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Al Harqa Littalyene: Dreams Beyond the Mediterranean
(Clandestine Migration from Tunisia to Italy)

Rayed Khedher

Clandestine migration from Tunisia to Italy is one of the most important migration issues in the Mediterranean. There has been little ethnographic research devoted to this issue and no deep examination of the personal motivations of the Tunisia potential male migrant. Most of the literature and case studies have focused on the socio-economic impacts of this migration on either Tunisia or Italy. In this article, I investigate these motivations by focusing on the young men in Hay Ettadhamen, a large depressed township on the outskirts of Tunis. The article examines the hypothesis that Tunisian men living in this township migrate to Italy due to a quest for "Paradise Europe" with its seemingly attractive lifestyle. I attempt to turn the focus away from the simple push and pull factors of economics being the main motivation and illuminate other hidden sets of incentives that are specific to Hay Ettadhamen township.

The article specifically examines the impact of French colonization, social networks and media in the shaping of these clandestine migratory movements. This ethnographic study is based on nine months of qualitative research design involving participant observation and in-depth interviews.

Europe-Bound Migrants Drown at Sea

Tunisian rescue teams have resumed their search for about 200 illegal immigrants who are feared dead after their boat capsized off the country's coast on its way to Italy. The Tunisian coast guard has already rescued 41 people and recovered 20 bodies, but rough seas have hampered the rescue operation. It is at least the second boat to go down in the area this week. As many as 70 were drowned when their boat sank off the tiny Italian island of Lampedusa on Monday. Italian newspapers have described the stretch of water between Africa and Sicily as a huge underwater graveyard. The cause of Friday's sinking is not known. It may have been because the boat was overcrowded or in poor condition, or because of bad weather - or a combination of all three. [BBC News 2003]



Boat of Death

Frightening stories like the one reported by the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) have recently (circa 2000) become more frequent, filling Tunisian newspapers and drawing the attention of national authorities as well as human rights institutions and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Many "death stories," especially those involving a small number of victims, never make it into the papers.

Clandestine migration from Tunisia to Italy (*al harqa* as it is called in the Tunisian vernacular) is one of the most important migration issues in the Mediterranean. There has been little ethnographic research devoted to this issue and no deep examination of the personal motivations of the potential Tunisian male migrant. Most of the literature and case studies have focused on the socio-economic impacts of this migration on either Tunisia or Italy. This paper examines these motivations by focusing on the young men in Hay Ettaadhamen, a large depressed township on the outskirts of Tunis, Tunisia. I argue that Tunisian men living in Hay Ettadhamen migrate to Italy due to constructed images about "Paradise Europe" which create a strong quest for the West with its seemingly attractive consumer culture and lifestyle. I analyze the identity crisis suffered by most respondents and examine the impact of media on their imaginary and the way it fuels their desires to migrate. I focus on Tunisia's post-colonial legacy and examine its role in the construction and the shaping of local identity and the self. Ultimately, I argue that some traits of Italian and western culture have been successfully appropriated and incorporated into the local culture of Hay Ettadhamen through various symbols, words and artifacts; creating hopes, but also, as we will see, disappointments.

The data used in this paper was gathered during

nine months of ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Tunis, Tunisia in the spring of 2005. I employed a qualitative research design involving participant observation and in-depth interviews. The main site where the research was carried out was an impoverished urban township outside Tunis named *Hay Ettadhamen* which is an Arabic term that literally means “solidarity township.” Located in the North-Western outskirts of Tunis, the township coalesced between 1970 and 1985 when hundreds of informal settlements were erected by rural migrants. Mainly from the Western part of Tunisia, these came to the town searching for better life opportunities (Kaaki 2003). Attracted by the urban lifestyle and driven by the hope of higher incomes, rural migrants settled on the non-occupied land of what is today Hay Ettadhamen (Kaaki 2003: 300-305).

Hay Ettadhamen was an ideal site for my research because: (1) it is home to a large number of potential clandestine migrants; (2) it is a place where various migratory attempts take place frequently creating a ‘migration culture’ characterizing its various districts.



Welcome to Hay Ettadhamen

The sample in this study was composed of 30 unemployed men recruited from the larger districts of the township. About 45% of the respondents were between the ages of 26 and 30 years. Although, 73% of the respondents had some primary school education, a majority had dropped out before matriculating to secondary school. The data revealed that 78% of the respondents came from extended families originating from rural areas that moved to Tunis in search of better life opportunities. To enhance sampling validity, data was collected in the three main districts of Hay Ettadhamen; Dawar Hicher, El Intilaka and El Mniihla. In conducting this ethnography, I shared in as intimate a manner as possible the lives, personal stories, and motivations of the potential migrants as intimately as possible. In this way, data gathered is also based on my direct observations and not simply on second-hand informants' accounts or the open-ended interviews. I frequented places where they met; cafés, *Salle de Jeux* (game rooms), popular restaurants, public baths, barbershops, Metro and bus stations and some youth centers in the neighborhood. My ethnography reveals that the majority of the participants have one objective in common: that is to enter Europe by any means available to them. Migration has become their only obsession, the focus of their daily talk as one 21-year-old respondent says, "I think about it 24 hours a day." (Taped interview 04/12/05)

Before presenting the findings of this research study, I will examine the issue of illegal human crossings in the anthropological literature and observe its larger connections with globalization and transnational global media.

In comparison with other social science disciplines, anthropology did not give the study of migration high priority as an area of research until the late 1950s and early 1960s (Brettell 2000: 97). Subsequently, the study of

people's movements across national boundaries has been one of the main research areas for many anthropologists; especially those working with urban and transnational communities. More recently, various anthropological studies (Anderson 1991; Appadurai 1991; Massey et al 1998; Brettell 2000; Foner 2000) have studied the factors behind these movements and looked at the roles of global capitalism and technological advances in making those transnational networks possible. Many postulate that transnational migration is a consequence of globalization, and that transnational capitalism has generated an unprecedented increase in human mobility. A striking feature of globalization is the rapid, paradoxical social and cultural transformation it engenders. Paradoxical because the more globalization encourages us to think of our contemporary world as a village, the more we realize that national frontiers are becoming more and more rigid (Collier and Dollar 2001). The frontiers are rigid in terms of constructed boundaries of culture, race and nationality but not in a physical sense vis-à-vis borders. This contradiction is true for most countries of the world and has in turn divided the world into a Global impoverished South and a Global enriched North. A North that has benefited enormously from globalization at the expense of an ill-fated South that is the casualty of globalization. While more and more people have the desire and means to go to more places more than ever before, enhanced border controls are making it more and more difficult, paradoxically for them to do so—whether for purposes of migration or even routine tourist travel (Oucho 1996).

According to the study, clandestine migration is a phenomenon that can best be explained through the expansive nature of the global market with its commodities, ideologies, technology and culture. This happens in

part because globalization creates infrastructures of transportation, communication, and social networks that make the rich Global North 'virtually' accessible and within an illusory reach to the rest of the impoverished Global South. The phenomenon of globalization through its technological, cultural and economic aspects has created the European myth or what I chose to call "Paradise Europe" in the minds of thousands of desperate Tunisian youth.

The young men of Hay Ettadhamen daydream about this "Paradise Europe" until they lose touch with their reality in the township. When entering the township, the first thing that catches one's attention is the participants' ability to create imaginative scenarios by using various symbols whenever they interact with each other. For instance, the participants use a coded language that they constructed and that is exclusively used among them. *Hnash* (a snake) refers to a policeman; *eddazza* (a push) refers to money and *harqa* (burning) refers to clandestine migration. Also, they sometimes employ some broken Italian words in their everyday language:

While sitting with Sabri at a local café, I heard a guy swearing in Italian using the word *fa fankulo* which literally means 'fuck you.' Sabri commented by saying that this is one way of showing off and telling everyone that you speak Italian and that you can even swear using Italian. That people should fear you and respect you. Using a few Italian words is a way for many potential migrants to associate themselves with the West. [fieldnotes 02/25/05]

Also, some informants have Italian names as

nicknames; such as Mario, Roberto and others refer to each other using place names such as, 'Roma,' 'Milano,' 'Sicilia.' It seems that their real world becomes one of imagination and fantasy revolving around Italian symbols and words which usage shapes their worldview. These symbols range between a T-shirt with the Italian flag, a belt with 'Italy' inscribed on it, posters of famous Italian soccer players, some semi-naked Italian movie stars and loud Italian music. I will discuss these symbols and examine the way they contribute to the construction of the socio-cultural reality of the study population. I will show that they help form the perspective from which these young men perceive, think about, and experience their world and the new world that they want to penetrate. So what is this imaginary? How does it get created and what impact does it have on the construction of the cultural identity of these potential migrants?

According to the Tunisian sociologist Moncef Wannas (1992) the social imaginary is the set of values, institutions, and symbols common to a particular social group and its corresponding society. He defines it as "the ways in which people imagine their social existence, how they fit and how they mentally comprehend the world around them, through pictures, stories and symbols and myths" (Wannas 1992: 72).

The potential migrants of Hay Ettadhamen perceive the surrounding world and the reality differently than do other Tunisian young men in various parts of the country. They have fed their brains with beautiful images about their desired destination 'Italy' until losing touch with local reality and entering an imaginary world, a world of fantasy. These beautiful images, as we will see later, are drawn from various sources, among them television, magazines, and exaggerated oral stories recounted by

returning migrants. These are the images that created the young men's frustrations and the 'dislocation' in their identities. In fact, most of the respondents in this study are suffering from an identity crisis due to the shift in their local identities that they refuse to adapt to the socio-cultural space which is the township. In her discussion of identity, Kobena Mercer, states that "identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty" (Mercer 1990: 43). The processes that led to the dislocation of the respondents' identities go back to when these young men and their families moved to the city of Tunis. As mentioned earlier, the majority of the participants lived in rural contexts very different from the urban setting in which they found themselves. The process of adaptation was difficult for them because of unemployment, poverty and social exclusion, in addition to many other predicaments that shaped the reality of their urban transition. Ridha relates his identity crisis to the day his family moved away from the south of the country. He is sure that Italy will 'grant' him an identity because he has none. He recounts:

"Of course you have an identity crisis. You are the *nouzouh* [a pejorative term for rural migrant] who has no place in the society. Since we came from Gabes [a town in the South], people made me feel different just by looking at me in a funny way. You start to question everything and think about yourself as someone with no identity. Maybe Italy will give me an identity because if I make it there I will become *abd* [a human

being].” [Taped interview 02/06/05]

From the quote above, it seems that Ridha thinks of identity as something that you quickly acquire just like a commodity that you buy in the market perhaps revealing an aspect of globalization and Western consumerism. Italy, he states, will grant him an identity which he lost in Tunisia- that of being human.



When Will I Cross

Hence, the crisis is one of rural versus urban, of tradition versus modernity; a crisis of contrasting values, meanings and symbols; of a cultural identity that got so powerfully ‘dislocated.’ Similarly, Stuart Hall (1992:4) examines the issue of identity and argues that it is “too ambiguous and complex.” A crisis of identity according to him should be seen as “part of a wider process of change which is dislocating the central structures and processes of modern societies and undermining the frameworks which gave individuals stable anchorage in the social world” (Hall 1992:4). In order to go beyond this identity

crisis and to give meaning to their imaginative world, most respondents turn to the consumption of material objects that convey Western ideals and lifestyles. They spend their time trying to adhere to their newly constructed worlds because it is within these spaces that they can find refuge and enthusiastically dream about migrating to the idealized West. Hall (1992:102) also speaks of “shared identities” when he talks about “global consumerism” between nations and its ability to create possibilities for the formation of those “shared identities”- as “customers for the same goods, clients for the same services, audiences for the same messages and images” (Hall 1992: 102). Consequently, these collective identities and socially constructed imaginaries become their vital virtual space that gives them a sense of belonging and makes them escape from the sadness of their life circumstances.

Abdessattar, 34 years old, has an immense appreciation for anything that comes from *il kharij* (the West). He saves whatever money he makes out of gambling and takes the metro to downtown Tunis to eat at Macdoly which is the equivalent of MacDonald’s. For him it is like a trip to Europe, a ‘Western experience’ that makes him feel worthwhile. He says:

“Being in Macdoly, I can at least feel that I am eating proper food. The atmosphere is very nice and the French fries are crispy and delicious. I like Macdoly because whenever I go there I feel as if I have been to Europe. The trip to downtown gets ecstatic when I have some extra dinars and go to Café de Paris (a famous Café bar in Tunis) to drink few beers and forget hamm iddinya (the problems

of life).” [Taped interview 04/05/05]

By eating European-style fast food, speaking a few words in Italian and consuming Western products, most informants, like Abdessattar try to live part of their dream before it even materializes. In doing so, they recuperate their lost self-esteem and regain some confidence in themselves which informs them that there is still some hope, that the migration alternative is possible. The most painful lesson one learns from being in Hay Ettadhamen is that these imagined constructions can only marginalize these young men. They create a ‘dislocated’ identity that makes them the odd group. It is an identity that creates social conflicts and pushes the mainstream society to stigmatize them as the ‘Other,’ which in the work of Michel Foucault consists of those who are excluded from positions of power, and are often victimized within a predominantly liberal humanist view of the subject (Critical Dictionary of Postmodern Thought: 181).

When conducting this study, I came to realize that the issue of identity has also been impacted by the consumption of Western media. This media, as we will see, helped the construction and shaping of migration intentions of the majority of the study participants. So, how does media, and television in particular, shape migration intentions?

While King and Wood did address the impact of media on migration (King and Wood 2001; White 1980), most of the studies dealing with migration have not so far examined the role of the media as an important incentive for people’s movements. Media through its various and attractive sources such as television, radio, and magazines feed into the imaginary world that I have discussed earlier fueling the hopes and desires for Western lifestyles and culture of many vulnerable

youth. The 'aesthetic' images provided by the media get perceived and eventually internalized by these desperate youth who, because of limited education and hopelessness, become victims of these images.

Among a few other sources such as newspapers and magazines, television remains the main source of information for the majority of the study population. The images broadcast by Italian and other European television channels act as a window through which potential migrants see, admire, and dream about the 'beautiful' West. Whether this information is true or false plays an important role in stimulating the intentions of Hay Ettadhamen youth to take the deadly risks of clandestine migration. According to Arjun Appadurai (1996: 6), electronic media allow people to construct 'imagined worlds' in their everyday lives under the influence of radio and television, cassettes and videos, newsprint and telephone. He also argues that "more people than ever before imagine routinely the possibility that they will live and work in places other than where they were born." In the case of Hay Ettadhamen youth, media with their exaggerated images seem to be among the major factors that influence their motivation to migrate to Italy. Also, Italian television in addition to the other Western channels influences not as much the actual clandestine passage, but more the way these youth perceive, express and locate themselves with respect to their larger cultural identity. For instance, Hafedh, 28 years old, has never left Tunisia, yet he can tell one everything about Italy- its historical monuments, towns, food, films, and even politicians:

"Ittalyen (Italy) aaahhhhh....what can I say about it? It is the place where everything is possible. It is a country where the jobs

are plenty. Money is very easy to make and you can buy anything you want. In Italy you can easily get beautiful pussies and enjoy life. The Italians are also fun people. They like to dance, eat well and party all the time. You know I watch Italian TV all the time. I watch everything including the News and children's programs. I also watch history programs and the weather. I feel as if I live there already. It is funny, because my *jotha* (corpse) is here, but my mind is there." [Taped interview 05/12/05]

Right from the beginning, Hafedh explodes with 'aaaahhhh'. This happens after I asked him about Italy and what he knows about it. He seems to have a lot to say and he does not even know how to start. It is obvious that his source is television as he said it himself "I watch Italian TV all the time." He watches everything including the weather and children's programs. His place in the township is rather 'virtual' because mentally he has already migrated. It is the brain that is there, but the body to which he refers as 'corpse' is still in the township. His referring to his body using the term *jotha* (corpse) may infer that Hafedh's body is already dead. It is a body that he has already killed!

Just like Hafedh, the urban poor of Hay Ettadhamen can receive in the privacy of their homes the Western consumer culture through a hundred television channels through which they tirelessly zap in search of a better life, a 'lost' hope, and a beautiful dream. The visitor of the township can see satellite dishes on most roofs of the shabby semi-constructed houses that characterize the urban landscape of Hay Ettadhamen. Some of these dishes are also huge old pans, no longer fit for serving food that are

now being used to capture some blurred images of Italy. The disillusioned youths in Hay Ettadhamen seem to have an incredible imagination and a creativity developed out of a deep desire to penetrate the Western world and to access its beautiful images and attractive culture. This confirms the proverb "necessity is the mother of invention."

In their book *Media and Migration* (2001), Russel King and Nancy Wood argue that media, in addition to the provocative performances of the returning migrants have a significant impact on migration incentives. They state "Images of wealth and of a free and relaxed lifestyle in the 'West' or the 'North' are commonplace in the developing and transforming countries of the world, and the constancy of these images in global media- films, television, magazines and advertisements- tends to reinforce their 'truth' in the eyes of the beholders. Often returning migrants collude in strengthening the veracity of these images, partly to impress, and partly to deny any elements of failure, suffering or exclusion, both to their family and friends back home, and perhaps also to themselves." [King & Wood 2001:2]

The effect of the media does not happen instantly, but is a process through which these desperate young men unconsciously construct an illusory image which they have forced themselves to believe. We see how most young men in Hay Ettadhamen who have never been out of the country, like Hafedh for instance, can tell one all about Italy and the rest of Europe just from what they see on those satellite television channels. The majority of those interviewed reported to have learned some Italian expressions and even clothing styles just by watching Italian and European shows. Some of the programs that the Italian stations broadcast are American, French and German programs dubbed in Italian. When

I informed some of the respondents about the origin of those programs, they seemed to think that they all came from Italy except a few. For them, anything Western is Italian and could also be French, German etc. They use one word that is *lorop* (L'Europe) which means Europe.

Both, Italian and French television have always acted to promote an attractive and beautiful Europe. Most informants grew up watching those channels satisfying an urgent need to be like the 'Westerner,' in his dress, language and culture. As expressed by Anouar in a taped interview "We have always dreamt of Italy since our early childhood. We watched Calimero cartoons at the RAI UNO (Italian national TV channel) when we were kids. We followed Sanremo Festival for Italian music; we watched *Domenica In* (TV Show), Pippo Baudo (Italian animator) and Rafaella Carra (Italian TV presenter)."

This beautiful image of Italy or the West is also fed by the provocative scenes that take place every summer when the returning migrants invade the neighborhood driving their big cars and playing deafening Italian music. One informant remarked "Their cars and loud music are like mobile night clubs." As argued by King and Wood (2001), these returning migrants confirm and validate the constructed images by displaying their success through the nice cars they drive and the fashionable clothes and jewelry they wear. These migrants, many of whom either work like slaves in Italy or deal with drugs try their best to bring in some symbols of their success, of their reconstructed identities which are always western consumer goods (cars, brand clothes, latest cell phones, etc.). As such, each summer, the boundaries between the 'North' and the 'South' get blurred transforming the township of Hay Ettadhamen into a globalized space where euros, Fiat, Alfa Romeo, Levis 501, Nike, Adidas, Western hairstyles,

fashion, music, ideas and language circulate defying all geographical boundaries. These Western commodities invade the collective consciousness of thousands of hopeless would-be migrants provoke them and offer them the alternative of clandestine migration as the only way out.

Due to geographical proximity between Tunisia and Italy (just 44 miles separates Kelibia, a coastal town in the North east, from Lampadusa, an island South of Sicily) Italian television could be seen in the Northern Tunisian territory. As such, the youths' cultural identity gets constructed and negotiated through Italian television in addition to whatever comes from the Western world from music, pictures, and consumer goods. The hybridization of cultural identity led to the construction of an interesting imaginary world that echoes more Western socio-cultural values than local ones. This is how the picture of "Paradise Europe" gets reinforced in the minds, the socio-cultural context and the collective imaginary of Hay Ettadhamen youth.

In her study of labor migrants, Saskia Sassen emphasizes that 'cultural-ideological links' between the sending country and the receiving country should not be underestimated. She argues that "the presence of foreign plants not only brings the U.S. or any other 'Western' country closer, but it also 'westernizes' the less developed country and its people; as a result, migration emerges as an option" (Sassen 1988, 20). It is not surprising then that most respondents in this study believe that Italy and Europe are 'stylish,' 'beautiful,' 'fun,' 'exciting;' Italy is the promised land where all is possible. Italy will provide them with new opportunities to become successful and to realize their dreams.

Images about the West always shape the everyday conversations among the respondents. When images in Hay

Ettadhamen seem dark and ugly, the young men create other Western images and use them when needed. Listening to Western music, watching French films, admiring the sexy Italian reporter, wearing European clothes, using Italian names and watching German pornography are all used as a strategy to compensate their destitute reality and to complete the picture of virtual Europe, a far-fetched dream. This process contributes in the creation of their myriad cultural identities that I discussed earlier and as Hall states, "cultural identities are continually being transformed;" that is, they are not fixed but are "subject to the continual play of history, culture, and power" (Hall 1990: 225).

The majority of respondents have also complained about the conservatism of the traditional Tunisian culture and the lack of entertainment facilities and opportunities. However, very few respondents elaborated on the issue of sexual frustration that is prevalent among many of them. Nejib confesses about his addiction to pornographic movies and admits that Italy will put a halt to this because as soon as he will get there, he will become sexually active. Nejib told me that he also watches Western TV stations especially pornographic ones that he manages to get by decoding the cable receiver through some tricks that some genius guy helps him do in the township. Nejib stays up late until everybody sleeps in the house and then secretly watches these movies that he never gets to watch elsewhere. He has actually admitted that he is addicted as he watches them almost every night. I laughed when he asked me if I knew whether masturbating four times per night would make him blind. He added that once he will make it to Italy, he will stop masturbating because plenty of Italian *zbabir* (vaginas) will be available for him. [Fieldnotes 02/28/05]



European Women are Passports to Europe

I argue that this desire for Western ideals and values was not created from a void, but was rather the result of a long ideological process that dates back to the early days of Tunisian independence. The government of Tunisia started a modernization policy in the early 1960s which aimed at breaking away from the pre-colonial traditional norms by embracing western ideals of society and governance (Charrad 2001). So, for many Tunisians the West has always been the 'modern,' the 'beautiful,' the 'organized.' This modernization policy has deeply affected Tunisian society which started to look at anything Western as a symbol of progress and as something superior. The image of the West embodied in France or Italy dwells in the minds of most young men in Hay Ettadhamen. In Tunisia, anything of a poor quality is referred to as *arbi* (Arab or local) and its counterpart of better quality is *souri* (referring to French or European). For instance, an *arbi* road is a dirt road that is not safe. An *arbi* rendezvous is a failed appointment. An *arbi* behavior is rough and vulgar whereas a *souri* behavior is chic and sophisticated. Yet, we interestingly find that some items (mainly food) when

they are good, delicious, and nutritious are referred to as *arbi* such as; *aatham arbi* (free range eggs); *zebda arbi* (traditional butter) etc. The terms that refer to anything *arbi* (Arab) and were used in a negative way depict the complex of inferiority that was rooted via French colonization which took place over three-quarters of a century. In the same manner, the word *souri* (French) was a term that was introduced with colonization and which referred to infrastructure, behavior, manners, dress etc. These terms are also used to refer to some class jargon; the Tunisian upper class is still described as *souri* (French) versus *goor* (rural and peasant who has no manners).

Moreover, mimicking the West takes form through the way the study population imitates the returning migrants, those who have already made it across the Mediterranean. One can see the way the youth observe their returning compatriots when they come over during the summer time for vacation. These 'successful migrants' suddenly become their role models and anything that they do is desirable and becomes 'the thing!' Moreover, the use of Italian words and jargon by the study population is intentional and highly determines their membership within the migrating population. Some of these Italian words (Italicized) have been 'Tunisianized' such as *jornata* (day), *dakurdo*(OK), *andiamo maa bathna* (Let's go together), *andi lontano ma choftouch* (It has been a long time that I have not seen you), *spozato* (married), *il macchina maazalit fil bort* (the car is still at the port). These expressions and others are heard in an exaggerated fashion during the summer when most migrants return for a Tunisian vacation. Certain words have even become part of everyday talk among the potential migrants such as; *bello* (beautiful), *certo* (sure), *fa niente* (no problem), *fankulo* (fuck off). These Italian words and their usage in

everyday language are manifestations of an identity that is ill at ease with itself; an identity that wants to resemble the 'successful Westerner,' the Italian or the European. Through the use of Italian words and the consumption of Western symbols they assign themselves to the West. It is an attempt to belong to it even at a 'mental' level. They are intentionally appropriating the Western cultural norms. They 'mimic' Western culture "while translating it to their own" (Bhabha 1994: 102). Fanon (1967) evokes this when he dealt with the 'mentality of the colonizer.' Fanon suggests that learning and speaking the colonizer's language confirms colonial mentality as the colonized 'becomes whiter' or in our case 'becomes Westerner.' He argues "to speak means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization" (Fanon 1967 17-18). According to Fanon, being colonized by an ideology, language has a deep affect on one's self-awareness because cultural values are internalized into consciousness (Fanon 1952). The participants in this study are not able to assume their local culture. They are still colonized by Western ideals which makes them disconnected from the real world around them. The fact that such a disconnection with reality exists alienates these youths alienated in their own society.

This analysis leads me to draw from Taieb Salah's famous novel *Season of Migration to the North*. This novel beautifully illustrates the relationship between self-representation, self-perception and the other and the way it is shaped by colonial legacies and postcolonial realities. Mustapha, the main character in the novel, who embodies the 'South' finally finds his happiness by settling in England, 'the North.' He says "I am South that yearns for the North and the ice" (Salah 1969: 30). The North

here is not a geographical location as much as it is an ideology. An ideology that is desired but despised because it comes from the 'white man' (North) who is responsible for Mustafa's (South) humiliation and impoverishment. The white man who "because he has ruled us for a period of our history, will for a long time continue to have for us that feeling of contempt the strong have for the weak" (Salah 1969: 60). And it is the white man who would also say, "you cannot manage to live without us. You used to complain about colonialism and when we left you created the legend of neo-colonialism. It seems that our presence, in an open or undercover form, is as indispensable to you as air and water" (Salah 1969: 30).

This paper has examined the construct of "Paradise Europe" as a key motivator for the desperate youth of Hay Ettadhamen towards clandestine migration from Tunisia to Italy. The study is an attempt to induce a shift in our thinking about migration towards its symbolic cultural and ethnographic dimensions rather than solely a phenomenon that derives its meaning from economics. I have shown that the phenomenon of clandestine migration has symbolically pervaded not only the collective awareness of the potential migrants, but also the many spheres of Hay Ettadhamen popular culture. Based on the findings of this ethnographic study, the intentions to migrate are intrinsically linked to globalization through its elements of transnational capital but, mainly, the technological advances in communication and global media. This accessible media through its exaggerated images about "Paradise Europe" which the youth appropriate, make them believe that Europe will solve all their issues of impoverishment, unemployment, social exclusion, marginalization and suffering. It is this North that will restore their dislocated identities and offer them the possibility of becoming rich and successful.

The study has shown that the potential migrants of Hay Ettadhamen perceive the surrounding world and the reality through constructed beautiful images about their desired Europe. Images that the respondents of the study captured, interpreted and incorporated in their daily lives in the township. These images made them lose touch with their local reality to enter an imaginary world, a world of fantasy in which they found refuge each time the present reality becomes dull. These constructed images are the source of their frustration and fierce desire to leave, to realize a dream and, for some, to die.

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