The Journey as Purgatory in Amin Maalouf’s novels*

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Journey in Maalouf’s fictions does not end to a destination or finish line. In Maalouf’s fictional world, destination is part of the route. It is for this that the author points out in Samarkand: how hasty the passengers are to arrive. His heroes, contrary to hasty passengers, travel the world in different directions so that their life, mixed to their journey, ends in the start point. Maalouf believes that the starting point is the source as opposed to the roots. The roots are in the ground while the sources are free, like Tanios mountain which is hanging somewhere between the earth and the sky. The end section of the study shows that Tanios, the representative of Maalouf’s heroes, sitting on a mountain between life and death, will end his journey in purgatory. The study in hand is an attempt to illuminate the ties between journey and purgatory as Maalouf sees it.

I. INTRODUCTION

Travels, so numerous in Maalouf’s fictional world, the author studied in this article, make possible to frequent the world and to assume the differences. Maalouf’s heroes are all travelers, but these characters travel first, to meet the other, relevant to escape than the movement and the meeting of the other. Exile for this author is a feeling, an attitude, a daring.

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II. THE MERMAID ENCHANTS THE SAILOR

Travel is a guarantee of tolerance, the antithesis of isolation and confinement. Maalouf, in his essays and articles, finds no way surer, more leaving, amortizes the tension caused by the oscillation between homeland and exile and gives the possibility of movement, opens the horizon towards a life resulting from an open movement and not a closed circle between the point of departure and the period. It is clear that a real reason, an excuse incites or even forces the heroes to take the road but the remarkable fact is that being obliged to travel is unavoidable in the Maalouf’s novels. It’s the Mermaid who enchants the sailor.

III. TOWARDS HETEROTOPY

The plastic space of heterotopy makes the change of territory function on a metaphorical level where it reaches its climax. After all, the trip as a heterotopic way closes on the starting point, on the house, like the caravan but the important thing is that it turns on the point of origin and not the root. The ship, the largest reserve of imagination, the most perfect heterotopy takes the lovers away. And the lovers are the fugitives who have found refuge in each other. The absence of the homeland / beloved is the beginning of the search for an intimate land and love too. It is the distance that makes everything more in love and puts Tanios at the top of the rock.

IV. PURGATORY

The caravan or the ship, the space of the meeting and the threshold of passage from one world to another, are the synthesis of the stop and the movement, the union and the separation, the meeting and the farewell. Baldassare finds finally himself in Geneva, where his generation was born. He was always there beside: a prenatal presence. His house is anchored on the water and floats between his hectic papers. The journey flows thus in a very small space, in the womb of the mother.

The narrator of Rock of Tanios goes, in the last minutes of his narration, on the rock where Tanios sat to feel what Tanios experienced. The result is that weightlessness invades him. Weightlessness and suspension, break down the habits, change the direction of the arrow of constant travel from west to east: this time from east to west. Nobody can stand on the water by his own feet, he plunges into it and the sea rewards the hero by lightening him like what the rock of Tanios did. Becoming is not expressed in the territories, but in its evolution, between life and death, in purgatory.

V. CONCLUSION

Maalouf brings back Tanios on his mountain which is attached to the ground and aspires to departure: purgatory. Tanios does not stop on the mountain, he disappears and from that moment his journey comes alive in
another way, in the form of a mountain. The Maalouf’s hero looks for the way, out of a labyrinth, apparently already crossed, surprisingly, by his own steps. Any departure in other words is destined for return. The trip as Purgatory is not simply an abstract, unreal, idealistic and infeasible synthesis of movement and residence, this state seeks the one who does not reciprocate, who does not suspect, the human of fatality and not that of resentment.

**BIBLIOGRAPHIE**


