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Nostalgia for Afghanistan's History in Tony Kushner's Homebody/Kabul

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Keywords: Nostalgia, Homeland, Tony Kushner, Recalling history, Homebody/ Kabul

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The objective of this paper is to represent how the feelings of dissatisfaction with the present can lead the colonizer to recall the history of the colonized land. This is represented through the analysis of the American play *Homebody/Kabul* (2001) written by Tony Kushner (1957-). The play depicts the suffering of the English protagonist, Homebody, from displacement within her homeland and family and her alienation from the present. Therefore, she decides to seek home and to recall history of Afghanistan, a country which is trapped between its glorious past and its traumatic present. Thus, nostalgia becomes a helpful mechanism for the colonizer to transcend those feelings of alienation and displacement. The analysis of this paper depends on the theories of Svetlana Boym through her book *The Future of Nostalgia* (2001,) and Dennis Walder throughout his *Postcolonial Nostalgias: Writing, Representation, and Memory* (2012), in order to examine how nostalgia for the lost time and the lost homeland may force the colonizer to recall the history and to seek home in the land of the colonized. Through a postcolonial lens, the analysis investigates Homebody's emotions of displacement from her home and her emotions of alienation from the present which forces her to search home in the land of the colonized, first mentally by recalling its history then by moving physically to Afghanistan.

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Introduction:

This paper aims to investigate how postcolonial nostalgia may be a mechanism for the colonizer to transcend feelings of displacement and alienation. Thus, it can be considered a driving force to seek home by recalling the history of the colonized. This is explained through the analysis of the American play *Homebody/Kabul* (2001) which was written shortly before 9/11 by the American playwright Tony Kushner (1956-). Through the play, Kushner depicts the nostalgic journey of the English protagonist, Homebody, who struggles to overcome her feelings of alienation from modernism and displacement from her homeland through resorting to the history and seeking home in Afghanistan's history.

The paper is analyzed through a postcolonial lens. The researcher is guided by the two theoretical frameworks. The first is related to the Russian- American cultural theorist Svetlana Boym (1935- 2015) who is concerned through her book *The Future of Nostalgia* (2001,) with theorizing the mysteries of nostalgia to the time and space which no longer exist. The second theoretical framework is the South African critic Dennis Walder's (1943-) who discusses in his book *Postcolonial Nostalgias: Writing, Representation, and Memory* (2012) how nostalgia can connect people across national, historical and personal boundaries. His book aims to explore how postcolonial nostalgia can work to explore the ambivalent space between memory, history, and the present (6).

This paper is divided into two sections. The first section is related to the theoretical framework of this paper, focusing on the meaning of nostalgia in general and postcolonial nostalgia in particular. Then, the following part provides background to how history and nostalgia are represented in the theatre. This is followed by a brief account of Tony Kushner's work as well as a synopsis of the discussed play. The second part examines how Tony Kushner presents through the character of Homebody the postcolonial nostalgia from the perspective of the colonizer. The analysis investigates Homebody's emotions of displacement from her home and her emotions of alienation from the present. The following part investigates how her nostalgia motivates her to search home in the land of the colonized, first by recalling its history then by moving physically to Afghanistan.

Nostalgia: Origins and Concepts:

Nostalgia is a contradictory and flexible concept which depends on the interplay between the sadness and bitterness of recalling the past and the pleasure of memorizing it (Harper, 1966, p.120). The Swiss physician Johannes Hofer (1669–1752) was the first one to introduce the term nostalgia in 1688. The term was based on two Greek words; ‘nostos- ‘that means to return home, and ‘-algia’ which means longing or pain (Boym, 2001, p. 4).

However, this phenomenon has been studied and investigated through different approaches as Svetlana Boym (2001) wrote, “[t]he study of nostalgia does not belong to any specific discipline: it frustrates psychologists, sociologists, literary theorists and philosophers, even computer scientists” (p. xvii). The theoretical framework of this paper depends on Svetlana Boym’s book *The Future of Nostalgia* through which Boym explains the complex relationship between nostalgia, time, space, and memory by focusing on the phenomenon of nostalgia in Central and Eastern European exiles, immigrants, and diaspora during the twentieth century. She highlights how nostalgia to a lost home, or a lost time can enrich the self in the age.

Boym (2001) has defined nostalgia as “longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed” (p.13) Therefore, nostalgia is regarded as a form “melancholia caused by prolonged absence from one’s home or country; severe homesickness”, and as a ‘[r]egret or sorrowful longing for the conditions of a past age (Boym, 2001, p. 9). Based on this definition, it is clear that Boym has based her interpretation related to nostalgia upon two dimensions which are longing for home(space) and for the past (history) as a result of rejecting modernity and physical or psychological displacement.

According to Boym, nostalgia in the age of globalization is based on the realization of the impossibility of returning to the physical home again (Boym,2001, p. 31). Therefore, she differentiates between two tendencies of nostalgia; reflective and restorative nostalgia to provide meaning to the confusing emotions of longing for a lost time and a lost home. Concerning nostalgia to the homeland, she explains that restorative nostalgia’s main aim is to rebuild the lost home especially in postcolonial contexts by focusing on reviving the national myths and symbols (p.41,72). On the other hand, she defines reflective nostalgia as the tendency to focus on the emotions of longing itself because the lost home cannot be restored (p.41,19). Concerning nostalgia to the lost time, restorative nostalgia focuses on the role of memory in recalling

only moments of national glory throughout history, while reflective nostalgia views history with a critical lens as it is aware that time cannot be restored (Boym,2001, p.15).

The second theoretical framework, namely Dennis Walder, explains how nostalgic narratives in postcolonial writings can provide a positive view for history. He believes that this nostalgia emerged because of the decline of many empires throughout the 20th century (Walder, 2012, p.13-14). Thus, nostalgia has become a "[m]elancholy for societies without power" (Baudrillard, 1993, p. 361). In other words, societies who experienced colonization are anxious about their past, so they reimagine a homeland through their memory to relieve the negative emotions of nostalgia which constitutes a part of developing their identity (Walder, 2012, p.49).

Representation of Memory and Nostalgia in the Western Theatre:

Representation of nostalgia to the past in the Western theatre has always taken various forms of representation. That is because the theatre used to be considered to be a form of art that involves employing aesthetic imagination to investigate the past. Thus, the theatre is regarded as a space where the present meets the past and where the living faces the dead (Cixous, 1997, p.425). Being the oldest form of art, the theatre has always played a crucial role in preserving the national memory because it transfers the past into artistic form to act as a guide for the future (Bennette,2004, p. 2). However, the representation of the playwrights to history on stage always involves their interpretation and perception to the past (Gul,2017, p. 2).

The different phases of the theatre's representation of the past have taken multiple manifestations which leads to the emergence of 'memory theatre' which is defined according to Jeanette Malkin (1999) as the theatre which manifests the repressed memories or the shared past which is considered to be an interplay between the private and collective memory (p.8). In fact, most memory plays in the West involve nostalgic tone to the glorious past due to the various political and economic circumstances. For example, in England with the beginning of twentieth century, John Osborne (1929-1994) was one of the playwrights who was able to represent the role of memory in recalling the past in the theatre as he investigated through his plays how the young English generations are yearning for England's glorious past when England was a great Empire. According to Kimball King (1997), Osborne represents the anger

against "the rapidly progressing loss of Empire, and the Americanization of the West" (p.179). His play *Look Back in Anger* (1959) was written as a reaction to many significant political events in England as the nationalization of the Suez Canal in Egypt in 1956. During that time young generations were disappointed that their government would not be able to keep England's glorious imperial history (Salgado,1980, p. 92). Osborne wrote many other plays as *Inadmissible Evidence* (1964), through which the protagonist always is nostalgic towards the glorious past of England (Trussler, 1969, p. 133). Moreover, through his play *Watch It Come Down* (1975), he investigates how the situation is getting worse in England (Tecimer,2005, p. 65). In fact, Osborne illustrated the relationship between anger and nostalgia in his latest play *Déjàvu* (1991) through one of his characters saying:

It is mourning to the unknown, the loss of what went before without you, it's the love at another time but not this might have sprung on you, and greatest loss of all, the deprivation of what, even as a child, seemed to be irrevocably your own, your country, your birthplace, that, at least, is as tangible as death (Osborne, 1993, p.372).

In the United States after the economic depression in 1920s, the majority of American playwrights represent the nostalgia for the glorious Jazzy Age. Thus, nostalgia for the past became a recurrent theme of the plays at that time. They criticize how the glories of the American dream became a memory (Chaouch,2003 p, 139). For instance, Tennessee Williams (1911-1983) and Arthur Miller (1915-2005), have discussed through their plays the illusion of the American dream by comparing between the present and the past (Gul, 2017, p. 8,9). Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* (1945) traces the internal conflict of the protagonist Tom to escape from his painful memories (Presley,1990, p. 31) as he notes through the introduction of the play, that "nostalgia is the first condition of the play" (Williams, 1949, p. 9). His main aim was to make audience face the present situation in the United States after the economic depression (Biggsby, *Critical Introduction*, pp.2, 45). Similarly, through Arthur Miller's play *Death of a Salesman* (1949), memory is considered to be a crucial tool to investigate the past (Naseef, 2023, p. 879). For instance, the protagonist Lowman criticizes the impossibility of restoring the glorious memories of the American dream as he said "how do we get back to all the great times?" (p.97) because "dear dead days beyond recall" (p. 23).

During the second half of the twentieth century, many playwrights as Sam Shepard (1943-2017) and August Wilson (1945-2005) comprised history and

memory in their plots (Gul, 2017, p.8). For example, Sam Shepard was against Americans who are unable to learn from history as was manifested in his play *States of Shock* (1991) (Wynand, 2005, p. 300). Similarly, the African American playwright August Wilson was one of the prominent playwrights who exploited several techniques on the stage to present how past is essential in shaping the present through his ten cycle plays which explore the history of African Americans. His techniques depend on the blues to connect the audience with their African history. Moreover, Wilson portrayed, in his play *The Piano Lesson* (1987), mentally distracted characters who are haunted by their past because they are unable to understand the reality of the present situation (Elam, 2006, p. 29).

Moving to the twenty-first century, many playwrights consider representing memory and history on the stage as a political act (Bechtel, 2004, p. 23). Naomi Wallace (1960-) and Tony Kushner manage to explore the history of the Middle East and its relationship to the colonization as a form of resistance. This echoes Edward Said's (2012) view that they "speak the truth to power and to be the voice of the victimized (p. xi). Therefore, their theatre has become a space to represent the cruelty of modernity and the importance of preserving the collective memory of humankind (Kapushevskaja-Drakulevska, 2013, pp.34-36).

For instance, Naomi Wallace's plays *The Heart of America* (1994) and *The Fever Chart: Three Visions of the Middle East* (2008) raise many questions concerning the history of imperialism in the Middle East (Cumming, 2013, pp. 47,156). Her interest in history and politics stems from her realization that they are essential for nations, defining their present to attain better future (Wallace,2007, p. 281). Concerning Tony Kushner, he is one of the most prominent playwrights who is concerned with representation of history and politics on stage.

Tony Kushner:

Tony Kushner (1956-) is a Jewish-American playwright who is famous for his interest in politics and history. Kushner has received various prizes, such as the Tony Award in 1993 and Lambda Literary award in 1994 (Vorlicky,1997, p. 3). However, he started his career as a playwright in 1990s as he was influenced by the leftist movements in the United States at that time, so he wrote his first play "A Bright Room Called Day" (1985). During his career, he wrote many plays as *La Fin de la Baleine: An Opera for the Apocalypse* (1983), *A Bright Room Called Day* (1985), *Yes, Yes, No, No* (1985), and *Stella* (1987),

Hydriotaphia, Slavs! (1996), and the book for the musical *Caroline, or Change* (2002). He wrote many plays which are considered as ones of the most distinguished plays in the twentieth century as *Angels in America* (1991) which traces the history of the United States during 1980s. He wrote many other historical plays as *Slvas* (1994) which investigates the history of the collapse of the Soviet Union (Al Badri, 2014, p. x).

In fact, Kushner's works have always reflected his interest in both politics and history. Kushner is influenced by the Brechtian¹ epic mode and his theories about political drama and the theories of Walter Benjamin² about history (Vorlicky, 1997, pp.3-6). Thus, his works usually include historical figures and political events which aim to explore the meaning of humanity and justice. Kushner (1997) believes that stage is considered a place of 'historical conversion' and that theatre is mainly political (p.19). Therefore, Kushner considers theatre as a social force which can change the reality by motivating the American audience to recall the past to attain better present (Al Badri, 2014, p. 1). Through his book *The Theatre of Tony Kushner* (2021), James Fisher elaborates that Kushner's theatre presents the magic of the art by linking past with the present to face the challenges of the real world (p.18). This skill appears clearly through his play *Homebody/Kabul* which interweaves the past with the present.

Background on *Homebody/Kabul*:

Although *Homebody/Kabul* was written before the events of 9/11, it was produced during the eagerness of the West to Understand Afghanistan's complicated history in the aftermath of 9/11 (Dickinson and Denes, 2010, p. 437). Thus, the play represents the manifestation of politics and history for a country which remained ambiguous for the Western audience. In other words, Tony Kushner manages through this play to present the history of Afghanistan from the lens of both the colonizer through the British characters and the colonized through the Afghans.

¹ Brecht points that theory concerning political and epic theatre is based on the assumption that stage can be regarded as an illusion. Therefore, the actor has to create a "on stage fourth wall" so that the audience believe that the action is real. His claim that the theatre has to expose the conflicts within the society and the struggles of war in order to change and evaluate the reality. (Brecht, 1964, pp.59, 157-9).

² Benjamin explains his view through the interpretation of the image of the angel in Paulklee's painting "Angelus Novus". This angel is trying to preserve the wreckages and ruins of history in face of storms of modernization but all his attempts and endeavors to recollect history failed. Hence, he could not even close his wings in face of the storm (Benjamin, 1942, pp. 257-258).

The title of the play suggests the plot structure which is divided into 'homebody' and 'Kabul'. The first part *Homebody/Kabul* refers to the English protagonist's monologue to her homeland in London through which she represents her view for the history of Afghanistan and the meaning of home from the perspective of the colonizer. While the second part investigates the meaning of home from the perspective of the colonized (Afghans) who live in Kabul and how Afghanistan has always been suffering from its geography and its history (Neumann, 2015, p. 116). Thus, the play focuses on what is known as "the interplay of history and geography" (Soja, 1989, p. 11). This duality between geography and history is represented when Kushner wrote in the afterward of the play that his main argument is to present "Afghanistan and the West's historic and contemporary relationship to that country" (2001, p. 148).

The plot of the play revolves around a middle-class English¹ woman who is referred to as 'Homebody'. She is sitting alone in her living room in London reading a book which is called *A Historical Guide to Kabul* (published in 1965) written by Nancy Hatch Durpee². Through her monologue she fluctuates between narrating the chronological order of the history of Afghanistan which "begins at the very dawn of history, circa 3,000 B.C." (9), and her private miserable life with her family in London and her love affair with the traumatized Afghan hat seller.

The second part of the play takes place in Kabul in Afghanistan in the aftermath of the Russian invasion and under the rule of Taliban. Through two acts, Kushner represents the contemporary political situation in Afghanistan through tracing the journey of Homebody's husband Milton and her daughter Priscillia to find her in Kabul. Thus, after her elopement with the Afghan hat seller to Kabul, it was reported that she has been either lost or killed there. Through Priscillia's journey to find Homebody, she encountered with many Afghan characters who fluctuate between suffering from their harsh present, and recalling their glorious past.

¹ Kushner chose an English protagonist because he believes that the British may have articulateness and preciseness in vocabulary more than Americans (Berson, 2003).

² Nancy Hatch Durpee is a well-known historian which has devoted her life to document the Afghanistan's history so Tony Kushner depends on her book to introduce the history of Afghanistan through the first part of the play (Lachman, 2013, p. 4).

Homebody's Displacement and Alienation:

Boym (2001) defined nostalgia as the "ache of temporal distance and displacement" (p.76). Based on this definition, Boym considers nostalgia as the weapon to transcend the negative feelings of dissatisfaction and displacement which are only cured by returning home (p.44). Particularly, in postcolonial contexts nostalgia has become a psychological and mental mechanism for both the colonizer and the colonized to reimagine a utopian homeland (Wilson, 2005, p. 74).

This is traced throughout the play where Tony Kushner investigates the complexity of the nostalgic feelings of his protagonist who is dissatisfied with her homeland in the present for both public and private reasons. Her longing for a homeland forces her to seek home in the land of the colonized but in the past. Homebody's dissatisfaction with the present could be attributed to both public and personal reasons.

First on the public level, Homebody's main motivation is her unacceptance to modernism. Some critics consider nostalgia as a resistance to modernity as Karl Marx (1975) who believes that nostalgia is a "reactionary sentiment" to societies which reject modernity as it is considered as "rolling back the wheel of history" (pp.254- 268). Similarly, Boym (2001) considers nostalgia as an act of defense against "accelerated rhythms of life and historical upheavals" and against the modern idea of time of history and progress" (pp.14, 16). This is applied on the character of Homebody who is dissatisfied with modernism declaring "this century has taught us to direct our imagination however fleetingly toward the hidden suffering" (p.31). Through several times through her monologue, she expressed her dissatisfaction and her refusal to be part of the corrupted present related to Western woman. This was obvious when she states:

Ours is a time of connection; the private is gone. All must be touched. All touch corrupts. All must be corrupted the present is always an awful place to be. And it remains awful to us, the scene of our crime, the place of our shame (Kushner, 2001, pp.24,11).

On the other hand, in postcolonial situations, nostalgia has a relationship with modernity because nostalgia is a resistance to capitalism of the imperial powers (Stewart,1988, p. 227). Homebody's visit to the Afghan shop in London is a manifestation to her refusal to both modernity and capitalism. First, she is displeased with modernity which turns this "aesthetic" art crafts into an 'Afghan junk' or 'third world junk' (p.17). Her admiration to the village from which the

hats came from, represents her anti modern attitude a fact which appears through her description to this village which “resisting the onslaught of modernity” and is full of “a many-cameled caravan” which are not found only in Afghanistan, but “across the entire postcolonial not yet developed world” (p.34). However, in the “post-first World post- modern city of London,” all the camels “flopped and toppled” and will “die of exhaustion” (p.34).

Secondly, she is dissatisfied with capitalism, which is an integral part of the modern economic system in the Western countries which changes authentic crafts and beauty into materialistic stuff. This is symbolized with the credit cards which can turn the beauty of hats into junk as she expresses; “Having waved our credit cards in its general direction, have made into junk” (p.30).

On the private level, *Homebody* suffers from a sense of alienation within the boundaries of her family. According to Boym (2001), emotions of alienation and displacement always involve melancholia and disconnection from the outer world (p.91). This could be applied on *Homebody* starting from her distracted monologue and through the stage directions which portrays her as a lonely and depressed woman within her domestic sphere. She is completely isolated from the outer world by being imprisoned within her outdated books. Her isolation from her family is reflected through her depressed tone and several sighs whenever she narrates anything about her personal life: “My husband cannot bear my. . . the sound of me. . . so I rarely speak to him anymore. We both take powerful antidepressants” (Kushner, 2001, p.27). Her miscommunication with her husband, who works as a computer engineer, is another manifestation to her disability to understand or to cope with modernism. This could be traced through her description to her husband who only understands “electronic tone signals” which she cannot understand. *Homebody* believes that this was reflected on his character as he is always “speedy, myriad, nervous, miraculous” (Kushner, *Homebody* 27). This modern nature prevents him from doing anything that is real (Suliman, 2022, p. 5).

She has a similar interrupted relationship with her daughter Priscilla whom she feels that she is responsible for her misery because of their psychological as well as physical separation “I am her mother, she is... starving. I... withhold my touch. The touch which does not understand that which it touches is the touch which corrupts that which it touches, and which corrupts itself” (Kushner,2001, p.42). Those cold relationships with her family members are reflected on the atmosphere of her miserable home: “And now my daughter; come home as one does. Mother knows mysteries; so, I wanted her to be out in the world, my daughter” (Kushner, 2001, p.42). Ironically, *Homebody* feels

even alienated from herself. This is reflected on her mental chaos as she described her brain as “pink-beige walnut-wrinkled nutmeat within a crystalliform quartzoid ice-white hoarfrost casing” (Kushner, 2001, p.14,15). According to *Homebody*, this lack of connection and this mental chaos stem from being different from her surroundings even in the way she speaks:

I can't help myself... I blame it on books, how else to explain it?
My parents don't speak like this; no one I know does; no one does.
It's an alien influence, and my borders have only been broached by
books. Sad to say (Kushner, 2001, p.12).

However, as Dennis Walder's points that family always constitutes the twilight zone where the personal memory of the past always interacts with the public memory of the whole society (p.13). Therefore, *Homebody's* personal misery as a depressed mother and wife interacts with her misery as a Western woman who cannot interact with the accelerating wheel of modernism. Therefore, *Homebody's* decision to make an imaginary journey to Afghanistan echoes Bhabha's view of postcolonial subjects who may decide to throw themselves into other “other times and other places, in the nations of others” as a sort of compensation and relief (Bhabha,1990, p.199). Thus, by returning into an imaginary community longing can be turned into belonging (Boym,2001, p. 350).

On the public level, *Homebody's* misery has many dimensions. Thus, her misery as a representative of colonial and imperial power could be represented through her relationship with Afghanistan. In his interview with Charlie Rose (2001), Kushner notes that *homebody's* inner misery is symbolized through her relationship with Afghanistan, a country which has been subjected to external pressures through imperial powers and internal pressures through ethnic conflicts. This situation is similar to *Homebody* who has been subjected to the pressures of her culture, her family and even internal mental and psychological pressures (Blake,2009, p. 258). In fact, her sympathy with the hand of the Afghan merchant which is wounded is a projection to her psych which is similarly, wounded (Minwalla,2005, p. 33).

Therefore, nostalgia has become her mental and psychological strategy to transcend all those hostile emotions. According to Boym (2001), nostalgia can be regarded as “a conscious choice to reject the logic of late modernity and to look sideways from the “tunnel vision” of progressive ideologies or master narratives” (p.49). Her nostalgia for Kabul in the past is nostalgia to primitivity which contradicts her modern life in London, she considers as unreal and fake (Suliman,2022, p.5).

Seeking Home in Afghanistan:

As was mentioned previously, nostalgia is yearning for lost time (history) and space (homeland). In that sense, the concept of home always transcends the geographical location because home has become a state of mind. Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling (1995) explain through their book *Home* the complex nature of the concept of home as it can motivate contradictory feelings of alienation and belonging (p.11). In postcolonial contexts, when the boundaries of home become interrupted and violated due to colonization, the postcolonial subjects transcend the feelings of being uneasiness by constructing imaginary homelands in their minds (Bhabha,1990 p.9). Thus, they create utopian homeland not only because of their longing to their homelands in the past but also as a failure of adapting with their surroundings in the present (Starobinski & Kemp, 1966, p.101).

From the very beginning of the play, Kushner illustrates how home constitutes an integral part for her identity and existence as she states that she feels lost because “away from home world became crowded” (p.53) Therefore. *Homebody*'s yearning to a lost homeland forces her to create an imaginary homeland in Kabul for many reasons. First, *Homebody*'s aim is to compensate her negative emotions of absence. Bryan Turner (1987) notes that when the homeland is absent, nostalgia helps the nostalgic person to relieve those negative feelings of absence. Thus, the nostalgic person always creates and idealizes a homeland, which is located in a lost time and place. This home is always free from any ethnic or political struggles (p.154). Therefore, nostalgia to the lost homeland becomes a psychological substitution rather than “forgetting about the reality” (Boym,2001, p.74).

Second, the tranquility of the city of Kabul in the past becomes an escape from her modern current life in London. Her choice to draw images of Kabul are based on outdated books which place Afghanistan outside modern world (Anker,2013, p.211).

However, her description to the city of Kabul echoes Boym interpretation to restorative nostalgia through ‘myth-making’ of the lost home (Boym,2001, p.72). This could be traced through her praising to the geographical beauty of old Kabul and to the serene beauty of the valleys of the Kabul River” (Kushner,2001, p. 2) and the mountains which were “unreal as clouds” (Kushner,2001, p.39). Her monologue ends with an old poem written by the old Persian Poet Sa'b-I-Tabrizi through which he portrays a primitive image to the pure beauty of old Kabul:

Oh the beautiful city of Kabul wears a rugged mountain skirt.
the dust of Kabul's blowing soil smarts lightly in my eyes.
But I love her; for knowledge and love both come from her dust...
The beauty of her trees makes me blush.
Every street in Kabul fascinates the eye...
I sing to the gardens of Kabul;
Even paradise is jealous of their greenery. (Kushner, 2001, p.56).

These ideal images provide the nostalgic person with a temporary emotion of pleasure and healing or as Doris Lessing (1999) has described them as a 'poisoned itch' (p.7). Third, nostalgia to the lost homeland in the past has become the mental and the psychological technique which the colonizer and the colonized use in order to compensate those feelings of loss and to create a sense of continuity with the lost time. In other words, memory becomes a search tool not only for roots but also for what Hutchon (2000) calls "a lost coherence" (p.189). Therefore, memory became the efficient tool to bridge those gaps of continuity. The idealization of Kabul reflects Boym's interpretation of restorative nostalgia which emphasizes reconstructing the lost homeland by patching the gaps of the memory (p.72). In that sense, *Homebody* depends on outdated books about Kabul in the past as she notes:

Impassioned, fluttery, doomed. A subject strikes my fancy: Kabul— you will see why, that's the tale I am telling- but then, I can't help myself, it's almost perverse, in libraries, in secondhand bookshops, I invariably seek out not the source but all that which was dropped by the wayside on the way to the source, outdated guidebooks . . . old magazines, hysterical political treatises written by an advocate of some long-since defeated or abandoned or transmuted cause (p.9-10).

However, the dilemma of the nostalgic person lies in the fact that this duality is between imaginary and real home. *Homebody* is trapped between her confusion between her imaginary home in Afghanistan in the past and her real home in London. Boym (2001) explains this phenomenon as one of the main drawbacks of restorative nostalgia. Walder notes that the nostalgic may die in order to restore the phantom of homeland by forcing the image of the real homeland with the imaginary into a single image, but the result is that it "breaks the frame or burns the surface" (p.13). This is clearly reflected through

Homebody's real journey to Afghanistan which ended with her ambiguous destiny of loss and death.

Recalling History of the Colonized:

According to Bendall (2005), dissatisfaction with the present always forces the nostalgic person to search for connection with a better time in the past by attributing their personal memories with the collective narratives (p. 4). However, it is difficult to recall the past without being affected by nostalgia particularly, in postcolonial contexts where the connection involves the "colonizer and the colonized and those in-between" (Walder 14,25). Through her prolonged monologue, Homebody narrates the history of Afghanistan from being the crossroad to the ancient civilizations to the conflict of empires and the struggle of various tribes (Fyfee,2010, p. 96).

Homebody's nostalgia to the past of the Afghanistan is obviously traced through her monologue which traces chronological order the history of Afghanistan till the present. Homebody's recalling to history stems from her understanding that history is "the wisdom's hand which switches on the light within...Ah, now, now I see why we suffered so back then, now I see what we went through. I understand" (p.24). Furthermore, she believes that history is "the scenery becomes translucent, beautifully lit" (24).

However, Homebody's recalling the history of Afghanistan is complicated and has many dimensions. First, it can be considered as a journey to a lost civilization. Dennis Walder notes that whenever the colonizers are aware of their displacement, they become obsessed with the glories of lost empires (Walder,2012, p. 72). Patricia Lorcin mentions that this recalling is part of imperial nostalgia which is attributed to 'the loss of empire' and the 'decline of national grandeur' (p.97). It stems from Homebody's motivation to understand the contradiction between historical and the "forgotten colonial representation and the present-day Kabul (Stevens,2016, p. 54). Therefore, Homebody finds in the ancient history of Afghanistan a projection to her memories about the glorious history of the British Empire.

On the other hand, on the private level, Homebody's anti -modernism forces her to be nostalgic to what Boym calls as "slower rhythms of the past" (41). Thus, she refuses the present which is overwhelmed by "succumbing to luxury" (Kushner, p. 23). Therefore, she fluctuates through her monologue between the narration of her personal daily struggles, the global concerns of exile, oppression, and other impacts of imperialism. For instance, her account

about her expectation of the failure of her party in London “I had no hope that this would be a good party. My parties are never good parties” was interrupted by her narration to the history of Mauryan empire in Afghanistan ‘By the end of the third century the far-flung Mauryan empire had disappeared, and a period of disorder, migration and tribal unrest follows, for which the records are clouded and confused” (Kushner, 2001, p.14). Lara Stevens (2016) notes that through this part of the monologue, Kushner is able to portray Afghanistan's complex history and traumatic present which is manifested through the clash between the luxurious modern parties in London and the “the elephant dowry of a Mauryan princess” (p.55).

However, this mental journey ended with Homebody's decision to leave London willingly to Kabul. Derek Gingrich (2014) describes this nostalgic journey as an endeavor to cure Homebody's soul by crossing the boundaries of the imperial West to the oppressed East (p.94). Thus, as the artistic director of Steppenwolf theatre points throughout the preface of the play that history of Afghanistan represents Homebody's attempts to escape from the miserable private history through which she cannot bear her deficiencies as a mother and as a wife (p.11).

Conclusion:

Throughout *Homebody/Kabul*, Kushner has manifested how the emotions of being displaced and alienated from both time and place may force not only the colonized but also the colonizer to yearn for a different time and different place. By focusing on the colonizer through the character of Homebody, postcolonial nostalgia has become the means of interpretation to understand the political and historical structures which trapped the colonizers of the falling empires in the contemporary world. Homebody, who is alienated not only from her domestic sphere in London but also from the modernism, has been motivated to resort mentally and physically to the land and to recall the history of the colonized. Her fascination with the Afghanistan's past has been a sort of compensation and comfort to her disconnection to the modern world and miscommunication with her family. Finally, the play explores through the character of Homebody the complexity of postcolonial nostalgia as it can be a source of comfort and pain, connection and disconnection at the same time.

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الحنين إلى تاريخ أفغانستان في مسرحية هوم بادي/كابول لتوني كوشنر

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المستخلص:

يستهدف هذا البحث استعراض كيف يشكل الحنين إلى الماضي و استدعاء التاريخ إحدى الطرق العديدة للهروب من الحاضر المؤلم من أجل الحلم بمستقبل أفضل و خلق نوع من التواصل بين الماضي و الحاضر. و يستعرض البحث كيف أن مشاعر الاغتراب عن الحاضر قد تدفع المستعمر إلى استدعاء تاريخ المستعمرات السابقة بوصفه نوعاً من التعويض عن الاغتراب عن الحاضر. وهذا يتضح من خلال تحليل المسرحية الأمريكية هوم بدي/كابول (٢٠٠١) للكاتب توني كوشنر (١٩٥٠ -). تلقي المسرحية الضوء على البطلة و هي امرأة إنجليزية في منتصف الأربعينات تسمى هوم بدي، تعاني من من الاغتراب عن المكان و الزمان الذي تعيش فيه. فعلى المستوى الشخصي فهي تعاني من عدم القدرة على التواصل مع أفراد أسرتها و كذلك على المستوى العام لا تستطيع تقبل مواكبة الحداثة في المجتمع الغربي. لذلك تقرر أن تستدعي تاريخ أفغانستان بعد قراءتها لكتاب عن أفغانستان و من ثم تقرر الذهاب إلى أفغانستان كوسيلة لتجاوز مشاعر الاغتراب عن بيتها و أسرتها ووطنها و مشاعر الإشتياق إلى الماضي. و يعتمد الباحث في التحليل على نظريات ما بعد الكولونيالية: النظرية الأولى لسيلفيا بويم الواردة في كتابها "مستقبل الحنين إلى الماضي" (٢٠٠١) و النظرية الثانية هي "الحنين إلى الماضي فيما بعد الكولونيالية" (٢٠١٢) للكاتب دنيس و الدر لإلقاء الضوء على كيفية اتخاذ الحنين إلى الماضي لدى المستعمر بعدين: الأول إلى المكان و الثاني إلى الزمان كنوع من التعويض عن الاغتراب المكاني و الزماني.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الحنين إلى الماضي- أرض الوطن – استدعاء التاريخ - توني كوشنر- هوم بدي/كابول.