

Placelessness and the Subversive Tactics of Mobility in Ernest Hemingway and Jabra Ibrahim Jabra

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Abstract : This paper teases out the ways in which the constructs of placelessness and mobility are articulated in modern exilic Palestinian literature and American expatriate writing. The mode of placelessness embodied by the characters of each of my two authors (expatriation in Paris Montparnasse for Hemingway's characters and involuntary exile in Europe for Jabra's) will be elicited from the orientations of their mobility. This paper argues that the proclivity of Hemingway's characters for centrifugal motion (moving away from the centre) is a strategy to increase their sense of freedom that space (expatriation), rather than place, secures. By contrast, the movement of Jabra's characters is centripetal (moving or tending to move towards the centre). It echoes his Palestinian characters' recurrent futile attempts to return to Palestine, and it expresses their resistance to the lures of exile. This paper asserts that the involuntarily exiled character (the Palestinian in this case) is a figure obsessed with and ache for a place, roots and 'a dwelling' from which he was uprooted - a place that defines his authentic existence and frames his understanding of the world in Martin Heidegger's, Simone Weil's and Gaston Bachelard's senses. In parallel, this paper explains that the expatriate character (the American in this case) views place as confining, restrictive and disagreeable, while mobility as a figure of freedom, resistance, wealth, self-fashioning and understanding/inhabiting the world. Place in this sense is associated with past, tradition, ideology, existence and being. Mobility is equivalent with modernity, progression, innovation, self-fashioning and freedom.

Keywords : American expatriate literature, exilic Palestinian literature, mobility, place, placelessness

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