unified world'" of globalization is a sham'; borders now divide

> the rich capitalist North from the poor and devastated South. New walls are being constructed all over the world: between Palestinians and Israelis, between Mexico and the United States, between Africa and the Spanish enclaves, between the pleasures of wealth and the desires of the poor. (2008, p. 38)

Badiou makes explicit what Murad's gaze at the Spanish shore powerfully reflects:

that the world is in fact divided and while the poor are 'claimed by an illusionary Eldorado' (Abderrezak 2016, p. 82), frontiers proliferate.

At the 'Mediterranean Passage' (Palladino 2014), boat people are regulated, intercepted, pushed back, shot, left to die and territorial zones have to be kept distinct. As globalization (for trade) and border regimes (for people) typify our contemporaneity, in this picture the Mediterranean, '[a] body of water that provided the principal gateway between Europe, Asia, and Africa, establishing many of the premises and practices of occidental modernity, has been shut down' (Chambers 2010, p. 678). The border across the Mediterranean is an epitome of more significant and deep-rooted divisions between two continents, worlds, people, and coasts; to recall Gramsci, the subaltern in the south is confined to its alterity. The closing down of the Mediterranean is a symptom of perennial ruptures that the rich north insists on maintaining, it is a literal translation of the hegemonic dynamics that regulate the relationships between the two shores – the European on one side and the African/Middle Eastern on the other. The figures of contemporary migration – the 'boat people', the asylum seeker, the refugee, the uninvited guest – speak of the failure of such a system, of the violence which borders entail, of colonial legacies and unequal power relations which reproduce poverty and cultivate wealth.

One night, on an inflatable dinghy made for eight people, Murad attempts to cross over to Spain – having borrowed money from family and reconciled with the idea that to emigrate is the only chance he has left. As Alami observes, 'in his own society, [Murad] has become invisible, a situation he did not foresee when he chose to study language and literature at university' (2012, p. 146). From the inflatable vessel, huddled with other passengers, '[h]e looks at the Spanish coastline, closer with every breath. The waves are inky black, except for hints of foam here and there, glistening white under the moon like tombstones in a dark cemetery' (Lalami 2005, p. 2). From the little distance that separates these two worlds Murad can see the Spanish coastline, so close – yet seemingly unattainable. In between, the Mediterranean with its inky black waves, even the glistening white foam under the moon is to Murad's eyes a reminder that for many the sea entails death.

As Thomas points out, '[t]he Mediterranean has emerged as a privileged site for exploring global dynamics, containing both proximity and distance, constituting a link but also an obstacle and a barrier' (2011, p.147). Europe's growing anxiety and preoccupation with border control[5] and restrictive immigration policies culminated in 'the externalization of borders […] realized through bilateral agreements between EU and non-EU countries' (Palladino & Gjergji 2015, p. 3). Border countries in the Mediterranean area are at the forefront of these partnerships. Morocco – defined as the '*Gendarme de l'Europe*' (Belguendouz 2005) – plays a vital role in contemporary Euro-African migration (Berriane et al. 2015) as a key partner to Spain and France (among others) in bilateral agreements and cooperation to manage movement and repress irregular migration.[6] The Strait of Gibraltar and the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla are 'not only a focal point of significant migration flows, but also the pivot of complex bilateral relations at different levels' (Carling 2007, p. 338). This intensified cooperation in policing and militarization across the Mediterranean resulted in longer and more dangerous journeys (Carling 2007). Among the deadliest routes towards Europe (Frontex 2016), the Strait is the backdrop to suffering and violence which characterize the contemporary diaspora. Amnesty International registers over 23,000 deaths between 2000 and 2014, among those trying to reach Europe (2014, p. 5) making the Mediterranean a 'migrant graveyard';[7] and 2016 has seen so far the highest number of fatalities, according to UN report.[8] Death is in the

minds of all of those who dream of a new life. This is a 'modern and disquieting evocation of the transatlantic "Middle Passage" creeping at the doors of Europe' (Palladino 2014, p. 221). Chambers eloquently describes the tragic cost of lives of contemporary migration: 'the unnamed have never been recovered. Their bodies rest on the seabed, unconsciously contributing to the solidifying of the sea, transforming a site of transit into a mounting barrier' (2005, p. 324). The Mediterranean is today a mounting barrier which slowly solidifies a place of currents and encounters into a border. This image of the Mediterranean resonates with Gloria Anzaldua's description of the US-Mexican border as an open wound, a 'borderland' where the 'Third World grates against the first and bleeds' (1999, 25). An open wound between Europe and Africa, the Mediterranean is an unnatural boundary, here the Third world literally bleeds in the First – in search of 'a life more bearable' (Bachelet 2016). Yet, border corssers defy and transgress this imposed boundary with the very act of migration; moreover, Lalami's novel subverts the notion that "bearable life" entails "successful" migration by narrating of immobility as a site of productive transformations.

Between 'Stuckedness' and Mobility: Migratory Economies and Enrichment Tales

In the following analysis, I argue that forced immobility – understood as the failure to make it to Europe and to complete the migratory journey – can lead to positive, hopeful developments; in Bachelet's ethnographic study, migrants' 'failure to cross stirred a productive process and reoriented [their] own quest for a life more bearable' (2016, p. 108). My reading foregrounds Halima's perceived stuckedness as an opportunity for fruitful transformations, and sheds light on (im)mobility's numerous nuances; it moves away from understandings of migration solely as movement, and it brings to the fore aspects which often remain overlooked by an increased focus on narratives of mobility.

During the crossing, Murad, Halima and the other thirty passengers are told by the smuggler that they 'have to swim the rest of way' (Lalami 2005, p. 9) when they are 250 meters away from the Spanish coast. They all reluctantly consign themselves to the sea: some swim headfast to the shore; others struggle before making their bodies plough through the water; others, unable to swim, desperately try to stay afloat staring at death in the eyes. Murad finds himself soaked and cold, but safely ashore. He knows that he has made it to Spain, though he is soon caught by the Spanish authorities:

> He is taken to the holding station, the sand from the beach still stuck on his pants. On his way there, he sees a body bag on the ground. A sour taste invades his mouth. He swallows but can't contain it. He doubles over and the officer lets go of him. Murad stumbles to the side of the building and vomits. It could have been him in that body bag; it could have been Faten. Maybe Aziz or Halima. (15)

Anzaldua's image of the Third world grating against the First and bleeding is here laid bare before Murad's eyes: the body bag materializes the countless, nameless deaths at sea, and Murad is made sick. Lalami's novel reminds its readers that the many drowned, unaccounted bodies perishing at the borders of Europe are women, men and children with stories. Murad thinks that the anonymous corpse could have

been himself, or anyone of his fellow travellers, Aziz, Faten and Halima who, like him – searching for the *pleasures of wealth* – were on a quest for 'hope and other dangerous pursuits'. As a wound, the Mediterranean borderland oozes death, and it also strips the survived border crossers of dignity by transforming them into 'boat people'—they are no longer citizens but 'illegal' migrants. Having reached the European shore, Murad, 'sit[ting]on a metal chair, handcuffed' (14), is initiated to the EU border regime. As Turner observes, 'there is emerging a parallel "immobility regime" exercising surveillance and control over migrants, refugees and other aliens' (2007, p. 289). Animated by dreams of a better life where he could put his degree in English to good use, failed by the 'regular' immigration system, Murad took the only route available to him yet finds himself confined and immobile. He ends up shackled, detained, and soon after forcefully returned to Morocco.

Murad's deportation offers an insight into contemporary migration practices, bringing to view the impacts and implications of Morocco's role in transnational politics of border control on the lives of ordinary people whose 'destinies are in the hands of others – the captain, the coast guards, God' (1). The coast guards' duty to patrol the shores is combined with both their rescue activities at sea and their authority to deport those not 'entitled' to claim asylum back to the country they set off from. Murad's deportation speaks of the EU border regime's close ties with African countries in its mission to control migration. Whilst Morocco is increasingly becoming a country of transit and destination for economic migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees (most notably Sub-Saharans and recently Syrian), it still remains a major sender of migrants.[9] Emigration and immigration are deeply rooted in the history, culture and socio-economic texture of the country, as narratives of enrichment still function as an effective pull factor for outward migration. In Lalami's novel, Halima, a poorly educated mother of two, and victim of domestic violence at the hands of her alcoholic husband Maati, struggles to make ends meet, to feed her children, and to find justice and protection away from violence. Resigned to a life of poverty, Halima reflects on the role migration plays in her life:

> She thought about her brothers, Tarik leaving one morning when she was still a young girl and Abdelkrim following him only months later, and how there would be no word from either of them for a year. Then the money had started coming, sporadically at first, and later with addicting regularity, […] [she] still lived in the same cement house with the corrugated tin roof and brown water streaming down the middle of the street. She wondered now what would have happened had she, too, gone to Europe like her brothers. Would she have an apartment, a washing machine, maybe even a car? (67)

The money Halima's brothers sent to Morocco helped to support the family, especially their mother, yet it also contributed to the country's economy and – most notably – confirmed the value and role of emigration to secure better opportunities and a better future. Emigration is woven in the texture of Halima's family; her memory as a little girl of her brothers' largess celebrates these installments sent from far away to provide for the family as a providential aid. Halima thinks about her brothers' success far from her own poor dwellings in a marginal neighborhood of Casablanca; she wonders about life in Europe, the prospect of migration and the wealth it might bring – a washing machine, or a car. Her thoughts and ideas of an apartment clash with the reality of her home in Morocco roofed by corrugated tin. Yet, Farik and Abdelkrim's wealth and material contributions to the family dominate

this extract – there seems to be no room for familial affection, for the fondness among siblings. Perhaps this absence gestures toward the many untold stories about emigration: the ways it often tears families apart, the distance it creates between those who leave and those left behind, the challenges of living elsewhere and always being an 'immigrant'.[10]

Lailami depicts Halima's life in Morocco as defined by domestic violence, a casual janitorial job and the struggle to raise her children. Carling notes that 'in different parts of the world, involuntary immobility has become a central concern for people who have lost a strategy for creating a better life for themselves and their families' (2002, p.7). In Halima's case, her immobility is due to her socio-economic circumstances as well as her gender: migrating like her brothers did was not an option for her as a young woman, and leaving her violent marriage is rendered nearly impossible. Class and gender intersect for Halima to confine her to immobility beyond poverty and subsistence – she is also deprived of safety, opportunities, support, justice and legal protection. Her mother tries but fails to end Halima's subjection to domestic abuse: 'It took several weeks and another three beatings, the most recent only yesterday, before Halima managed to save the money to visit the sorceress her mother had recommended' (Lalami 2005, p. 52). Seemingly a breakthrough in Halima's ghastly everyday life, this visit to the sorceress did not end the abuse and only strains her financial situation. Her mother's plan depletes even more their resources and gives false hopes to Halima, ready to try out anything in order to escape her suffering. Halima's visit to the sorceress cannot be read as simply a cultural or class marker, but rather as a narrative staging of Halima's situation of extreme limitation. As Abunasser points out, 'Halima's story is rooted in a legal system that binds her to a violent husband. […] Halima has begun to realise that the social and legal insistence that women be patient is, in fact, a tool to silence and disempower' (2016, p. 189); her own mother reiterates Halima's duty of patience, reinforcing her entrapment. In these circumstances, an irregular entry into Europe via sea appears to promise more to Halima and her children than does their current condition; 'diaspora presents the possibility of emancipation' (194). Having borrowed more money for the trip, they too set off to Spain on the same six-meter long inflatable vessel which carried Murad and the others. Halima could not swim. When the smuggler asked all passengers to swim to Tarifa, she nearly drowned, but was saved by her own son, only a child. Once on Spanish soil Halima too is caught by the guards, detained and then deported back to Morocco, consigned back to extreme poverty and the threat of physical abuse.

Thinking about how she almost lost her life in the crossing, the risks she exposed her children to, the money she had to borrow and the humiliation of her return, Halima ponders: 'And all for what? We'll be stuck here till the day we die. Soon we'll be begging at the door of the mosque on Fridays' (Lalami 2005, p. 59). Halima reflects on her condition of involuntary, forced immobility and the missed chance as she dwells on being stuck. She fears having to resort to begging outside a mosque – the ultimate symbol of dispossession. It is interesting to note that 'stuckedness' till death is what Halima sees left after her failed migration project. As anthropologist Hage notes, 'the societal and historical conditions of permanent crisis we live in have led to a proliferation and intensification of [a] sense of "stuckedness"' (2009, p. 97) – a specific dimension of involuntary immobility. What Hage terms a 'mobility envy' – physical and existential – is strictly bound up with this sense of stuckedness; it involves people's desire to look

> for a space and a life where they feel they are going somewhere as opposed to nowhere, or at least, a space where the quality of their 'going-ness' is better than what it is in the space they are leaving behind. More often than not, what is referred to as 'voluntary' migration then is either an inability or an unwillingness to endure and 'wait out' a crisis of existential mobility. (98)

Halima yearns to migrate precisely because she can no longer 'wait out' and patiently endure poverty and violence. While Hage argues that the 'civilized' heroes are 'resilient enough to [...] wait out [their] stuckedness' (2009, p. 100), Bachelet notes that migrants refuse 'to "wait out" the crisis. Their urge [is] not "to keep calm and carry on" but, in their own words, "to jump barriers"' (2016, p. 214). Hage's notion of 'civilized' heroes does not account for lack of choice and complex circumstances when waiting cannot be an option. Halima's resilience is challenged as she 'struggle[s] with patriarchal, systemic corruption' (Abunasser 2016, p. 187) in an attempt to find justice, obtain a divorce from her abusive husband and live a life more livable.

Halima's urgent departure reflects a desire to jump barriers rather than to endure; while her forced return to Morocco renews her sense of stuckedness, this forced immobility stirs important changes in her life. Once Halima and the three children return to Casablanca, Maati grants her a divorce. She moves to a different neighborhood and makes a living by selling homemade food at the market. The heroic acts of her ten year old son Farid, who saved her from drowning, brings about a sense of hope: 'Farid had pulled her to safety somehow. […] Besides, the boy had helped his sister, Mouna, and his younger brother, Amin, as well. They had *all* survived. Farid was a saint' (Lalami 2005, p. 105). Farid's sainthood becomes the talk of the neighborhood, and neighbors visit Halima's home asking for blessings. Even Halima's mother, previously dismissive of her daughter, pays a visit to find relief from her aches and pains. Thus Lalami's narrative about Halima ends in a position between stuckedness and waiting out, and with important shifts in her character. As her ailing mother laments that she cannot afford to pay a doctor, Halima reassures her:

> "Don't worry. I'll pay," said Halima. She reached out and touched her mother's arm as if to comfort her. Then she turned to watch the beghrir break into bubbles as it cooked. She did not notice the fading afternoon light that lengthened the shadows behind her, framing her body like the arches of a shrine. (p. 117)

This situates Halima in the position of provider and care giver; her promise to pay for her mother's medical expenses brings closure to their fraught relationship. Halima's new display of agency marks a change from her former self – she is no longer victim of her husband, manipulated by her mother into handing over her savings to a sorceress, or unable to provide for herself and her own children. Moreover, this image of her enshrined body, enveloped by a dim afternoon light, conveys a sense of hope – as if she, and not her son, is a kind of saint.

This shift in the narrative depicts Halima as a hero who has undergone a transformation even though she remains in the same geographical place. The novel reconfigures immobility not as failure or interrupted development, but, in Deleuzian terms, as a 'voyage *in situ*'. To return to Hage, Halima's resilience earns her a new sense of 'going-ness': even the beghrir, breaking into bubbles, metaphorically

indicates a rupture, a transition into something else. Alami notes that Halima redefines herself 'in light of systematic and socially-sanctioned processes of exclusion and rejection on both sides of the straits' (2012, p. 144). In this paragraph, which brings to a close Halima's story in the novel, shadows recast her body in a new light, creating a final image of Halima as almost sacred, certainly transformed. Forced immobility and 'failure' to migrate can generate productive opportunities and positive change – like in Halima's case, immobility becomes a fruitlful site for agency, resilience and resitance.

Murad's Forced (Im)mobility: Ruptures with the Past, Imagined future and Re-Telling

Anthropological studies of globalisation have highlighted the need to account for 'immobility, entrapment, confinement, incarceration' alongside flexibility and mobility (Navaro-Yashin 2003: 108). For Carling, given 'the degree of conflict over mobility and the frustration about immobility among people in many traditional countries of emigration […] one might ask if our times are not also "the age of involuntary immobility"' (2002: 5). In Lalami's novel, Murad is caught by the hegemonic dynamics of modernity where coloniality robs the 'other' of its present and denigrates its past in favour of a Western/ised future. His forced immobility after a failed attempt to emigrate to Spain actually engenders a cathartic moment and re-orients Murad's understandings of time. In the last pages the readers learn that Murad is a story teller, not only for the occasional tourists, he is the novel's narrator; this new role can be read as an act of resistance, empowerment and agency in the face of forced immobility. As Lakha observes, 'immobility may encompass positive strategies of active resistance, or a response to shame, and an active mode of refusing to move toward assimilationist social processes' (2009, p. 122). After being deported back to Morocco,

> Murad had gone home and refused to go out. He avoided family gatherings, refused to run errands, turned down offers to play soccer with the neighbors. Everyone knew he'd tried to go to Spain, and now they all knew he'd been caught and deported, so he took to staying home with his mother, forsaking even a glass of tea at the Café La Liberté with the other unemployed young men from the neighbourhood. (Lalami 2005, p.164)

The forced return home was shameful for Murad: he secluded himself in his mother's house but kept a close eye on her gold bracelets imagining that selling them could enable him to pay for another crossing into Spain, for another attempt, what he imagined might have been successful.

> If he hadn't set foot in Spain, it would have been easier to dismiss his fantasies of what could have been; but he had made it to Tarifa, so everyday he daydreamed about the life he thought he would have had. (165-66)

Murad's daydreaming of Spain and of the life he could have had relegates him to his home and to an imagined future elsewhere. These these fantasies hold him back from living his life in Morocco. His success in making it to Tarifa only enhances his desire to try again and legitimizes his fantasies even further. Stuck in his mother's home,

Murad's life is put on hold, his present is hijacked by an imagined future. The syntax of the passage above is unmistakably regulated by the subjunctive and conditional moods. This partial failure is reflected by the conditional terms, but Murad eventually turns to his actual present:

> Now, he realized, he'd had it wrong. He'd been so consumed with his imagined future that he hadn't noticed how it started to overtake something inside him, bit by bit. He'd been living in the future, thinking of all his tomorrows in a better place, never realizing that his past was drifting. (166)

This poignant extract portrays Murad experiencing a catharsis, his thoughts shift to the indicative mood as the adverb 'now' firmly anchors him to the present, a time previously eroded by the conditionality of an imagined future. In this new temporal equation Murad shifts his focus from the future to the past – the present is only indirectly acknowledged by the adverb 'now'. Murad's realization that the future was the only direction orienting his temporal compass surprisingly gears him to the past and not to living and experiencing his present. He moves to the other end of accountable (and re-countable) time:

> He wondered if one always had to sacrifice the past for the future, of if it was something he had done, something peculiar to him, an inability to fill himself with too much, so that for every new bit of imagined future, he had to forsake a tangible past. (166)

Murad's lucubrations on time situate past and future as inextricably bound up, he recognizes that his 'mobility envy' was a threat to his own past. Through these reflections, Murad re-qualifies his past as more valuable, something to celebrate; the verb 'sacrifice' indicates a desire not to forsake the past for the fantasy of a future. However, the glaring absence of references about the present is telling: Murad's failed attempt to emigrate forcefully brings him back to his present in Morocco, a time he unwillingly dwells in. While in detention in Spain, awaiting his deportation, he dreaded such a return: '[h]is future there stands before him, unalterable, despite his efforts, despite the risk he took and the price he paid. He will have to return to the same old apartment, to live off his mother and sister, without any prospects or opportunity' (15). As the future remains unalterable, Tangier for Murad entails a life barren of prospects and opportunities. Once confronted the shame of his return, Murad's cathartic experience helps him navigate the difficulties of a forced repatriation, the bitterness of his failed migratory project and the need to re-shape a life in Tangier. He releases the chimeric shadows of an imagined future and turns to the past, something tangible – rather than imagined (like the future) or tragic, slippery (like his present). This coping strategy helps Murad rebuild a liveable life in Tangier – the past becomes a vessel to re-figure himself and to bestow a new significance to his present.

Murad's resilience after failing, his way of *waiting out*, finds a new 'going-ness' – in Hage's terms. The final chapter of *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*, titled 'The Story Teller', tells of Murad's reflections on time and celebration of the past continue and take to question the significance and value of stories:

> When he was a little boy, Murad remembered, his father would sit down at night, cross-legged on the raffia mat, his back to the wall, and tell stories for

> him and his sister Lamya. […] He remembered the stories only in fragments, […] pieces of a puzzle that he couldn't reconstruct. Realizing this, he felt at once angry and sad, as though he had just discovered that a part of him was missing. (163)

Fragments of stories, that he can hardly piece together, map on Murad's sense of mutilation and dismemberment. Murad's imagined mutilation represents the cost of his fantasies, a time spent lost in the fantasy of a future that entailed sacrificing his past. Murad feels interrogated by his future which makes demands upon him, and he finds himself maimed, unable to account for those same past histories he learned as a child: 'And now, when he thought of the future, he saw himself in front of his children, as mute as if his tongue had been cut off, unable to recount for them the stories he'd heard as a child' (166). The adverbial 'and now' unequivocally situates Murad in his present; in this 'now' Murad envisions a different future—one embodied by his own putative children claiming for those same tales he was recounted as a child. In this new vision of the future, Murad is not driving a car or living in an apartment somewhere in Europe, but he is preoccupied by the demands that his future children. The perceived (illusionary), physical dismemberment renders his migratory project as an embodied experience. Murad's feeling of being maimed, having his tongue cut off, and the preoccupation with his loss – albeit temporary – situates the stories of his childhood as the focal point of these final pages and as the framing device for the novel as a whole.

The last chapter depicts Murad's life after being deported back to Morocco. After his ashamed isolation at home, Murad 'jumped on the offer' (165) to work as a shop assistant at *Botbol Bazaar and Gifts*. Surrounded by Moroccan artifacts, antiques, carpets, jewelry and more, Murad sits behind the counter reading a book. Different levels of self-referentiality are played out here: from the overt act of Murad's reading, we are told of his childhood and his father's night tales. Oral storytelling compellingly dominates the final part of the chapter (and the novel as a whole) with Murad entertaining two customers in the gift shop with the traditional story of a rug weaver named Ghomari.

Murad's role as story teller recasts him with renewed agency; like for Halima, his immobility and stuckedness open up new opportunities. The novel's ending depicts Murad in a different light: 'He thought about his father, who'd told stories to his children, and how they were almost forgotten today. Anas closed the cash register with a loud ring, but Murad hardly paid any attention; he was already lost in the story he would start writing tonight' (173). Childhood forgotten stories work as pretext to these final lines, bringing to full circle the acts of listening, reading and writing. Murad is unconcerned with the sound of the cash register—money, materiality that had previously obsessed him—because he is lost in the story he will himself write; it is so that readers learn about his role as the novel's narrator and about his future as a writer. The syntax of this sentence begs for further analysis: split in two parts by a semicolon, the first tells about Anas and the till, the second about Murad's story and writing. This syntactic juxtaposition distills the migratory experiences narrated by Lalami: on one shore, imagined futures and materiality – apartments, cars, washing machines –and on the other, Murad as active agent imagining and writing a story, shaping his characters' future. As Alami observes,

> the novel emphasises acts of active resistance that do not reiterate victimisation but ones that offer a path towards cultural resistance that honours cultural

> memory and calls for the development of more ideologically-informed forms of engaging historical memory in order to promote individual and cultural agency. (2012, p. 154)

Valuing past memories and localized, nativist narratives, Murad rejects Eurocentric accounts of Morocco and 'initiates his own act of storytelling, his own act of creating a cultural identity' (151). [11] It is not accidental that the novel's very last word is 'tonight', unequivocally locating the character and the story back to an immediate present.

Conclusions

Lalami's characters deal with imagined futures that are animated by migratory fantasies, and come to terms with their own forced immobility in ways that disrupt the dominant narratives about migration. This resonates with Clifford's definition of the postcolonial which points to 'real, *if incomplete*, ruptures with past structures of domination, sites of current struggle and imagined futures' (1994, p. 302). Murad's and Halima's trajectories reveal that their forced return to Morocco is an occasion to rupture with past structures of domination and to exercise empowerment, agency and resistance in the present. Against the grain of Western/ised accounts of movement as development and progress, Lalaimi constructs counter-narratives that re-figure (im)mobility, and she—through these characters—opens a different mode of postcolonial storytelling that does not privilege the exiled, border-crossing migrant. Halima's and Murad's stories challenge and complement the ubiquitous images of boat people arriving on the southern coasts of Europe, introducing immobility in narratives of migrancy—and revealing that this 'immobility' is itself not an impasse but another form of mobility: viable futures are indeed possible outside of Europe's borders.

In the 'age of involuntary immobility' the realities of those who are forced to remain behind are obfuscated by border-crossing tales. Foregrounding (im)mobility to engage with experiences of human displacement illuminates the complex networks, relations and dynamics at the heart of migratory projects and discloses different kinds of movements. Literary and cultural studies scholarship must acknowledge and engage with the shift in focus emerging from the social sciences; a scholarly attention to human mobility ought to explore immobility too. Immobility allows for an insight into experiences of displacement beyond mere movement. Migration is about those who leave, as well as those who stay behind, those who seek to move but fail, and those whose movement is hindered; there is a need to account for other stories to get a better understanding of migration.

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[1] Abderrezak reminds us of some of the representatives of this sub-genre among Moroccan, Spanish, Italian and French writings: Youssef Amghar's *Il e´tait parti dans la nuit*, Moulay Hachem El Amrani's *Hmidou el emigrante*, Nasser-Eddine Bekkai Lahbil's *Le De´troit ou le voyage des vaincus*, Ahmed Bouchikhi's *Le Cimetie`re des illusions*, El Driss's *Vivre a` l'arrache*, Hocein Faraj's *L'Aller et le retour*, Rachid El Hamri's *Le Ne´ant bleu*, Salim Jay's *Tu ne traverseras pas le de´troit*, Youssef Jebri's *Le Manuscrit d'Hicham, destine´es marocaines*, Y Youcef M.D.'s Je *reˆve d'une autre vie*, and Hamid Skif's *La Ge´ographie de la peur*. (2007, p. 462).

[2] Other works by Moroccan (francophone) writers such as Tahar Ben Jelloun, Youssouf Amine Elalamy, and Mahi Binebine also 'react against and offer an alternative to monolithic narratives in mass media and politics concerning clandestine migration' (Abderrezak 2009, p. 462).

[3] Among other contemporary Arab Anglophone (British or American) women authors are 'Ahdaf Soueif, Fadia Faqir, Laila Lalami and Leila Aboulela and others as British Arabs; Naomi Shehab Nye, Layla Halabi, Susan Muaddi Darradj and Diana Abou Jaber and others as Arab Americans' (Sarnou 2014, p. 68). For Sarnou, it is important to recognize 'Arab Anglophone women's narratives as a new minor literature that is articulated in a major language—English—and as an international discourse' (p. 80).

[4] Balibar observes that our 'world that is now broadly unified from the point of view of economic exchange and communication needs borders more than ever to segregate, at least in tendency, wealth and poverty in distinct territorial zones […] The poor, at least, need to be systematically triaged and

regulated at points of entry to the wealthiest territories' (2009, p. 113).

[5] From the Hague Programme (2004), to the Stockholm Programme (2010–14), and the creation of Frontex (2004) – the European agency which enforces border controls at the frontiers and beyond – there has been a steady institutionalization of border management and an increased focus on curbing migration.

[6] From the eighties up until more recently, there is a long history of agreements and treaties between the EU and North Africa within the framework of migration (MPC 2013).

[7] Vice (23-04-2015) 'In Photos: Europe's mass Migrant Graveyard in the Mediterranean'. Available at: https://news.vice.com/article/in-photos-europesmass-migrant-graveyard-in-the-mediterranean.

[8] http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=55389#.WEfn-GqLSUk

[9] Mainly towards OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries, such as France, Belgium, Italy, Spain, Germany. A report by the Migration Policy Centre states that '[e]migration brings important resources to Morocco. These financial transfers, in fact, represent the second source of hard currency after tourism receipts, themselves brought by Moroccan expatriates spending the summer break in Morocco' (MPC 2013, p. 1).

[10] Aziz, one of the novel's characters who managed to dodge the coast guards and find his way to his destination where he was promised a job in a farm, successfully emigrates to Spain. Laden with presents for relatives, friends, neighbours, Aziz visits his family back in Morocco; he embodies the paradigm of the emigrant who has made it elsewhere, and his return is a display of success, measured in goods. However, Lalami's novel also refers to other aspects of Aziz's migratory venture: 'But he didn't talk about the time when he was in El Corte Ingles shopping for a jacket and a guard followed him around as if he were a criminal. He didn't describe how, at the grocery store, cashiers greeted customers with hellos and thank yous, but their eyes always gazed past him as though he were invisible, nor did he mention the constant identity checks that the police had performed these last two years' (Lalami 2005, p. 144). Interestingly, this extract begins with the adversative adverb 'but' – announcing an antithesis 'but' aptly introduces a series of negations, what Aziz failed to recount.

[11] The novel commences with Murad's account of the trip across the waterway to reach Spain, and grounds the narrative in Morocco's past; he recalls how: 'Tariq Ibn Ziyad had led a powerful Moor army across the Straits and […] established an empire that ruled over Spain for more than seven hundred years. Little did they know that we'd be back, Murad thinks. Only instead of a fleet, here we are in an inflatable boat – not just Moors, but a motley mix of people, from the ex-colonies, without guns or armor, without a charismatic leader'. (Lalami 2005, p. 2-3) This passage brings to the surface the countries' shared histories and decisively situates colonial legacies in the narrative. The journey undertaken by Murad and this motely mix of people from the ex-colonies – armless and harmless, and without a leader – reminds our narrator of the famous invasion of Spain at the hands of the Moors.