

Nomadic Subjectivity, Statelessness, and Exile in Algerian Anglophone Literature: A Braidottian Reading of Djaffar Chetouane's *Donkey Heart Monkey Mind*

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Abstract

At a time when statelessness, forced displacement, and fractured belonging are reshaping the ethical perspectives of English literary studies, this study positions Djaffar Chetouane's *Donkey Heart Monkey Mind* as a major intervention in Algerian Anglophone literature, exile writing, and the genre of migration narrative. The aim of the study is to fill the void of critical engagement with the novel and to extend Rosi Braidotti's theory of nomadic subjectivity by providing an original interpretation of it as the novel's thematic and formal structure in North African Anglophone literary criticism. In the methodological approach, it brings together a qualitative close reading with a posthuman relational ethics and a nomadic subjectivity, a nomadic writing, and a nomadic embodiment, inspired by the theories of B. Braidotti. The analysis emphasizes the statelessness that is transformed by trauma, multilingualism, fragmentation and broken time, not so much a lack of a stable national identity as a self-constituted statelessness. It contends that *Donkey Heart Monkey Mind* reconceives exile not as absolute loss but as an unfinished mode of becoming, thereby contributing to current debates on Algerian Anglophone literature and opening a distinctive critical pathway for future research on statelessness, migration narratives, and transnational literary subjectivity.

Keywords: Algerian Anglophone literature, Braidotti, *Donkey Heart Monkey Mind*, exile, migration narrative, nomadic subjectivity, statelessness

1. Introduction

While literature reflects individuals' experiences of belonging, modern migration literature challenges inherited ideas of home, belonging, and identity (Adel et al., 2024), and represents subjectivity as fractured across languages, borders, and legal regimes (Brah, 1996; Stierstorfer & Wilson, 2018). In postcolonial literary studies, such experiences have often been examined through the lenses of diaspora, exile, and resistance (Ali et al., 2025; Bhabha, 1994; Brah, 1996). Although postcolonial theory remains influential, it cannot fully account for texts in which displacement does not culminate in return and cultural reconciliation (Asif et al., 2025; Elhalafawy et al., 2025). Instead, such displacement produces a continuing condition of instability, contradiction, and ethical becoming (Brah, 1996; Braidotti, 2006). Thus, Braidotti's nomadic theory (2006, 2011) reconceptualizes subjectivity as mobile, non-unitary, embodied, and relational. It reconceptualizes migration narratives as formal and ethical enactments of continuous becoming rather than merely stories of fractured belonging (Braidotti, 2011, 2013, 2014).

Statelessness is legally defined as the condition of "a person who is not considered as a national by any State under the operation of its law" (UNHCR, 2025). However, in cultural and literary studies, it also signifies the loss or suspension of institutional protection, political belonging, and stable social recognition (Blitz, 2024). Accordingly, in this study, statelessness is defined as a condition that intersects with migration and exile yet remains analytically distinct, as it subjects the protagonist to prolonged precarity and fragmented identity across national borders (Alhourani et al., 2025a).

Djaffar Chetouane's *Donkey Heart Monkey Mind* is a novel that exhibits the protagonist's movement from political repression in Algeria through imprisonment and torture to undocumented migration, exile, and unsafe survival across frontiers. The significance of this journey lies in its portrayal of successive stages of displacement. The novel is aesthetically structured by its fragmented narrative structure, hybrid discursive modes, multilingual elements, unstable memory, and persistent bodily trauma. Thus, the work functions as more than a simple

narrative about mobility, formally reflecting a dislocated mode of subjectivity. The protagonist emerges as a subject continually reconstituted through violence, movement, ethical experiences, and unfinished self-discovery (Khater et al., 2022).

The novel has yet to be fully discussed, particularly in the body of Anglophone literary scholarship, in spite of the rise in the importance of diasporic Algerian literature. However, the study of Algerian and North African postcolonial literary works has tended to favor paradigms linked to Fanon, Said, and Bhabha over nomadic and posthuman paradigms of subjectivity (Alenzi et al., 2026b). The theory has not been widely discussed in the context of Algerian narratives of exile, but it has now acquired considerable relevance in feminist philosophy, posthuman studies, and theories of relational ethics. This is a double gap: the first one being the lack of academic work dedicated to *Donkey Heart Monkey Mind*, and the second one is the underutilization of the nomadic theory of Braidotti in North African Anglophone works of migration, statelessness, and identity in displacement. This study aims to fill this void by implementing the Braidottian theory in *Donkey Heart Monkey Mind*, and expanding on both the protagonist's displaced identity as well as the novel's fractured structure.

This study thus explores the following research question: In what ways does *Donkey Heart Monkey Mind* demonstrate the key elements of Rosi Braidotti's nomadic theory in terms of its subjectivity and its non-linear narrative? The study suggests that the novel is a literary representation of nomadic subjectivity which is sensitive to the mobility of being and gives primacy to situations of ethics over ethnic belonging and to the condition of becoming over the condition of identity.

The analysis demonstrates that this novel clearly exemplifies the main tenets of nomadic theory in the sense that it illustrates subjectivity as fluid, embodied, ethically relational, and structurally non-linear. Moreover, the protagonist's recurrent displacements between Africa, Europe, and the United States disclose his unstable identity that denies its belonging, nation, and ethnicity. Instead, it passes through erratic stages of becoming shaped by trauma, displacement, and vulnerability. Moreover, the disordered chronology of events, hybrid voice, multilingual texture, dislocated subjectivity that resists return and reconciliation, non-redemptive disclosure at the end, and fragmented memory all contribute to the novel's nomadic aesthetics (Ayrım et al., 2026). Therefore, while the novel aligns with Braidotti's estimation of the nomadic subject as non-unitary and anti-essentialist, it extends nomadic insights into the field of Algerian Anglophone literature.

The study makes three main contributions to the literary field. First, it offers a critical reading of an underexamined Algerian Anglophone text represented in *Donkey Heart Monkey Mind*. Second, it introduces Braidotti's nomadic theory into the examination of North African writing, particularly works concerned with migration. Third, it creates an understanding of exile literature that exceeds fixed national, cultural, and identitarian forms to a more fluid understanding of subjectivity and ethics (Adel et al., 2025). Thus, through Braidotti's framework, displacement in Chetouane's novel is understood not merely as the loss of home but as the space of a difficult, unfinished, and ethically charged process of self-resaping.

The analysis is organized into six interrelated sections. Firstly, it studies the nomadic subjectivity considering the protagonist's fragmented sense of belonging and frequent movement. Secondly, it represents exile as an ethical space of becoming where relationality creates new forms of identity. Thirdly, it explores the novel's anti-essentialist and posthuman perceptions, particularly its emphasis on embodiment, trauma, and affect. Fourthly, it analyzes how fragmentation, non-linearity, and hybrid narration formally reformulate dislocation narratives. Fifthly, it reports how transversal alliances and ethical solidarities across distinct national, linguistic, and social groups are privileged over relations within similar ethnicities (Alhourani et al., 2025b). Finally, the sixth section analyses memory and dislocation, claiming that remembrance in this literary text is affective, unstable, and future-oriented. These sections exhibit that *Donkey Heart Monkey Mind* offers a significant literary manifestation of nomadic theory. In doing so, it exceeds the conventional critical frame that usually categorizes postcolonial Algerian exile literature into more layered literature that explores the depth of subjectivity.

2. Literature Review

Recent scholarship in migration and diaspora studies has increasingly emphasized the need to reconceptualize subjectivity beyond fixed, nation-bound frameworks. We see migration as a dynamic process today, and one that is still unfolding, as it constructs subjectivity by way of transnational travel, relational contact, and structural inequalities. Diaspora is not just defined as a dispersion from a homeland, but as a place of knowledge production and global connections. Mogaji (2025) contends that existing diaspora theory emphasizes the transnational movement of ideas, identities, and power over a conception of diaspora that had been focused on static ideas of belonging.

Within literary studies, migration narratives have been widely examined as spaces where identity is negotiated, fragmented, and continuously reconfigured. Ojuola's recent study (2024) proves that diasporic literature emphasizes the importance of memory, trauma and affect in defining migrant subjectivities, especially in an African and transnational context. These stories tend to be non-linear and cannot be neatly categorized or defined, allowing subjectivity to appear as layered, unstable, and even contingent upon an experience of displacement. This is especially true of *Donkey Heart Monkey Mind*, which is an exploration of how identity comes about through a series of dislocations, encounters and embodied experiences, rather than in a coherent or unified trajectory.

Furthermore, new studies have emphasised the role of relational and network-based approaches to migration. Migration is now seen as part of social and transnational networks that influence migration and sense of belonging. For example, Prieto-Curiel et al. (2023) theorize migration as a diaspora network model, which highlights the relationships between social networks and the organization of migration beyond those of individuals. This networked understanding helps to reinforce the concept of migration as relational and collective, as in literary depictions in which the subject's life and identity are produced by interactions across the borders with others.

Nonetheless, there are many theoretical frameworks that remain unchanged from the postcolonial period and center on hybridity, resistance,

and national identity. However, numerous theoretical approaches still exist that are not altered from the postcolonial period and emphasize hybridity, resistance, and national identity. These strategies are useful, but not always effective in dealing with texts that portray displacement as an unending condition with no resolution or return. Reconciliation and cultural synthesis are not sufficient means to understand identity in these situations; it must be explored as a process of ongoing transformation.

The nomadic theory of Rosi Braidotti is one of the more potent ways to overcome such restrictions. Essentially, the nomadic subject is non-unitary, embodied, and continually becoming, as opposed to essentialist and stable understandings of the subject (Braidotti, 2011). Her approach highlights a focus on mobility, relationality, and an ethical approach to difference, which resonates with the current focus in migration research. In addition, the formalist qualities of fragmentation, non-linearity, and hybridity are also emphasized as forms of displaced subjectivity in the context of nomadic writing (Braidotti, 2014). The characteristics of these qualities are very aligned with the narrative structure in *Donkey Heart Monkey Mind*, which is non-chronological and foregrounds embodied and affective experience.

While Braidotti's ideas have been adopted in feminist and posthumanism, the use of her ideas for North African Anglophone literature has been relatively underutilized. The aim of this study is to overcome this lacuna by engaging nomadic theory with contemporary research on migration and diaspora and to work with it in an under-researched piece of literature. It is in this way that it adds to a contemporary and theoretically integrated understanding of displacement as a process of becoming that is relational and embodied. The nomadic theory has recently been used to describe and analyze the contemporary novel. The term nomadic subjectivity is used by Altun (2026) to analyze Frankissstein and shows its applicability to literary analysis, while also serving as an example of the need for more analysis of this type in North African Anglophone literature.

Despite the growing interest in Algerian Anglophone literature, *Donkey Heart Monkey Mind* has received little sustained scholarly attention, particularly from the perspective of nomadic subjectivity and statelessness. This limited body of criticism further underscores the need for the current study.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative interpretive methodology grounded in literary analysis and critical theory. The primary method used is close textual reading, which enables a detailed examination of how *Donkey Heart Monkey Mind* constructs themes of displacement, identity, and subjectivity. Through close reading, the study analyzes narrative structure, language, imagery, and thematic development to uncover how the text represents the experience of migration and exile.

The analysis is theoretically underpinned by Rosi Braidotti, the nomadic theory, ideas related to nomadic subjectivity, relational identity, embodiment and becoming (Braidotti, 2006, 2011, 2013). These ideas are then translated into analytical tools to better understand the protagonist's journey in the creation of his identity, and the formal aspects of the novel, including fragmentation, non-linearity, and multilingual expression. The study is not merely the application of theory, but is an interpretation of the text, and an interpretation from theory, keeping in mind the specific story, culture and context of the text.

More recent scholarship on migration and diaspora is also drawn into the analytical framework. The essays in the current volume by Mogaji (2025) and Ojuola (2024) provide a modern perspective on diaspora as a transnational and knowledge-generative process, and a perspective on memory and affect as diasporic identity-making tools, respectively. Moreover, Prieto-Curiel et al. (2023) bring an approach of migration as relational and organized via social networks. These perspectives bring into play Braidotti's construction, placing the analysis in the context of current academic discussions on mobility, identity, and relational subjectivity.

Selected episodes from the narrative are analysed, highlighting important features of the protagonist's experience such as imprisonment, migration, exile and relations with others. The episodes are examined in terms of the themes and the narrative, specifically the themes of nomadic subjectivity, its fragmentation and disrupted temporality and its relational encounters. Another area of study is memory and trauma, which is explored as a part of the process of identity formation, and how past experiences continue to exist and affect the subject's own process of identity formation. While this methodological approach allows for an in-depth and theoretically grounded interpretation, it is limited by its focus on a single literary text and a specific theoretical framework. Therefore, the findings are not intended to be generalized but rather to provide a focused contribution to the migration literature and the study of nomadic subjectivity. Future research may expand this approach through comparative studies or interdisciplinary methods.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Nomadic Subjectivity

While traditional understandings of subjectivity have been associated with a fixed coherent identity rooted in stable categories such as nation, culture, gender, or origin (Altun, 2023, 2026; Hauge, 2007), Rosi Braidotti defines the nomadic subject as a continuously constructed identity that is shaped through movement and lived experience rather than anchored to a single, stable sense of belonging (Braidotti, 2011). Therefore, Nomadism exceeds the siege of physical mobility to include the ethical stance that resists essentialist identity formations (Braidotti, 2006).

This theoretical framework finds a compelling literary articulation in Djaffar Chetouane's *Donkey Heart Monkey Mind*, where the protagonist's subjectivity is shaped through constant displacement and existential rupture from his motherland. Throughout the story, Algeria is represented as a site of exclusion rather than belonging for the narrator. Throughout the narrative, his repeated, ruthless and unjust arrests expose the nation-state as a violent institution that actively expels dissenting bodies rather than a protective home.

During his imprisonment as a university student, the narrator emphasizes the arbitrary nature of his detention as he was arrested not for a crime but for celebrating a Berber cultural event which was regarded by the authorities as an act of political dissent and a challenge of Amazigh identity (Chetouane, 2011, pp. 10–11). The narrator recounts being taken into a small, windowless cell where he notices “the rope hanging from the ceiling” and “the blood all over the floor,” details that foreshadow the violence to come (Chetouane, 2011, p.7). He describes how the policemen “stripped him] naked” and hoisted him up so that “only [his] toes were touching the ground,” leaving him suspended and powerless (Chetouane, 2011, p.8). Torture is rendered through intensely corporeal language, as the lashes of the whip produce a “burning sensation that was so painful,” leading him to scream uncontrollably, while his body is reduced to pain, fear, and exposure (Chetouane, 2011, p.8). The effects of this brutality persist beyond the prison itself, confirming that state violence permanently splits the subject’s sense of belonging and identity (Chetouane, 2011, pp. 11–12). Hence, identity in the novel is not grounded in national attachment but fractured by trauma and political oppression, as the Algerian authority is embodied not as a source of belonging but as the force that dislocates the subject.

This nomadic condition persists during the protagonist’s subsequent migration across Libya and Egypt. In the Arab world, he comes across suspicion, surveillance, and vulnerability instead of refuge, solidarity, and freedom, especially when he talks about Libya, a place where “no one could do anything without the knowledge of the government” and “where he feels constantly surveyed and constrained” (Chetouane, 2011, p.92). Libya is not just a place of passage, but also a literary image of the state’s omnipresent control over mobile subjects, thus further establishing the protagonist’s condition of statelessness and permanent displacement. In Egypt, his situation is even more precarious, because he is forcibly taken from one prison to another, and he is finally ousted after being labeled “a mystery” and his name is dismissed by the state authorities (Chetouane, 2011, p. 107). Not being recognised by institutional authorities is a marker not only of exclusion but also of the ways in which institutional identity is limited. The novel thus presents institutional recognition as unstable ground for subjectivity, reiterating Braidotti’s argument that the nomadic subject comes into being through traveling and becoming-in-relations instead of belonging to a law. These experiences challenge the idea that a sense of belonging comes from a common culture or language and instead argue that it is created by movement rather than by a shared cultural or linguistic identity. Movement in this context is no longer a journey towards reintegration but a process of ongoing reshaping by uncertainty and adaptation.

The narrator’s dislocation across Europe further exemplifies the nomadic subjectivity. In these spaces, he exists as an undocumented marginalized migrant crossing imprisonment, homelessness, and hazardous working and living conditions, as he recounts moving between shelters, sleeping in streets, and spending time “in and out of jail” across several European countries (Chetouane, 2011, p.11). His displacement is marked by constant anxiety as his survival depends on temporary jobs and illegal arrangements rather than social containment (Chetouane, 2011, p.67). At the same time, these encounters also enable him to develop transversal ethical relations (Braidotti, 2016), in which unexpected solidarity comes from Europeans and Americans who offer food, shelter, or assistance despite their different nationalities, languages, and backgrounds. This ethical dimension is articulated when the narrator states that he has “been embraced and cared for by strangers who had almost nothing to give themselves,” highlighting that solidarity and generosity can arise from shared circumstances rather than shared identity (Chetouane, 2011, p. 237). Such interactions foreground nomadic subjectivity as relational and ethical rather than territorial (Braidotti, 2006), formed through affective connections rather than stable roots, as the narrator’s sense of humanity is restored not through citizenship or legal status but through fleeting acts of compassion encountered in transit.

At the very end of the narrative, the subjectivity of the protagonist was still sum and subtraction, but never completed or reconciled. Although the novel follows him since he last left Algeria, on the unethical basis of a fraud scheme that sold nonexistent chicks, the novel provides no redemption or closure. He says that the next day he “bought a plane ticket to Madrid” (Chetouane, 2011, p. 65), setting up an “alternative line,” which is a false trail, before leaving the country. The morally ambiguous departure further undermines the novel’s hopes for a traditional story of liberation, while suggesting mobility as a strategy for survival that is formed through ethical compromise. He finds himself in a new round of dispersal in Europe, now moving into another life without documentation, improvisation and risk being his means of survival. Such a novel is open-ended, acknowledging that nomadism is a perpetual becoming in which subjectivity is always renegotiated in the act of movement, but never reconciled with nor returned to. His subjectivity is therefore positioned by survival, contradiction, and moral tension, and points to the emergence of nomadic becoming out of instability, not certainty, where vulnerability and moral compromise are conditions of nomadic mobility.

Donkey Heart Monkey Mind is creating nomadic subjectivity by presenting subjectivity as adaptive, as fragmented, as continually constituted by a process of displacement. The protagonist is nowhere in the traditional sense; rather, he takes mobility as a way of life. The novel resists essentialist conceptions of identity by showing how identity is repeatedly negotiated in ethical encounters instead of through categories of nation, ethnicity, and citizenship.

4.2 Exile as an Ethical Space of Becoming

Far from a condition of loss, negative rupture from home, and nostalgia, Braidotti has reconceptualized exile as an ethical and ontological space of becoming that enables the restructuring of subjectivity beyond fixed identities. She recognizes exile as a productive interruption that destabilizes essentialist attachments to original culture and home belonging, thereby leading the subject to alternative modes of existence based in relationality, movement, and ethical transformation (Braidotti, 2006; 2011). Exile becomes a crucial condition establishing the subject’s self-redefinition beyond the inherited structures. The exiled subject, in this sense, is not the sign of passive suffering or moral deficiency; instead, it generates ethical agency precisely through exposure to uncertainty and instability. For Braidotti, this displacement rearticulates subjectivity through what she considers becoming-other: a continuing process of becoming through which

the self develops relations with the living experience, difference, and vulnerability (Braidotti, 2012). Therefore, vulnerability becomes a generative power provoking the subject towards new ethical formations based on responsibility, affective openness, and transversal relations across difference (Braidotti, 2006; 2016).

In *Donkey Heart Monkey Mind*, Chetouane exhibits exile through frequent illegal experiences grounded on imprisonment and expulsion across multiple national contexts, Algeria, Libya, Egypt, and Europe, revealing exile as a permanent condition produced by state power rather than temporary interruption personally chosen. Egypt provides a clear illustration of this when he was shuffled between prisons and eventually deported without explanation asserting the arbitrariness of its regime that reduces the migrant subject to a bureaucratic anomaly, “a mystery” whose identity cannot be verified or trusted by authority (Chetouane, 2011, p.107). In Europe, his undocumented status traps him in the cycle of illegality and vulnerability, vagrancy, and precarious labor, as he moves “in and out of jail” while surviving through illegal arrangements (Chetouane, 2011, p. 13). The narrative frames these experiences as a stage of subject configuration that strips it of institutional recognition and develops dimensions of selfhood beyond legal belonging (Farris, 2017).

The condition of exile becomes further complicated due to the foregrounded ethical relations introduced with strangers to interrupt its isolation and rehumanize it. Throughout his journey, the protagonist repeatedly gains necessary supplies such as food, shelter, and care from Europeans and Americans regardless of his unlikelihood of nationality, language, and culture. Exile becomes a space of ethical relationality since survival often depends on the kindness of unknown individuals who offer rides while hitchhiking (Chetouane, 2011, p. 37), share meals (Chetouane, 2011, p.164), and provide temporary labor. These encounters transform exile from a condition of exclusion into a space where new ethical connections emerge beyond national and cultural boundaries, making relational subjectivity the foundation of exile rather than national belonging. In Luxembourg for example, despite the ongoing condition of displacement, his temporary work in an Italian restaurant provides him with support and stability he seeks (Chetouane, 2011, p.37). While these basic tools are in themselves relatively unpretentious, they have profound ethical significance and set the stage for a new community where communication is felt in the language of need and humanity. Also, when drivers are unable to communicate with him but offer him food in periods of hunger, he is able to continue his journey across borders without institutional protection (Chetouane, 2011, pp.181-182). What is important is the ethical connections that develop in the course of these encounters, in which there is a greater importance of interdependence than of rigid notions of belonging.

The ethical depth of exile persists even more in the United States, where care appears unexpectedly within moments of distress. His first encounter in the United States: an African American passenger listens to his story, reassures him, and generously offers him money, affirming his humanity at a moment of extreme vulnerability (Chetouane, 2011, p.44). Likewise, during his detention by U.S. authorities, the protagonist is unpredictably treated by female translators (p.196), police officers who “were very kind to me”, as he reports (Chetouane, 2011, p.57), and medical staff who provide food, medical attention, and temporary accommodation in hotels, treating him not as a criminal but as a human being in hardship (50-54). They, as recited, “embraced and cared for strangers who had almost nothing to give themselves” (Chetouane, 2011, p. 237). Rather than portraying these encounters as isolated acts of kindness, the novel constructs them as ethical moments that challenge exclusionary notions of belonging by foregrounding shared human vulnerability. These experiences foreground transversal partnerships and affective ties that are built upon difference, vulnerability, need, and responsibility, which are more foregrounded than identity-based solidarity (Braidotti, 2006; 2016). In this case, while institutional protection is absent, interpersonal relations sustain ethical responsibility more than authority, making exile a space in which new forms of ethical subjectivity emerge. Thus, humanity is upheld through affective bonds forged in transit, proving that exile facilitates alternative ethical developments within the subject grounded in responsibility, openness, and relational becoming (Braidotti, 2016).

Ultimately, exile in this work becomes an affirmative condition personally chosen as the protagonist contradicts the conventional endings of narratives about exile. He refuses the redemptive closure of return, nostalgia, and reconciliation and instead, he repetitively chooses movement even when return is thematically possible. The scene of his final departure from Algeria without hesitation exemplifies Braidotti’s theory about exile as not a moral failure, but a strategy of survival created by the nomadic subject who seeks a stable origin to which they must ultimately return (Braidotti, 2011; 2012). Thus, the protagonist embraces exile as an ongoing state of becoming, adopting movement itself as a mode of existence. By this terminal, return is undesirable and even impossible, while exile becomes a future-oriented ethical stance. Thus, the novel presents exile as a space where subjectivity is constantly passing through uncertainty, paradox, and ethical compromise far from national reintegration (Braidotti, 2011; Lahiani et al., 2026).

4.3 Posthuman, Anti-Essentialist Thought

Braidotti retheorizes subjectivity as relational, embodied, affective, and historically situated, standing against the Eurocentric characterization of humanism as a rational, autonomous, unified, sovereign, and self-grounded in universality (Braidotti, 2013). She presumes that the individual is formed through his vulnerability, interdependence, and exposure to material and social forces that surpass his control. In that sense, components such as space, power, trauma, memory, and other bodies contribute to shape identity through its interactions with them. The nomadic subject philosophy of Braidotti precisely resists essentialist definitions of “the human,” prioritizing becoming, embodiment, and affect over stability and transcendence. Literary texts that disrupt linear narration, highlight physical experience, and represent consciousness as relational can be considered posthuman sketches of nomadic subjectivity.

That the novel highlights the body of the protagonist as the primary site of subject formation is a strong representation of a posthuman subject. The novel frequently positions subjectivity within vulnerability, need, and fear, most notably during times of arrest and torture. For example, being stripped naked, suspended by a rope, and whipped until his skin uncontrollably peeled off reduces the self to sensation with

no consciousness but of pain. This torture leaves physical scars in his body and creates psychological trauma and tensions in his mind, confirming that violence inscribes itself materially and mentally onto the subject. His unconscious reactions, such as screams and loss of bodily control, underscore a subjectivity shaped by passivity and mental instability with no self-control. Such characteristics of the protagonist challenge the humanist models of the self as rational and self-possessed, instead presenting subjectivity as embodied and vulnerable, constituted through lived material experience far from abstract consciousness. He does not “think” his way into identity; instead, identity is shaped through what the body is passes through, remembers, and survives.

Fragmented consciousness and memory further convey the posthuman subjectivity that challenges the linear coherence and unified self-representation. For example, the protagonist recounts his life experience randomly between past and present, homeland and transit, trauma and survival, with no chronological connection. Fragmented subjectivity is reflected through incoherent memory that does not appear as an archive but as an emotional motivation that intervenes unexpectedly, often stimulated by sensations, spaces, and confronts. Moments of vulnerability, arrest, hunger, need, and fear reactivate memories of prior violence and destabilizing any sense of a continuous self. Thus, the instability of memory becomes a posthuman strategy that challenges essentialist identity by presenting subjectivity as layered, fractured, and continually becoming.

Furthermore, the non-linear plot of the story in which the protagonist's consciousness is disrupted, perplexed, and unable to be aware of its entity articulates an anti-humanist epistemology that refuses the transparent and self-knowing subject, and instead it is relational and contingent, shaped by environments of investigation, imprisonment, and displacement (Braidotti, 2013).

To sum up, the overall narrative structure of *Donkey Heart Monkey Mind* reinforces its posthuman inclination by denying a linear trajectory of recounting, teleology, and redemptive resolution. Besides, the fragmented storytelling model is reflected through unpredictable shifts and episodic movements of the protagonist, mirroring the de-territorialized existence of the posthuman. Another representation of posthumanism is the absence of a clear narrative arc throughout the story, no definitive return, reconciliation, nor moral resolution. Thus, the narrative challenges the humanist expectation that self-actualization of the subject is culminated through union and coherence. However, the end comes unpredictably, open to all suspicions, and unfinished, indicating that factors such as belonging to a unified gender, land, clan, institution, or community could not shape the subject. Instead, it is through relational forces such as borders, legal systems, chance encounters, and institutional violence. This anti-teleological form privileges becoming over being and process over closure. In addition, the self-knowledge of the protagonist is resolved through movement; continuously reconfigured, vulnerability, and ethical integration with others, through continuous reconfiguration, vulnerability, and ethical integration with others. The novel enacts a posthuman vision of nomadic subjectivity through an unsatiated human whose existence is proven merely through nomadism, material and relational conditions, and affective forces.

4.4 Nomadic Writing

Braidotti's framework of nomadic writing is marked by non-linear structure and multiple temporal layers, a hybrid speaker, multilingualism and translation, fragmentation and retrospection (Braidotti, 2010). On the contrary, it resists linear advancement, stable identity, and narrative closure.

In *Donkey Heart Monkey Mind*, it is nomadic in terms of aesthetics, with broken structure and multiple temporal layers. The first chapter takes the reader from the hanged body in the cell, to the protest, back to Berber history and then to the Berber demonstration in 1980 and forward again to future exile. This formal dislocation reflects the protagonist's own fractured selfhood, not only in the narrative's fragmentation, but in the fluidity of the self and its ever-changing nature as it is presented in the formal logic of nomadic writing. Specifically, from the outset, before the main story kicks in, the novel opens with a violent scene in the first chapter, “Hanging in the Cell”, and then flashes back in time to the Berber political manifestation and past memories of the repression. This technique places the reader into the immediacy of torture with the abrupt line, “My toes were barely touching the ground” (Chetouane, 2011, p. 1). The narrative's non-linear structure is conveyed through non-sequential chronology in stations of returns, interruptions, and retrospective insertions. First, the novel highlights the protest “two days before,” then returns backward into the history of Berber oppression and the 1980 Berber Spring (Chetouane, 2011, pp. 1-6), before skipping forward again at the chapter closure when it says that, three years later, he had already arrived at “a new continent” and entered another phase of suffering and movement (Chetouane, 2011, p. 13). By refusing chronological closure, these temporal dislocations reinforce the novel's representation of nomadic subjectivity as a continual process of becoming rather than a fixed or unified identity.

The hybrid speaker is another characteristic of the novel's nomadic narrative. It blends personal testimony, cultural explanation, political reflection, and historical commentary. For example, while he is recounting his detention and intimate bodily pain, he suddenly shifts to explain the Imazighen identity, how the word “Berber” was historically imposed, and how Tamazight survived state repression (Chetouane, 2011, pp. 4-6). This abrupt shift dissolves the boundaries between personal memory and collective history, suggesting that individual identity cannot be separated from broader cultural and political experiences. Therefore, the novel is neither autobiographical nor historical but rather a hybrid form in which memory, testimony, ethnographic discourse, and cultural ceremony cross conventional genre boundaries. This hybridity embodies the concept of nomadic writing as an aesthetic, linguistically mobile writing that crosses stationary boundaries and refuses a single stable mode of speaking just as the protagonist does (Braidotti, 2014).

The novel's hybrid language is a defining feature of its nomadic model. Multilingualism is detected through the repeatedly inserted non-English terms and expressions into the wholly English narrative, corresponding to Braidotti's sense of linguistic nomadism (Braidotti, 2014). For instance, terms such as Imazighen, Tamazight, the protest chant “Anarez walla anaknou” (Chetouane, 2011, p. 2), and even the

Tamazight blessing in the preface, Rabi Adhyili Yidhssen, are illustrations of nomadic subject. These inclusions are not ornamental; they create a multilingual and culturally layered prose that resists monolingual transparency and fixed linguistic belonging. By preserving these linguistic traces rather than translating or assimilating them into English, the novel foregrounds language itself as a site of cultural continuity and resistance, reinforcing Braidotti's view that nomadic writing unsettles fixed linguistic and cultural boundaries.

Narrative fragmentation is another sign of the narrative nomadic mold. Instead of orderly recollection of the events, the protagonist's consciousness itself is destabilized in several scenes. The prolonged torture in the cell is a striking example when the narrator describes "losing all sense of awareness and time" (Chetouane, 2011, p. 9), a phrase that hints at the breakdown of ordinary temporal perception, not just bodily collapse. In another scene, the narrator says his thoughts deviate, that he was "half asleep and half awake," and that he "couldn't differentiate between [his] awareness and [his] actual existence" (Chetouane, 2011, p. 133). Elsewhere, in Egypt, he describes an "inexplicable feeling of freedom that I have never felt before or since" in which he becomes "adrift in time" (Chetouane, 2011, p. 101). These fleeting moments shape the novel's form by making perception unstable, discontinuous, and affective and reformulating displacement through broken temporality. Thus, consciousness moves through different stations such as confusion, sensation, memory, and interruption just as the narration moves through events, timing, and motion. This is not a self-speaking subject recounting from a secure retrospective position, but a subject whose memory is fractured by anguish, repeated detention, and border-crossing. Ultimately, the work ends in fragmentary wandering, leaping forward into an anti-teleological conclusion with no resolution. The protagonist converts from an irritated young man into someone stuck in "a desperate run for his life" as he recites (Chetouane, 2011, pp. 11-13). His refusal to provide narrative closure reinforces the anti-teleological structure of nomadic subjectivity, leaving the narrative suspended in movement, contradiction, and unfinished becoming. (Braidotti, 2022).

4.5 Transversal Alliances

Transversal alliances in Braidotti's framework are related to ethical relations with categories of difference in nation, ethnicity, gender, or citizenship and instead establish solidarity in sameness. Braidotti (2006) expands that nomadic ethical concept of relationality is grounded on non-unitary, affirmative mutuality, vulnerability, and responsibility. Subjectivity, as she further argues, develops into an "expanded relational self," whose capability for connection extends across multiple geopolitical, ethnic, and social limitations (Braidotti, 2013). In other words, relations built during conditions of vulnerability and displacement are ethically more valued over conditions of belonging (Braidotti, 2019, 2022). Thus, transversal alliances are an ethics of cross-border solidarity between subjects of difference in race, culture, identity, belonging, and ethnicity. This difference is crossed positively through mutual support, unity, communication, contact, and coexistence, making ethics more important than identity and relation more important than origins.

Chetouane's novel constructs transversal alliances by showing that the protagonist's survival relies on ethical relations with people who stand outside his immediate identity group. For instance, when he stops in Surt in Libya, he finds "a couple of men strolling on the beach" who are "very friendly" and offer him "their beach cabin to sleep in," giving him temporary safety in a hostile landscape (Chetouane, 2011, p. 93). Their brief conversation in the evening tempers his nerves for a while and gives him the impression that he is in his comfort zone. Likewise in Egypt, a police chief offered him "ten Egyptian pounds," although saying, "I'm not rich, and I have a family to feed" (Chetouane, 2011, p. 99). Such generosity came from an authority agent, who was supposed to arrest him, just to support the protagonist in his distress after recognizing the worthlessness of his Libyan money in Egypt. The episode therefore redefines authority not as an instrument of exclusion but as a site of ethical responsibility, reinforcing the novel's portrayal of solidarity as transcending institutional and national boundaries.

His transversal relations appear again in Europe and the United States, where women and officials become unexpected ethical agents (Alenezi et al., 2026a). At the airport, he acknowledges that he met: "a woman who made me feel very special just through her gentle touch and her compassion to a stranger," emphasizing that she was an "inevitable female translator" offering practical help and support (Chetouane, 2011, p. 196). Another scene embodying the estimation of ethical agency between strangers rather than among individuals who share the same roots is the kindness and assistance that came unexpectedly during his interrogation in the United States. He notes that "two Italian police officers were very kind to me," even while they had "no responsibility other than to take me back to Rome" (Chetouane, 2011, p. 57). These examples mirror Braidotti's understanding of nomadic ethics that prioritize relationality over identity since solidarity here crosses national, linguistic, institutional, and gendered borders (Braidotti, 2006, 2013, 2019). Even though they had no shared belonging, their treatment was human and secure, in contrast to his horde, who abruptly handled his issues.

Solidarity examples extend to Spain, where the protagonist meets with marginalized figures of North African youths on the beach. At the moment he declared his thirst, hunger, and scarcity, they "immediately recognized that [he] was Algerian and reached into their pockets to give [him] money," giving "as though they had a lot of money," although he knows "they can't have had much to spare" (Chetouane, 2011, pp. 171-172). Although the incident includes regional recognition, its ethical implication is privileged. It demonstrates that nationality itself is not the motive to act generously but it is solidarity between precarious mobile subjects who, despite their limited means, stand with one another. Their act anticipates the narrator's later acknowledgment that he had "been embraced and cared for by strangers who had almost nothing to give themselves" (Chetouane, 2011, p. 237). These scenes foreground transversality by showing how nomadic subjects structure temporary yet affective communities through humble acts of charity, care, and interest regardless of their class, position, or geopolitical status. The novel therefore implies that the sustainability of a displaced self is not redeemed through recovery of identity but through a temporary network of alliances formed with vulnerable figures such as women, migrants, and homeless people encountered in transit, in which ethical connection replaces inherited belonging (Braidotti, 2006, 2016, 2019).

Over time and through experience, the protagonist gradually learned these ethics of relationality and responsiveness to those in need after receiving care from movable subjects. For example, after being well treated frequently, he regretted his previous thefts and wished he could repay the people he had stolen from directly since he knew they were not in a better condition than he was. He says: "I could make it up in kindness to others. It is never too late to do good things for those who are in need" (Chetouane, 2011, p. 196). This reflection marks a transformation in the protagonist's ethical consciousness, where receiving care becomes the basis for extending care to others. In addition, this ethical shift appears again in another stance in Chicago, with only a few dollars left, he recounts: "When a homeless person asked me for money, I gave him two dollars" (p. 196). Though the donation is financially humble, it is essential in Braidotti's constitution of relations. This is because it balances deficiency from one vulnerable to another and disrupts the logic of pure self-preservation. Then solidarity redistributes need and vulnerability between subjects. Another comparable dynamic happens earlier in jail, where after torture, "people in the cell had put [his] pants on" and took care of him during his faintness. Their care attaches him to this community to an extent that when release comes, he confesses: "I even thought of not leaving and staying with them in solidarity" (Chetouane, 2011, pp. 9-10). Here, solidarity emerges through shared vulnerability rather than shared identity, transforming imprisonment into an unexpected space of ethical affiliation. In this sense, solidarity is more than an abstract ideology; it embodies co-suffering, mutual care, and an affective recognition among harmed subjects (Khater et al., 2024). Therefore, the novel suggests that transversal alliances occur through shared weakness, coexistence, ethical openness, and solidarity among the different (Braidotti, 2006, pp. 5, 35; 2022).

4.6 Memory and Dislocation

According to Braidotti's perspective, memory is a transformative force within the nomadic subject, contributing to its process of becoming. In one of her writings. Writing as a Nomadic Subject, she claims that "the affective force of remembrance propels the process of becoming-intensive," and that remembering in a nomadic or minority mode "defeat[s] linearity" in order to "open up spaces of movement and of de-territorialization" (2014, p. 173). Then, memory is layered and changeable: beyond preserving previous events, it flashes back the past in ways that make new forms of subjectivity possible. This is why Braidotti further describes nomadic remembering as "the active reinvention of a self that is joyfully discontinuous," one that "destabilizes the sanctity of the past and the authority of experience" (2014, p. 174). In this sense, dislocation exceeds the notion of exile and becomes a mode of thinking through which the subject expands the fixed narratives of identities that are only inherited, not chosen. Braidotti deduces that the nomadic subject is always embodied and embedded; however, it arises from "different locations in space and time," led by the pressures that produce migrants, refugee seekers, and other marginalized groups in the contemporary world (Braidotti, 2023, p. 7). In brief, Braidotti argues that the continuity and becoming of the exiled subject are sustained through the dynamic interplay between dislocation and memory. While dislocation constitutes an essential condition of existence, memory functions as an affective, non-linear force that continually reshapes subjectivity.

In the novel, memory serves as a driving force continuously guiding the protagonist to reshape his subjectivity across different locations. Memories serve as a source of pride, self-confidence, and self-esteem towards his origins. In one narrative scene, he recalls that "the women in my family taught me deep compassion and pride in my roots" and that his "greatest childhood memories are of [his] grandmother" (Chetouane, 2011, p. 19). Although his possessions of the mother and grandmother, father and friends, his souvenirs of infancy, are abstract feelings that persist in him as moral and emotional intensities, they continue to orient his becoming. Likewise, his grandmother's conviction that the fire represents memory, continuity, and knowledge of human existence caused him to believe that he could "see" "life, past, present and future" (Chetouane, 2011, p. 20). This path challenges linear temporality, and memory becomes non-linear and transformative, not reconstructive but reconstructive "doubly". In his visit to Libya, memory remains relational and unstable and is worked out by "remembering the green beauty of Europe" (Chetouane, 2011, p. 92). So memory is the movement, the spatial comparison, which creates subjectivity not through the attachment of homeland but through nomadic encounters. Memory becomes in the end a force that de-territorializes and remakes subjectivity, not remembering a self.

The narrator's traumatic memories are likewise governed by the same nomadic logic that transforms dislocation from a dilemma or a source of nostalgia into a future-oriented ethics of survival. After the miserable scenario he passed through in Algeria, including torture and imprisonment, he lay meditating in bed and "imagining [his] life elsewhere" and that all he wanted was "to leave [his] country and [his] father behind" (Chetouane, 2011, p. 13). Here, memory does not draw him into the past but transforms anguish into movement, becoming a catalyst for future possibilities. Years later, returning to Algeria in 2006, he rejects the possibility of a redemptive homecoming. Despite "getting reacquainted with [his] family, especially [his] grandmother," he admits that the country "didn't feel right, didn't feel like the place for [him] to be" (Chetouane, 2011, pp. 226-227). This rejection reveals that memory does not restore his sense of belonging or reconcile him with his origins but instead affirms the impossibility of fully returning to them. To add, his homecoming to Tindouf is not an attempt to recuperate a misplaced self, but to confront a memory that is still materially engraved in his body and psyche: he wants to "relive the days that remained ingrained in [his] memories," to "experience [his] past in the present time," and to "rediscover the courage" through which he escaped and survived (Chetouane, 2011, p. 227). In these extracts, nomadic memory is an active recalling of the past that destabilises fixed identity in the present and makes memory a place of becoming. Memory is never a return to a lost sense of self but constantly reinterprets and moves subjectivity. In this writing, then, dislocation and remembrance are one and the same: the subject remembers, he is exiled; he is transformed, memory keeps opening him to movement, to fear, to reinvention.

5. Conclusion

This study has maintained that the main problem posed by *Donkey Heart Monkey Mind* is not just the fragmentation of belonging due to migration, but the literary imagining of subjectivity when the promise of return, reconciliation, and stable national identity is no longer

guaranteed by migration itself. In a Braidottian reading, the article demonstrates that by defining the self as mobile, embodied, relational, and structurally unfinished, Chetouane's novel transforms the notion of the self into a non-teleological, fragmented, multilingual narrative form. It therefore makes a twofold contribution: it is a sustained reading of an underexamined Algerian Anglophone novel, and it uncovers the explanatory power of nomadic theory for the interpretation of North African Anglophone writing in opposition to central postcolonial concerns with hybridity, resistance, and nationalism. The results also contribute to broader debates in the English literary field about the migration narrative, statelessness, trauma, and transnational subjectivity, proposing that exile in this novel is not only a loss, but also a relational becoming that is ethically charged. This interpretive adjustment situates the novel in a contemporary context in relation to wider issues of precarious mobility, broken citizenship, and literature in the era of lives lived at borders. Meanwhile, the argument has to be limited to one novel and one theoretical approach. This study could be continued with comparative analysis of Algerian and North African Anglophone narratives, with comparisons to nomadic theory and postcolonial, affect, or trauma theory, and through more focused consideration of the ways in which 'multilingual narration' and 'disrupted temporality' reconfigure the aesthetics and ethics of 'displacement' in various literary settings.

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