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Exploration of Migration and Gendered Selves in Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor's *Dust* and *The Dragonfly Sea*

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Abstract

This paper explores the effect of migration of unconsciously dominated female characters as presented by female writers, in African literature. The female writers include Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor whose works namely *The Dragonfly Sea* (2019) and *Dust* (2014) form the basis of this paper. The dominated female characters in these works migrate from one place to another, either voluntarily or circumstantially, in search of an empowered self. In patriarchal societies, the female is always defined in relation to, and as an inferior version of her male contemporary. The woman therefore, takes a journey away from the perception that she is inferior to man and therefore, his subject. Studies by feminist scholars revolve around culture and social constructions that subject the female characters to domination from their male contemporaries. Such studies examine how the dominated women are defying the socio-cultural patriarchal constructions in order to assert themselves. Consequently, this paper adds to such studies by exploring migration as an alternative strategy of rejecting and contesting patriarchal domination. The paper conducts a critical analysis on migration of the female protagonists, namely Ajany and Ayaana in Owuor's *Dust* (2014) and *The Dragonfly Sea* (2019) respectively. The arguments in the article are based on the feminist theory, with close reference to liberal feminism. The study employs narrative research to analyze data from primary and secondary texts. The paper assumes that migration is an unconscious step undertaken by the female character to challenge misogyny and patriarchy, towards empowerment, equality and inclusivity. One notable conclusion is that migration opens up diversity of choices and presents a variety of

opportunities to the vulnerable female character in challenging patriarchal domination and the subsequent emancipation.

Keywords: African Literature, Female Character, Feminism, Migration, Patriarchy.

INTRODUCTION

Spatial locations and relocations depict a character migrating from an oppressive to a contentment zone or self-finding course. The female characters' liberalism drives them from one location to another in an attempt to assert themselves. This paper is an exploration of how migration, also equated to traveling, acts as a way of resisting patriarchal domination. Migration is in this context conceptualized both as a literal and symbolic journey; literally as movement from one location to another, and symbolically from a naïve dominated character to an emancipated independent self. The dominated women travel, both physically and emotionally, out of the dominating environment to a more fulfilling environment. The paper carries out an in-depth analysis of Owuor's *Dust* (2014) and *The Dragonfly Sea* (2019) and explores how female characters resist oppressive cultures by moving away from this oppression.

Culture embodies misogyny and misogynistic males believe that they have every right to control their female contemporaries. Johnson (2014) views misogyny as part of a patriarchal culture that infuses into our cells and becomes part of us (p 64). He further points out that misogyny makes patriarchy part of human life and women cannot therefore, disengage from it. Huang (2025) argues that misogyny can be internalized where societal, traditional, and cultural factors that incorporate gender beliefs influence women's concerns over themselves, including how their bodies look like. Johnson and Huang's assertions depict misogyny as a deeply-rooted socio-cultural construction.

Patriarchy is defined as a "a system of social structures and practices where men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (Walby

1990, p 20). The social structures and practices are themselves a creation of the dominating males. Merger and Johnston (2025) view patriarchy as a system that maintains and reproduces men's domination and women's subordination (p 518). It is in defiance of such a system, that the arguments in this article suggest that the disgruntled characters move from the dominating system to a more inclusive one. Therefore, migrating from one location to another is equivalent to moving from one cultural setup to another. This aims at dismantling the gendered hierarchies within the patriarchal cultural setup. DeLoughrey (2007) argues that masculine subject travelers rely on feminized sea in order to imaginatively regenerate across time and space (p 5). In this case, the masculine subjects are globalized while the dominated feminine characters are localized. The women are thus imagined to be symbolically and physically static. This paper therefore, interprets migration of women to mean that they are dismantling the localized misogynistic notion and are transitioning to be globalized characters who are no longer under the dictates of their patriarchal male contemporaries.

Dust (2014) opens with Odidi running away from police officers who are pursuing him after a foiled robbery. Odidi can hear members of his gang felled by police bullets. As he runs, he hears his phone ringing and he can tell from the ringtone that it is his sister, Ajany calling. Ajany had left Kenya for Brazil after failing to demystify the silences surrounding their parents; Nyipir and Akai-ma. As she leaves for Brazil, she carries an unfinished sculpture which she hopes to fill in the missing parts while in Brazil. While in Brazil she loves and is offered love by Bernado. She forgets about home and

the mysteries surrounding her family. As Odidi is running home to save his life, Ajany is calling him for advice; she has stabbed Bernado for cheating on her and she believes Odidi will tell her what to do. She plans to come back home to Wuoth Ogik, translated to mean 'journey ends' to avoid the authorities in Brazil. Instead of getting an answer from Odidi, she receives a call from her father Nyipir, informing her that her brother is dead. She flies back to Nairobi, then to Wuoth Ogik, in Northern Frontier District.

The Dragonfly Sea (2019) describes the journey of the protagonist Ayaana, from the time she is a young girl to the time she matures and is getting married. As a young girl, Ayaana is searching for a father she has never met, along the shores of Indian Ocean. She hopes to find him among the seafarers who are returning home. She finally secures a 'father' in Muhidin, a seafarer who has migrated from China to Pate in search of a contented self. They both feel they belong to each other. Ayaana, the Descendant migrates from Pate Island in the Kenyan Coast to China, then flies to Istanbul with a hegemonic young man who is infuriated by her daring nature and the fact that she has outdone him in Calculus. After her studies, she flies back to Kenya as an independent, educated and empowered character.

Travelling presents the character with different possibilities towards change; both physically and emotionally. Basumatary (2018) states that travelling is entrenched in human mind-set and is a way of exploring new cultures and places, and explore new things. He further states that one travels to free themselves beyond the limits created for them (p 760). While travelling, one interacts with different cultures and a culture translates to a person's identity. Alwedini (2017) argue that women travel to study and explore the world in an attempt to free themselves from limiting marriages. The women interviewed in his research, argue that men fear educated wives because they feel the women will be more successful than them. This paper examines the travelling undertaken by

feminine characters and the impact this travelling has on the course to the characters' emancipation.

Owuor's *Dust* (2014) has attracted a lot of critical and scholarly works owing to its richness. Most of these studies revolve around character identity. Mbithi and Karumba (2021) in their article 'Why and to Where does Ajany Run? Culture and Femininity in Yvonne Owuor's *Dust*', argue that Ajany runs from literally everything including her mother who had rejected her from birth. They feel that Ajany is running from the oppressive reality of the present which include cultural and societal expectations. They further argue that Ajany's running leads to her self-acceptance and hybrid identity. The current paper argues that Ajany is not only physically running away, but is also migrating from one geographical setting to another to challenge the hegemonic forces she feels are oppressing her, both physically and psychologically.

Further, Karumba (2017) in her Master's dissertation 'Historical Consciousness and Character Formation' argues that Ajany acquires a hybrid identity from re-creating the past through painting the silences that her parents retain in their memories and from the narration she gets from the parents when they finally open up. Janet and Mahesh (2025) argue that from her childhood age, Ajany's painting makes her feel unnoticed and unacknowledged and she therefore, starts her journey in search of her identity. Karumba, Janet and Mahesh suggest that the journeys that Ajany undertakes are meant to unravel the mysteries that she feels would help her acquire a sense of self. However, this paper treats the journey differently. The journey is interpreted to mean that Ajany is not only migrating in search of family truths but she also migrates in a quest to assert herself, acquire a sense of belonging and get emancipated. The paper also argues that Ajany undertakes the journeys to prove to herself and her brother that she has the freedom of choice.

Carolyn and Salazar (2016) in their examination of reconstitution of gender in contemporary women's migration through an empirical analysis of migrant domestic work, transnational mothering, and women's marriage migration, argue that women's migration does not translate to equality between women and men. They point out that women migrate from one form of inequality to another (p 502). Their analysis suggests that migration has no effect in the women's dominated status. Contrary to their study, this paper argues that migration exposes the women and gives them a chance to diversify their views and get a different perception of the feminine gender in their cultural setup. Migration is therefore, viewed as a step towards emancipation of the female character.

Girard (2017) opines that gender-based violence and forced marriage may drive women and girls to migrate from their country of origin. He further argues that "gender-related discriminatory practices may push women to migrate as they pursue liberties they are deprived of" (p 61). The discriminatory practices, for instance those in Pate (*The Dragonfly Sea*, 2019), are a construction of the misogynistic males. Steiner (2025) describes the life in Pate's archipelago as characterized by patriarchal social structures that although hospitable, the incomers must abide to the set standards. These set standards don't favour Munira and by extension her daughter Ayaana who is born out of wedlock. Makokha nad Mukenya (2026) feel that Ayaana's encounters through travels describes a "personal narrative of growth and meditation on complexities of identity and belonging in a changing world" (p 44). The personal growth may include transition from a suppressed character to an emancipated one. This article interprets that Ayaana travels both literally and figuratively, from a dominating space from the time she is a baby and migrates from this domination to search for her fulfilment and empowerment through education.

While existing studies reveal that travelling leads suppressed characters to locations where they encounter numerous challenges before the get contented, liberal feminism reveal that travelling helps the characters gain the self-confidence that would enable them raise their voices. Feminist activism focuses on the liberation of women not only to achieve equality but also inclusivity. Leamon (2017) points out that feminism critically analyses the social structures and relations that dominate and oppress women. He further argues that feminism acts as a political tool that calls upon women and other critics of patriarchy to challenge and deconstruct patriarchal and misogynistic social structures and relations (p 207). Using the ideas advanced by liberal feminists, this paper hopes to prove that migration is a major and subtle way through which dominated women challenge the social-cultural structures used by misogynistic males to dominate them. The women challenge these dominating structures by moving away from the dominating forces.

In most African societies, males dominate while the females are dominated. Such cultural constructions relegate peripheral roles to the females while the males gain prominence. Liberal feminists' belief is that gender justice can only be achieved if there is a level playing ground between the masculine and feminine genders. Based on this belief, men and women are equal and should therefore, be given equal opportunities and rights. According to Botts and Tong (2018), liberal feminism came in three waves; the first wave focused on women's suffrage; the second wave on gender equity and equal opportunity for women; and the third wave on egalitarian concerns, equality of outcome, and intersectionality theory (p 21). Flynn (2002) states that liberal feminists focus on providing women economic, social, and political equality with men. The Suffrage Movement sought to raise women's voice in the political arena (p 9). In line with Flynn's submission, women are believed to be equal to

their male contemporaries if they are allowed to choose political representation. However, women do not only want to be heard in the political arena but also in other public spaces. Women feel that those who are educated and employed should get equal treatment and remuneration like their male contemporaries. This article hopes to prove that when female characters migrate from one place to another they gain confidence, assert themselves and consequently, get empowered.

Hooks (2015) states that liberal feminists focus on achieving equality with their male contemporaries without challenging and changing the cultural structure basis of the oppressive group (p 12). This creates an inclusive society where both males and females coexist mutually. Friedan (1997) posits that when barriers to higher education and political participation, discrimination or prejudice in law or morality are broken and a woman is seen as an unlimited person equal to man, then she can realize her full potential (p 86). This would consequently, eradicate gender hierarchies. Based on Hooks and Friedan's assertions, one's gender should not limit their progress and achievements. This paper views migration as a liberal approach where the dominated female character unshackles herself and leaves the dominating culture, either voluntarily or circumstantially to explore and gain that which is denied by her culture.

Travelling and Feminine Liberation

Owuor's *Dust* (2014) describes Ajany's journey from the time she is in primary school. She and her brother Odidi, had left the arid Northern-Kenya to a boarding school South of the Ewaso Nyiro river. Odidi had promised his sister that they would go "Far Away ...to *real* Kenya (p 13). Real Kenya can be interpreted both literally and figuratively. Literally, to mean moving to a place away from the hardship in the dry Northern Frontier District and figuratively, away from the mysteries concealed in their parents' silences. Odidi had also advised Ajany

to 'paint a river out of Wuoth Ogik' to take them to a new home (p. 17). He had also encouraged her to "paint an ocean and a ship, and inside the ship, me and you going Far Away" (p. 52). 'Far Away' suggests novelty; a spatial location where Odidi and Ajany would re-discover themselves and they would set the rules that govern them. This unconsciously ignites Ajany's desire to travel away from the restrictive space of Wuoth Ogik to a freer and inclusive space.

Wuoth Ogik is translated to mean journey ends (p 316), but it ironically becomes the beginning of the migratory journeys undertaken by Ajany. At school, the atlas becomes her favourite book imagining that anything could "happen between the lines and curves of a journey" (p 14). The atlas is thus the guide that directs her travel theoretically before she practically travels through and to the different places. This shows her desire to travel probably in search of a contented self. In school, her contentment comes from Odidi's achievement. This suggests that she is still dependent on her brother and that she has no sense of belonging when among her schoolmates. Therefore, travelling sets her free from her dependence on her brother.

Further, Ajany's desire to travel is fanned by her artistic skills. Ajany, an artist is selected by a centre of fine arts based in Nova Scotia to use art in designing a landscape and new technology experiment (p 119). She is selected because she is the only African applicant. Africa symbolizes suppression and oppression and therefore, Ajany represents those who are marginalized and oppressed by hegemonic forces. Unlike in Africa, Nova Scotia women and girls' and rights are protected to ensure safety (Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission, 2025). Odidi feels that whatever she is going for can be found in Africa but she argues she cannot find it. Girard (2017) argues that migration can enable women access education and career that might not be available in their country of origin. Apart from opening up career opportunities, Ajany hopes that migrating to Brazil would

pacify her troubled self and get contented. She makes the hard decision of choosing between the love she feels for her brother and chasing her dream to freedom. Making an independent choice of disentangling herself from her brother is the beginning of her journey towards emancipation. Migrating from Kenya in particular and Africa in general is in this paper interpreted to mean that she is moving away from the oppressive forces.

Feminized migration does not always ensure that the immigrant moves to a society that grants equality. The female immigrant has to struggle to assert herself in an environment that presents her with new forms of patriarchal domination. For instance, in Brazil Ajany loves Bernardo and she feels loved. Feeling appreciated, Ajany gradually feels contented. She writes to Odidi expressing her contentment and happiness. She then forgets about her home in Wuoth Ogik (p 140). Her confidence as a woman is born. This confidence breeds bravery and she daringly fights for what belongs to her. Ram and Nizamani (2024) contend that for one to be able to identify and address the vulnerabilities that face them, they must first acknowledge the social effect of migration in their region of origin (p 432). In view of this, Ajany understands the gender hierarchies in Wuoth Ogik which have prepared her to face and resist the patriarchal domination while in Brazil. She therefore, stabs Bernardo when she learns he is cheating on her. She says she stabbed him to cut herself out (p 267). Bernardo symbolizes the toxic masculinity that female characters are subjected to. Stabbing Bernardo is thus, symbolically interpreted as unshackling from the hegemonic masculinity that the female character is chained to. Cutting herself out suggests her assertiveness and desire to occupy her space. Therefore, his paper argues that by migrating to Brazil, Ajany is able to bravely face the oppressive patriarchal forces and forge her way towards empowerment.

Further, as Ajany migrates back to Kenya from Brazil, she is an empowered character who

faces patriarchal forces head-on. As she goes out in search of Odidi's killers, she meets Petrus Keah, a hegemonic police officer who was responsible for torturing political opponents of the time. Despite the fact that he had instilled fear and had suppressed his victims to submission and subsequent confession, Ajany faces him until he feels he is going mad (p 187). Therefore, this description depicts Ajany as a character who, after traveling to Brazil and back to Kenya, has become an authoritative force that cannot be suppressed by hegemonic males.

Just like Ajany, Ayaana in *The Dragonfly Sea* (2019) embarks on journeys that prove her strong personality. Ayaana's mother Munira, is rejected by her father and other patriarchal males in Pate when she travels back to Pate carrying a 'fatherless' child. The 'fatherless' child, Ayaana, is thus a victim of misogyny from the time she is a baby. When she matures, Ayaana's migration from Pate Island to China via the Indian Ocean is viewed as a way of charting a course from a dominating cultural setup to an environment that will open up her worldly view of issues and relationships. She is said to be moving from the "island into her destiny" (p 170). Although Ayaana is a victim of circumstances, she hopes that migrating to China would make her get rid of the island's dust from her existence. Dust represents all the dominating and degrading socio-cultural constructions. It is in this island that Ayaana understands that she is ranked lower than her male contemporaries along the gender hierarchical order. The superior males are represented by a number of males she interacts with. For instance, she is tortured both physically and emotionally by Suleiman who oppresses her and even kills her kitten as a proof of his authority over her. Suleiman believes he is better than her and when she outdoes him, he wishes she were a butterfly that he peels off her wings. Peeling off her wings symbolically means that he would immobilize her and thus deny her the ability to rise above his domination.

Further, the teacher in her madrassa class does not spare Ayaana the toxicity of his masculine ego. He pokes her forehead with his pointing stick and sends her out of his class. This demonstrates his authority over Ayaana. Another male who exercises his masculinity over the innocent Ayaana is a stranger who had tried to separate her from Muhidin, her adopted father, and her mother Munira, claiming that Ayaana was a God's chosen one. Another man, Wa Mashriq who promises Munira financial assistance wants to lure her into allowing him take Ayaana to a god. The god is a patriarchal male who only goes for virgin girls to prove his authority over them. The man's intention is to have Ayaana to himself and sexually assault her. This suggests that women are subjected to patriarchal domination through sexual and psychological abuse.

Further, Ayaana is a victim of dominating masculine forces who want to have her as a wife. In Pate island's dominating culture, one of the men wants her as a fourth wife (p 145). DeLoughrey (2007) argues that in grammar of empire, an island space is synonymous with remoteness and isolation and this was considered vital to successful colonization (p 8). This remoteness is brought out by Ayaana who confesses that her island does not exist on most maps of the world (p 107). In Pate island, patriarchal domination and gender binary antagonisms are successfully exercised owing to its isolation. Sam (2021) in his review of *The Dragonfly Sea* (2019) describes the coastal town as an isolated entity and so are her people (p 3). Therefore, traveling takes Ayaana's to a destiny that describes contentedness since she is no longer living in isolation. She thus gains the skills and confidence that enables her compete favourably with her male contemporaries.

Moreover, Ayaana's conception and childhood is surrounded by misogyny. Her mother Munira, falls in love with a man who devalues, mistreats and dominates her from the moment he learns she is expectant. The intimate moment leading to Ayaana's conception depicts

a macho man who is exercising his hegemonic masculinity over a defenseless woman. He had pinned Munira's "arms above her head, and had dragged her nightdress up to her neck, so that she did not fight back, or scream, or scratch, or kick, or punch him, or mark him with her manicured, painted nails" (p 161). This suggests that Ayaana is conceived in a dominating environment. Her birth ushers her into a society that considers her as an outcast since she has no father. Kibet (2024) compares Ayaana's fatherlessness and loneliness to the seclusion which Africa is subjected to by the global dominating nations (p 79). However, this paper suggests that Ayaana's fatherlessness ushers her into the oppressive patriarchal structures in Pate island. Ayaana therefore, inherits her mother's accursed and suppressed self. She thus, becomes a *kindonda* (walking wound) just like her mother. This translates to patriarchal subjugation subjected to Ayaana just like her mother. She therefore, rises above this subjugation when she migrates to China.

Ayaana's search for her father along the Kenyan coast connects her to Muhidin, a disillusioned fisherman cum trader who comes back to Pate Island from Naijing, China. The search also connects her to the oceans which ultimately, connects her to her destiny. Munira advises her daughter that when clever women see options, they seize them" (p 137). Her outcast status would change if she ventures out of this isolated island, through the ocean to a place where she is valued. When a chance arises for Ayaana to migrate to China, she seizes it. Unlike in her island, she is a precious entity among the Chinese (p 316). She migrates to China on a Descendant title; compared to Zheng He, a prominent Chinese explorer and admiral of the early 15th century. She acts as a bridge and thus becomes the connection between Pate island and China. Her journey across the ocean waters exposes her to vicious hegemonic attacks by the pirates that proves her ability to withstand the viciousness of the patriarchal forces and emerge triumphant. The attack by the

pirates is indicative of hegemonic masculinity that is exercised within the feminized ocean and ship.

Ayaana's migratory journey further proves that she can withstand any force that is against her victory. She fights against the storm even when it seems clear that she would perish in the waters (p 227). She is said to be called into being by the storm pushing her to step into the world and "soar into its mists (p 229). The effect of the storm takes her into "sleep worlds where everything is possible" (p 230). Enduring the storm depicts Ayaana as a character with a strong personality and a fighting spirit. The storm signifies external powers with the intention of subduing the feminized ocean and ship, and the vulnerable feminine Ayaana. Ayaana withstands this masculine pressure, an admirable courage and bravery that awes Lai Jin, the ship's captain. This marks the beginning of Ayaana and Lai Jin's love journey which culminates into a marriage. This is a defiance of the patriarchal cultural setup in Pate where men make choices that dictate the love life of the female characters. This analysis therefore, demonstrates that through this migration, Ayaana proves her feminine strength, and freedom of choice. This is an indicator that she is on her journey to empowerment.

Moreover, Ayaana's confidence while at Maritime University is unmatched. She considers Admiral Zheng He her mentor and considers herself "as a bridge, as ships are, between worlds and people" (p 283). Mane (2022) points out that Zheng He played a pivotal role in development of China's maritime and commercial influence. His voyages expanded China's political influence in the world. Comparing herself to Zheng He, Ayaana alludes to the fact that, despite being a woman, she is capable of achieving what the admiral, a man, had achieved. DeLoughrey (2007) states that the ocean and ship are feminized and masculine travelers are naturalized in their voyages across feminized lands and seas. Ayaana is thus joining the other feminine subjects who are suppressed

and oppressed through patriarchy. Muhindin tells Ayaana that a boat is a bridge (p 46) suggesting that, in the context of this paper, it can be used to cross from an oppressive system or an oppressed self to an emancipated self. She is seen as the bridge (p 155) that connects Kenya, represented by Pate island, to China. She sees the ocean as a passageway that needs navigators and she therefore, takes up the challenge to navigate through the murky patriarchal waters. She is thus decisive enough to disengage herself from the descendant title by enrolling for a Bachelor of Science program against her sponsors' dictates who later give in to her desire when they realise her passion to learn the sea and her admirable public performance.

According to UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund) China, equality of men and women is enshrined in the Chinese constitution with laws and regulations formulated and amended to guarantee and safeguard women's rights and interests. At Maritime university, Ayaana does not only become equal to man but also better than the best. She outdoes Koray, the best student then at the university in calculus. This arouses Koray's lust for Ayaana and provokes his masculine ego and oppressive instincts against Ayaana. He proclaims he is struggling to crash them and that he has never learned to lose (p 298). His desire to prove his authority over her drives him to plan their journey to his home in Istanbul, Turkey. Therefore, in the course of migration, the female character faces more hegemonic barriers that she must resist in order to get empowered.

Unlike in China where gender equality is safeguarded, gender inequality is witnessed in Turkey if gender representation in the political space is anything to go by. Patriarchal beliefs are persistent within women's organization. Carkir and Savas (2024) argue that subjugation along gender lines exist even in spaces that advocate for gender equality (p 9). UNFPA Turkey points out that even though there has been progress to eliminate gender inequality in Turkey, violence against women is widespread with at least 4

women out of 10 exposed to physical and sexual violence at least once in their lifetime. Ayaana becomes a victim of both physical and sexual exploitation from Koray. Despite proving her bravery and daring character to Koray while at the university, migrating to Istanbul depicts her as a naïve character who trusts Koray's masculine protection and guidance as a male. She entrusts him with her passport and when they get to Istanbul he refuses to return it to her. This is the first instance where he proves that he is in charge of Ayaana.

The subsequent portrayal of toxic masculinity from Koray is met with skepticism from Ayaana. Koray's mother, Nehir, tells Ayaana that Ayaana should acquire her own boat and that women need dreams more than men (p 316). Although Nehir's remarks are sarcastic, Ayaana does exactly that; she dreamed and hoped to migrate even more in search of her emancipation. With a boat, Ayaana would be able to navigate across the oceans and become like her role model Zheng He and this would suggest that she is empowered. However, Koray tells her that they, him and his father Emirhan, control passageways and sea routes (p 341). As mentioned earlier, the boat and the ocean are feminized metaphors that are under the authority of the masculine travelers. For her to deconstruct this masculinity she must be assertive enough.

Although through travelling Ayaana faces more challenges, her assertiveness is evidenced in the way she reacts when Koray forcefully gets intimate with her. His claim for her soul is met with a firm "never and an absolute no" (p 349). Later she wanders alone in the cities against Nehir's warning that it is unsafe on her own and without her passport. When she can accommodate no more of Koray's machismo, she acquires another temporary emergency travel pass from the Chinese consul general's office and flies back to China alone. Later, through her own efforts, she acquires another passport suggesting that Koray cannot limit her migration, and in the context of this

paper, her journey towards emancipation. This paper therefore, argues that the patriarchal dominance demonstrated by Koray and his family, does not break Ayaana but leaves her more assertive and decisive. Migrating to Istanbul from China has thus empowered her and prepared her for the masculinities she would have to deal with later.

Back in Maritime university, Ayaana receives vases which are emailed to her by a stranger. Koray's hegemonic ego and desire to control her makes him break the vases. She migrates by rail to Zhejiang in search of the stranger who had mailed her vases with an intention of having the broken pieces fixed. The broken pieces symbolize her shattered self. She, just like the vases are broken as a result of Koray's masculinist ego. She is enraged and swears to never let Koray control her. The stranger turns out to be Lai Jin. Within the time she stays with him, they get intimate and rekindle their love; a love that was born in a storm as they migrated by sea from Pate Island to Xiamen. Fixing the broken pieces of the vases can be interpreted to mean that Lai Jin is fixing her broken self.

Additionally, Ayaana proves her assertiveness when subjected to hegemonic masculinity by Koray. His threats when Ayaana comes back to the university do not cow her. She does not reveal whom she was with even when Koray strangles her. His arrogant portrayal of masculine power over her vulnerability is evidenced in his claim that he would kill her in a public place and nobody apart from both of them would know she was dying. She defiantly swears to never bow under his power. She swears to him that if she were to die in his hands, he would bleed with her to death. This indicates that Ayaana has become empowered. This paper argues that Ayaana's migration to Zhejiang has strengthened her daring nature and thus, belittling Koray's feeling of superiority.

While in China, Ayaana dreams in Mandarin (p 270). Mandarin is the widely spoken native language in the world. The supremacy of the language and the fact that Ayaana dreams in the language suggests that migrating to China has raised Ayaana's socio-cultural standing. She is thus, no longer under the limitations of the localized language of the Pate people. When she feels a lesser being compared to the other students in Xiamen University, she travels in "fast trains to experience movement and live out of the illusion of traveling miles of earth in the shortest of time... She traveled to escape, to rest" (p 271). This demonstrates her discontentment in her current state and desire to fasten her course towards empowerment. She therefore, travels to escape what she feels is suppressing her and find rest in her rightful space. This is the space where she can take charge and assert herself.

As Ayaana migrates back to Pate Island from Xiamen, China, she is a different character; emancipated and with an aura of authority. She is described as stepping "ashore with confidence" (p 414). Da Silva (2000) views journeying back as an attempt to rediscover the self (p 103). Ayaana does not come back to Pate as a naïve girl but as an assertive girl who can "bring a ship home" (p 417). She hires a speed boat which she speedily pilots to her home. Later, she marries Lai Jin, a man of her choice. Unlike Koray, Lai Jin treats her with dignity. This paper therefore, argues that through migration, Ayaana has successfully challenged hegemonic masculinity. She has therefore, become independent and empowered.

CONCLUSION

This paper comes to a major conclusion that migration is a strategy through which suppressed women move out of the spaces where they are suppressed, to places where they can assert themselves. It is evident that the women move away from misogynistic men to more oppressive spaces that help them unleash their liberalism and permissiveness making

them occupy their rightful spaces within the society. Symbolically, these women evolve from naivety to maturity through exposure, the complexities they face in their new locations and interaction with different patriarchal cultures and misogynistic males. The paper therefore, concludes that migration plays a pivotal role in molding the character's emancipated self. Feminist scholars and critics should further interrogate what becomes of the misogynistic man when the woman finally becomes emancipated and assertive.

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