Modern Migration in Two Arabic Novels

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Abstract
In her article "Modern Migration in Two Arabic Novels" Ikram Masmoudi proposes that twentieth-century Arab fiction is marked by the theme of the journey in literal and figurative ways. This motif features the theme of departure and arrival through characters crossing borders from East to West and from the periphery to the center (i.e., the metropolis) in order to acquire knowledge, understanding, and empowerment and to get a sense of Western modernity. The departure and arrival of the main characters becomes the central aesthetic preoccupying with a focus on their arrival back home and their rediscovery of their own idea of a negotiated modernity. The Saint's Lamp by Yahya Haqqi and Season of Migration to the North by Tayeb Salih depict two different kinds of enigmatic arrivals. Their arrival is the opportunity to adjust and assess their positions and their cultural differences. Although the two arriving protagonists in these novels have different attitudes vis-à-vis the West and their local culture, the structure of arrival in both novels is not straightforward and immediate, but instead reflects a negotiation between two attitudes and a transition from an immediate, physical arrival to an inner, mental arrival. This leads to a new understanding of and an adjustment to a fuller sense of arrival.

Recommended Citation

This text has been double-blind peer reviewed by 2+1 experts in the field.

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This time last year about 1,000 people per hour were fleeing Libya into Egypt and Tunisia. In total perhaps two million people have left their homes over the last year as a result of the impact of the Arab Spring across North Africa and the Middle East, and at least thirty countries have been directly affected by these flows. Many have since returned to their homes in Libya, but there are still at least 90,000 people internally displaced there; while the current estimate for displacement in and from Syria is at least 150,000 and rising rapidly.