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A Postcolonial Analysis of Terrorism Rationalization in Yasmina Khadra's *The Attack*

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Abstract:

*Employing the postcolonial paradigm, this paper explores the conduct of violence in a colonial condition and seeks to determine its rationality in *The Attack*. In colonial states, violence plays a critical role both in the furtherance and perpetuation of colonialism and the resistance of the same. Both the colonizer and the colonized assume some form of legitimacy in their violent acts. In an effort to delegitimize the resistance effort of the colonized, the colonizer often attempts to define and label the oppressed as terrorists gripped in unjustified acts of violence. Through a qualitative research design, this study probes how the colonized attempt to rationalize their violence by resisting the cloak of a terrorist therefore assuming the pose of a resistance and freedom fighter. The paper argues that the dispossessed justify their violence as a path towards redemption from the oppressed condition of colonization.*

Keywords: Violence, terrorism, post coloniality, rationalization, altruistic

1. Introduction

The story of *The Attack* is narrated in the context of the Palestine-Israel conflict in which the latter is thought to impose a colonial status on the former. The protracted conflict between Palestine and Israel can be traced to the formation of the Israel state in the Palestinian territory on 14th May 1948 upon the recommendation of the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (Hassan, 2004). Since then, violence has characterized the relationship between the Palestines and the Israelis. The nature of this conflict relates to the belief among the Palestines and their sympathizers that Israel's attempt to impose their state territory on what it considers its ancestral land is tantamount to colonization. For Palestines, this amounts to occupation by a foreign state. Dana and Jarbawi (2017) describe the Israel state as a Zionist colonizer of the Palestines who relies on their violent power and domination to marginalize their victims. Keen to establish a state, the Israel government has proceeded to label all forms of resistance violence perpetuated by the Palestines as terrorism. Khadra's *The Attack* fictionalizes the relationship between Israel and Palestine as a conflict of the colonizer and the colonized. The story is based on Dr. Amin Jaafari, a Palestine but naturalized Israel citizen who works as a surgeon at a major health facility in Tel Aviv, the Ichilov hospital. The entire narrative revolves around the doctor's attempt to comprehend a twisted puzzle in which his wife, SihemJaafari, is accused by the Israel state of perpetuating a suicide terrorist act in Hakiryra, resulting to the death of 17 people.

2. Colonial and Anticolonial Violence in the Attack

According to Dushatska (2019), colonialism is synonymous with violence. Ndlov-Gatsheni (2011) declares "the logic of violence can be located in coloniality" (p.561). Violence in a colonial state is viewed in the context of the imperialist's attempt to impose their rule through it. Fanon (1963) insists that colonization is a violent and brutal reality which the colonized must also counter in the same fashion. This suggests, the violence of the oppressed is enacted as reactive to the violence of the oppressor. It is a reaction to the colonized condition and therefore part of the attempt of the colonized to effect decolonization and liberation. If the violence of the oppressed is an attempt to realize freedom, then the violence of the colonizer represents an effort to preserve the colonial oppressive condition.

Within postcolonialism, Simatei (2005) defines violence as the "...relationships, processes, and conditions that attended the practise of colonialism" and these "violated the physical, social, and/or psychological integrity of the colonized" (Simatei, 2005, p. 85). Slight extensions may incorporate conceptions of violence voiced by scholars such as, Bufachi (2005) who perceive violence "in terms of an act of force or in terms of violation" (p. 193) and Geras (1990) who defines violence as "...the exercise of physical force so as to kill or injure, inflict direct harm or pain on human beings"

(p.22). All definitions and especially Simatei's, express the core character of violence which Dewey sums up as: destructive and harmful (Dewey as cited in Bufachi, 2005). But Dewey's notion that violence is destructive and harmful is contestable though may be allowable in certain narrow contexts such as in the analysis of the colonizer's use of violence to impose an injustice. The same cannot be said in the interpretation of the colonized's violence which scholars such as Fanon (1963) assert is therapeutic. Ultimately, how a particular act of violence is understood, depends on how it is presented. When the colonizer defines the violence of the colonized as terrorism as is the case in *The Attack*, it becomes undesirable and harmful, consistent with Dewey's thesis.

The Attack is imbued with various manifestations of violence which are either perpetuated by the state (colonizers) or the resistance movements (colonized). At the onset, the very beginning of the text, there is a violent suicide terrorist attack in a restaurant which subsequent investigations establish SihemJaafari, the wife to Dr. Amin Jaafari as culpable. In this attack, Sihem strapped "explosives onto herself and (went) to detonate them in the middle of a party" (p.60) in a restaurant "where some school kids organized a party to celebrate the birthday of one of their little classmates" (p.48). The aftermath of the attack in which Sihem "blew herself up in the middle of a bunch of school children" (p.155) is a fatality figure of "nineteen, among them eleven schoolchildren" (p.17). Upon Sihem's commission of this act, the state is quick to characterize it as an act of terrorism furthered by religious fundamentalists. But as subsequent analysis of Sihem's violence is performed, the notion of it being a terrorist act becomes contestable and problematized.

Significantly set at the very beginning of the text, Sihem's act of violence becomes the foundation of the entire text. The act forms a hovering presence, casting a long shadow on every single aspect of the text from the beginning to the end. Every word, phrase or statements in *The Attack*, is contextualized in this moment of a violent act staged against "kids who were just having a good time..." (p.48). From the beginning then, every party involved in the novelistic experience of the book, from the characters to the readers, is forced to grapple with the imperatives of violence, trying to answer the question, *why?* This forms the backdrop upon which Amin Jaafari, SihemJaafari's husband, would engage in a travel metaphor, attempting among other things, to understand how his wife could be responsible for an act considered terrorist.

The fact that Sihem's attack is set at the very beginning and targeted at children evokes two concepts necessary for a broader analysis of violence within post coloniality: *genesis* and *innocence*. The aspect of violence at the beginning of the text mirrors the colonial experience where the subjugated were exposed to violent acts at the very beginning of the colonial enterprise. Colonialism is founded on violence and brutality. In this sense, the fact that Sihem commits the violent act at a party, which is 'birthday party' celebrating a *beginning* comments on the notion of genesis. Violence at the beginning of a text against a celebration of a beginning (birthday party) evokes memories of the violent beginning of colonialism. There is a parallel between the violence of Sihem being set at the start of the narrative and the colonial experience whose genesis was rooted on violations and aggressions. It is a reminder of the truth that violence was the centerpiece of coloniality, right from the beginning.

On the other hand, Sihem's violence also provokes a reflection on the target of colonizer's violence. Aghamelu and Ejike (2017) declare, "the instrument of the colonial rule is violence" (p.27). However, the violence of the colonizer was aimed at natives whose only needs were "land, communality, dignity and cultural expression" (Aghamelu&Ejike, 2017, p.27) thereby raising the specter of violence against *innocence*, the second aspect of Sihem's violence.

By definition, children represent innocence. An attack on them would appear to be a moment when all lines of human considerations are erased. This then is the nature of Sihem's act whose targets are significant. This attack on children is designed to elicit a moral outrage. Yet, perceived from a postcolonial angle, Sihem's action can be said to be an attempt to violently draw attention to the gruesome violence that is perpetually committed against innocents in colonial situations. The underlying message of her act is clear: there is a close similarity between the innocence of the children she attacks, and the innocence of the victims of brutal Israel violent attacks on Palestines in Jenin, Sihem's home town which is perpetually engulfed in state violence. Sihem's act represents a violent reawakening to the reality of the merciless violence of the state against indefensible people. The dehumanizing nature of this attack on children forces a grappling on the violence against innocent colonized subjects. Described as such, this character is able to transcend the terrorist cloak foisted upon her by the Israel state. In effect, what is thought to be a terrorist act resists this label by urging a historical and contextual analysis. By appreciating both the historical and contextual circumstances of colonialism, Sihem's violence acquires a new meaning, contrary to the narrative perpetuated by the state. She is not a terrorist as the state claims. Rather, she is part of movement that opposes colonialism and occupation of the Jewish state of Israel.

At the moment of Sihem's violent attack, Dr. Amin Jaafari, her husband, is shocked. He struggles to process his wife's act. For him, violence regardless of the context, represents an expression of human folly. He perceives Sihem as a fundamentalist indoctrinated by radical extremists with little regard for human life. However, Amin's inability to comprehend Sihem's act, is interpreted as ignorance by characters such as Adel, who rationalize the violence as justified resistance action against the Israel colonizers. Regarding Sihem's attack, Adel tells Amin:

It was as if you were firing up a barbecue in a burned-out yard. You saw only the barbecue; she saw the rest, the desolation all around, spoiling all delight. It wasn't your fault; all the same, she couldn't bear sharing your blindness anymore... (p.227).

In this extract, the split screen imagery of a barbecue amidst desolation is a commentary to the contrasting stances espoused by Amin and his wife regarding the use of violence. The 'competing ethics of resistance' are shown to emanate from the broadness or narrowness of one's perception. In representing the masses, Sihem as Fanon (1963), understands that violence is a central solution to the problem of oppression. The barbecue imagery serves to highlight the supposition that, Amin's stance is grounded on ignorance. Its narrowness is similar to the state's insistence that those who oppose their colonial vision through violence, are terrorists. The idea that decolonization is attainable through other

means than violence, is depicted as a fantasy of organizing a party in the middle of destruction and suffering. In the analysis of this imagery, the reader is invited to assess the whole matter broadly, to look at both Amin and Sihem and their place in the burned-out barbecue.

Despite having his roots with an oppressed people, Amin rejects violence and all its vestiges. Being a Palestine who “come(s) from a poor but honest background,” (p.97), he has had to sacrifice in order to give meaning to his conviction that “A man’s life is worth much more than any sacrifice, no matter how great,” (p.245). He heartily believes that “...the greatest, the most just, the noblest cause on Earth is the right to live....” (p.246). This is why he “renounced (his) tribe, agreed to leave (his) mother’s side, made concession after concession in order to dedicate myself to my career alone” (p.165). Despite Amin’s burden of “putting up with the incivilities of (his) Jewish comrades” (p.96), he is still the “Arab who stood out from the rest-and who gave himself the satisfaction of graduating first in his class” (p.97). Amin declares that by being “on the side of my ability” (p.96), he now works in Tel Aviv, the centre of the Jewish community practicing “the noblest of all human professions” (p.166), a medical surgeon.

It is this background that molds Amin’s opposition to the tactics of violence. Yet, it is possible to see why. The fact that he renounces his mother’s tribe in order to pursue an education in a foreign country responsible for the oppression of his people, delineates him as both a privileged nationalist and a diasporic elite. All these factors have implications on the transformation and formation of Amin’s identity and world views. For a start, his education and exposure to a foreign country affects the way he interprets the struggle for freedom back at home. In this sense, Amin represents the elite nationalists who travel to the colonizers’ cities and as a consequence of the foreign interactions, develop a new perspective regarding the question of freedom and liberation.

Amin spends most of his life in the territory of the oppressor of his people. It can be hypothesized then, that Amin’s modalities of thought, including his opposition to the use of violence, are occasioned by his exposure to colonizer’s education, philosophies, beliefs and traditions which promote colonialism and its causes. There is a tension and disagreement in the way he and his wife perceive the question of freedom. In their life together, Sihem is retrospectively depicted as having remained closer to her people. She represents the local masses, or the periphery, while Amin stands for the elite diasporic community.

Commenting on the fraught relationship between the local oppressed masses and the diasporic metropolitan elites, Cole and Kandiyoti (2002) argue that “relations between the metropolis and periphery” (p.195) is always tenuous. Folola (2001) explains that the interaction of the colonized elites and the foreign education ended up producing individuals who were in their thoughts dissimilar to “the indigenous” (p.23). It is this dissimilarity between the elites and the communities left behind that creates a complication on the overall approach towards decolonization.

In Amin’s case, his transformation is made glaring by the act of his wife. His call for non-violence contrasts with Sihem’s act. It is a split that speaks of a tension among a people who agree on the need for freedom but disagree on the means. Srivastava (2010) describes this tension as the “competing ethics of resistance” (P. 303). She adds, “violence and non-violence as responses to colonization are seen to be profoundly linked to the contrasting realities of decolonization” (Srivastava, 2010, p.303). Srivastava alludes to the reality of tension between the peripheral masses and the metropolitan elites in the decolonization process.

In Amin, we have what Gunn (2018) calls a “a bourgeoisie and a small urban working class” (p.2990) among the colonized who are detached from the reality of oppression of the masses. In this manner, Sihem’s ironic act becomes a parody of Amin and other nationalists who state their commitment to a decolonization effort but the state of their life is removed from the daily suffering of the common people. Through education and exposure, the elites are seen as incapable of comprehending the true reality of oppression because colonists, through their education, imposed on them blindness. This fact is brought out in the contrast between Amin the elite, and his wife, Sihem, who represents the masses unaffected by bourgeoisie exposure. This explains why Adel who rationalizes Sihem’s violent act, still understands why Amin remains stuck in a state of ignorance.

Adel’s rationalization of Sihem’s violence is founded on the perceived unjust violence of the state against the Palestinians. It emphasizes the fact that states can be culprits in perpetuating mass oppression through indiscriminate violence. Jones and Lucinda Manda (2006) observe, “The longevity of binarized conceptions of identity in postcolonial states facilitates state-orchestrated and/or state sanctioned violence against a perceived other deemed alien” (p.211). According to this view, the colonizer freely employs violence because they perceive the colonized as different and therefore exempt from consideration which would otherwise moderate the brutality of their campaign.

The imagery of the barbecue then serves as a critique of Amin and his interpretation of the situation regarding the problem of colonization. It buttresses the perception that elites may not be in a position to appreciate the complex problem of decolonization because they are blinded with the colonizers’ cultural contamination. Their elitism renders them indifferent to the oppression of the masses. Their travels in the foreign cities complicate their comprehension of the people’s suffering. In *The Attack*, the contrast between the elite nationalists and the masses, is born out in the split and ironic marriage of a doctor, Amin, to a suicide terrorist in the cause of freedom, Sihem.

The fact that Sihem is able to hide her entire plot from Amin, furthers the motif of blindness which characterizes the nationalist elites’ removal and detachment from the colonial realities. All through the initial stages of the investigation to the Hakirya attacks, Amin maintains the innocence of his wife because he thinks, “her hands were too white for the smallest stain to escape my notice” (p.41). He declares:

Between Sihem and me, there was a perfect love, a harmonious serenade that seemed unmarred by a single false note. We didn’t talk; we told ourselves, the way a storyteller tells a romantic idyll. Had she ever uttered a groan, I

would have taken it for singing, for I couldn't suspect that she was on the periphery of my happiness when she embodied it utterly (p.76).

It is significant that Amin characterizes his knowledge and love of Sihem as perfect. This reflects the arrogance and pride of nationalists who insist of knowing more than everybody else. In the same way, Amin stresses the innocence of his wife in the attack and fights everybody else who proposes a different view. For him, he is the ultimate gateway to his wife. His masculinity prevents him from stepping back and considering the possibility that things might be different. Furthering on the notion of elitist removal from the suffering of the masses, Amin lived with his wife in "a splendid residence in one of the most exclusive neighborhoods in Tel Aviv, and our bank account is fairly substantial" (p.22). In the same measure, the couple occasionally "...take off for some fantastic place. We know Paris, Frankfurt, Barcelona, Miami, and several Caribbean islands" (p.22). But to illustrate the contrast between the spendthrift Amin and his conservative wife, Sihem did not always approve of the opulent life of her husband. Amin remembers, "Sihem didn't really have her heart set on taking a honeymoon trip. She knew my resources were limited and preferred investing in a less dreary apartment" (p.178).

It is because of Amin's attitude relating to his declared knowledge of Sihem, that when the truth about her involvement in the attack finally dawns, he is broken and inconsolable. When he receives the letter from Sihem establishing her culpability in the attack, he admits the wreckage it occasions: "The letter lies at my feet, exceedingly real, calling the totality of my convictions into question, pulverizing one by one all my rock-ribbed certitudes" (p.70). This letter reaffirms the ignorance and blindness of Amin. It calls to question his judgement. But more importantly, the letter fortifies the imagery of a barbecue fired in a destroyed place in which Amin only narrowly perceives the pleasure of a barbecue and is blind to the desolation around. The destroyed part of this imagery represents the suffering of the masses at the hands of the colonialists. The characterization of 'desolation all around' suggests a bigger area, which then point to the masses, the majority. The smaller area of a barbecue is contrasted to the sprawling masses who cannot partake in the merrymaking of the few elites like Amin who otherwise claim to fight for their freedom.

Regarding the matter of elitist detachment from the suffering of the masses, Diop (2012) notes how nationalists were enchanted by "dazzle of the products of modern market capitalism" (p.234) they were exposed to in the foreign cities. This aligns with Amin's preoccupation with parties and magnificent homes in 'exclusive neighborhoods.' It is this reality then that informs Amin's stance regarding the use of violence in a decolonization process. The construction of his identity points to a compromised character. It is why in the barbecue extract; Amin is told that it 'it wasn't your fault.' His blindness and ignorance, the excerpt affirms, were not matters of choosing. The transformation and formation of his identity and world view are attributable to his foreign travels. In connection to this stance, Diop further observes, "There is a whole cultural substratum that undergirds the subconscious of the elites, which in fact, in turn, is partly conditioned by the inherited set of beliefs" (Diop, 2012, p.223). According to Diop, the subconscious of Amin has been conditioned by the beliefs and traditions he encounters in the foreign land, in this case, Israel.

In the extract cited previously, Amin is absolved from his blindness, because the speaker, Adel, believes, he (Amin) has been contaminated in his foreign travels. This raises the aspect of identity and diaspora in postcolonialism. Typical of most diasporic nationals, Amin experiences complications regarding his identity which in turn influences his world views on decolonization back in the homeland. As an inherent component of coloniality (Mains *et al.*, 2013), diaspora can be understood in terms of "a travelling metaphor associated with tropes of mobility, displacement, borders and crossings" (Keown & Procter, 2009, p. 1). This implies, diaspora characterizes movements of people mostly from the colonized territories to the territories of their colonizers. Clifford notes that deterritorialization of diaspora is normally attributable to violence, poverty and economic hardships (Clifford as cited in Bhat, 2015). By moving from his homeland in Palestine territory to Israel for the purpose of realizing his goals, Amin is in a diasporic state. The same travel and journey metaphor would be observed when he travels to different places as he seeks to determine the motive of his wife committing a violent act in a restaurant. Later, Amin heads back to Jenin, his ancestral homeland, in a return motif. But evidently, his diasporic interactions affect his perception of the violence question in a colonial situation. Amin's travels and interactions are partly responsible for his blindness and ignorance in regards to the brutality of the colonizer's (Israel) violence against innocent people.

In *The Attack*, the town of Jenin represents a concrete example of the oppression ingrained in the colonial enterprise of the colonizer. It is the appropriate imagery of the savagery of the colonial assault. The reality of this town forms the grounds upon which the oppressed otherwise described as terrorists, rationalize their violence as a reaction against the brutality of the state colonizer. Here:

...small villages are in a state of siege; checkpoints on every access road; larger roads littered with charred vehicles blasted by drones; cohorts of the damned, lined up and waiting their turn to be checked, pushed about, and often turned back; protesting women, with nothing to ward off the blows of the rifle butts but their bruised hands... (p.200).

This town is a picture of the colonial violence orchestrated by the state of Israel. In this state, the town acquires a symbolic signification, representing the colonized state as a condition of colonial violence and chaos. The town's desolation and despondency reflect the reality of a colonized people in the face of a violent campaign by the colonizer. The images of roads 'littered with charred vehicles and blasted drones' bespeaks of unrelenting and unrestrained acts of violence. The bruised hands of the women form a recurrent image of a brutal campaign. Their deformed state becomes a permanent remainder of the oppression that colonization engenders. The state of things here, constructs a context within which to interpret the violent act of Sihem/Jaafari.

The violent campaign of the state against the Palestine town of Jenin, reflects an indifference and insensitivity which harkens back to SihemJaafari's acts at the beginning of the narrative. This solidifies the analysis that Sihem's act in its insensitivity, symbolizes the colonizers in their violent campaign. Souleymane (2017) observes "the aggression of the colonizer made the European colonists more barbaric than the people ostensibly supposed to be civilized" (p.26). In the extract above, the picture of mothers with bruises reflects the injuries suffered by the colonized states during colonization. Women are typically representative of nation-states inherent in the signification of countries with a feminine pronoun 'she' or 'her.' Thus, the bruises represent the deformity of the colonized state as a result of colonization. The marks imply, the colonized people continue to live with the scars of colonialism, after the physical departure of the colonizers. Therefore, the physical attack on these women is a reenactment of colonial violence against both the colonized people and their countries.

The colonial violence is also evident when Amin finally returns home, where he meets almost all living members of his family, including "cousins, uncles, nephews, nieces, and other relatives" (p.243). The family reunion is a picture of placidity and love. The relatives are at their ease as they connect and commune with each other. Amin observes, "...I don't regret this sojourn among my family. Their warmth consoles me; their generosity reassures me" (p.245). In this symbolic return, Amin finds reprieve from the crisis and conflicts that he faced in the diaspora. This is a relevant scene in the discussion of Bhabha's notion of unhomeliness since Amin is no longer an emigrant whose migration has supplanted "old ideas of belonging and identity" (Huddart, 2007, p.57). In their analysis of the concept of unhomely, Rostami and Parvaneh (2016) state, "home is perceived to be a place of stable identity where one has been and is understood. Home is a place of freedom and peace" (p. 157).

Therefore, Amin is in Bhabha's defined notion of home. The sense of belonging that he derives from the family reunion is devoid of the unhomely "where home is breached" (p.157) according to Rostami and Parvaneh (2016). In this state, Amin's identity is reified as he interacts with the familiar and the known. In this reunion, his nephew, Wissam, "tells amusing stories from the front until late in the night...Wissam is a piece of work; it's hard for me to believe that such a shy boy has developed such a hilarious sense of humor" (p.237). Home for Amin is a place of comfort and catharsis. He is released from the tension he experienced from his diasporic adventure.

However, shortly after, Wissam receives a phone call which requires him to travel to Jenin town. Several days later, the bad news comes in, "Wissam. He died in action today. He filled his car with explosives and drove into an Israel checkpoint" (p.246). As a result of this:

...soldiers invade the orchard at daybreak...soon a tank transporter brings in a bulldozer. The commanding officer informs that as a consequence of the suicide operation carried out by WissamJaafari against an army checkpoint and in accordance with the instructions he's received from his superiors, we have half an hour to evacuate the dwelling so that he can proceed to destroy it... (p.246-247).

The lead officer in this operation informs Amin that it is official government policy for the entire homes of perpetrators of violence against the state to be destroyed. In this case and in line with the policy, this home where Wissam lived and it belonged to Amin's aged granduncle Omr, would have to be destroyed by a bulldozer. Amin protests saying, "We're not going to let you destroy our house, the people who live here, where do you expect them to go? There are two old people here, both of them well past ninety..." (p.247). To this, the officer's reply is curt, "...you have twenty-nine minutes...Twenty-eight minutes..." (p.247). And shortly later:

The bulldozer bellows, spewing a thick cloud...as it pivots on itself, its steel tracks tear ferociously at the ground...at the moment when the low wall surrounding the property collapses, a wave of rage washes over me, sending me running toward the machine...and keep charging toward the monster that's about to annihilate my family history... (p.248).

The invasion of the bulldozer and the state agents, disrupts the peace. The serenity of the home is violated and a sense of displacement sets in. The turn of events in this scene, marks the transition for Amin, from homely to unhomely. This is because the state agents and the bulldozer symbolize the colonizer. The relations in this scene are synecdochic. A synecdoche is a "figure of which were a part is put for the whole, and the whole for the part (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2020). Llarena-Ascanio (n.d) states "politics of identity are synecdochic taking the part(individual) to be representative of the whole (the social group)" (par. 3). In this sense, Amin stands for the whole culture of the colonized while the state agents represent the culture of the colonizer.

The unhomely state is a psychological condition that ensues after the interaction of two cultures, the familiar and the unfamiliar. This suggests an unhomeliness is a state of hybridity, so that culturally, the native culture hybridizes with the foreign culture of the colonizer. Farahbakhsh and Revnaneh (2016) contends, "one aspect of hybridity is unhomeliness; to put it another way, Bhabha refers to a hybrid identity as an unhomely identity" (p.107). The unhomely state of Amin does not presuppose a state of homelessness. Rather, it implies, symbolically, a new state of identity as a result of the violent disruption of the state agents. In this case, he represents the native culture while the state agents represent the colonizer's culture. The contact between Amin and these agents leads to an uncomfortable state for Amin and his relatives, which is the defining characteristic of unhomely state. The unhomeliness inherent in this scene is metaphoric rather than literal, representing the cultural displacement that ensues after the contact between the known and the unknown.

Ultimately, after the destruction of this home, the family would be rendered homeless. The physical manifestation of the colonizer's action can be analyzed culturally. In her analysis of unhomeliness, Russell (2017) notes that in such a state, "displacement arises where home is breached" (p.3). Thus, the physical displacement extends to describe the cultural transmutation that occurs as a result of the mixing between the familiar and the unfamiliar.

Previously, it was noted that Sihem's act of violence at the beginning of the text permeates every aspect of *The Attack*. A particular element of the attack had to do with the fact that it was conducted at the beginning of the book hence becoming the foundation upon which to view all subsequent actions especially the violence of the colonizer. The symbolism of the attack is further reinforced in the invasion at Omr's residence by the agents of the state who demolish the house. In this attack, the state agents perpetuate their actions at the first time they meet this family. From the account of the text, no evidence is adduced to dissuade from the fact that this is the first-time government agents visit this homeland. There are parallels between Sihem's act at the beginning of the text and the agent's action at Omr's homestead. Both of the attacks point to the fact that the colonial campaign was characterized with violence from the very beginning. The violence of the colonizer was the defining feature of colonialism.

The scene at Omr's house is significant in the way it highlights the brutality and violence of the colonizer. The policy that informs this destruction as explained by the lead agent in the operation, sums up the rule of unjust at the heart of colonialism. The notion that an entire homestead is up for demolition reveals the cruelty of the state in its relationship with the colonized. Wissam's violence then serves an important function in exposing the colonial regime as unjust and unfair. It is through his violence against the state that the indiscriminate destructive policy is brought to the fore. Souleymane (2017) notes that "subversion was meant to reveal to humanity the brutality of colonialists over innocent people...although the military weaknesses highlight the inferiority of the colonized, it mainly foregrounds the wickedness of the colonial system" (p.261-262). It is this colonial wickedness and brutality that is apparent as the bulldozer tears down a house that was constructed many generations ago and a place where "many hopes were nourished" (p.249).

The most important symbolic value of Omr's house demolition scene lies with its portrayal of the colonial destruction of native's country. In this case, Omr's house symbolizes the entire country of the colonized people and its violation a commentary on the reality the colonized people perpetually confront. In Jenin and Omr's house, the completeness of the colonizers' unhinged campaign of violence, exploitation and injustice against the colonized, is in full view. The desperation and despondency that engulfs Omr and Aunt Najet as they are rendered homeless in the twilight of their lives provides a split mirror contrast that reveals the two sides of coin in a colonial condition: the coldness of the colonizer and the dehumanization of the colonized victims. This desperation is evident on Faten, Amin's cousin who for a long time, has tended to Omr in his old age. After demolition, "...she sits lifelessly, silently, with a dazed look on her face, like a shadow in a forgotten corner, waiting to melt into the night" (P. 250).

Faten in her desperate condition, reflects the situation of the colonized as they suffer under the yoke of colonial violence. Her 'lifelessness' and the figure of 'a shadow' speaks of the diminishing aspects of violence on its victims. Through violence, argues Aghamelu and Ejike (2017), "the natives are exploited, enslaved, oppressed, marginalized, dehumanized, abused and devalued by the colonizers" (p.25). It is through these series of violence effects that Aghamelu and Ejike also observe that, any form of violence has the effect of "diminishing the victim's sense of identity, dignity and self-worth" (p.24). In Faten, a portrait of a violently victimized native emerges. In her dehumanized and emasculated state, she tells the story of the colonized subjects at the hands of the brutal and violent colonial campaigns. This then vindicates the suggestion that "colonial expansion installed European authority through violence" (Carotenuto&Shaddle, 2012, p.5). The violent nature of colonial imperialism in the text, depicts the victims as devitalized, dehumanized and depersonalized.

If the colonialists' violence of the state is dehumanizing and destructive, then Sihem's violence is rehumanizing, contesting and restorative. It is an effort against the cause of imperialism and colonial brutality. It is a just cause against the unjust violence of the state in Jenin. In Sihem's suicidal violence, a sacrificial resistance against oppression is displayed. Sihem provides an actualization of Fanonian vision of decolonization where the monopoly of the colonizer's destructive violence is replayed with the colonized's reconstructive violence. Fanon declares "...violence is a cleansing force. It frees the natives from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect" (Fanon, 1963, p.93). For Fanon, violence is central in decolonization and fight for freedom. In this violence, the colonized overcome the terror label slapped upon them by the colonizer.

Having established that the colonizer's quest for domination is riddled with unbridled violence, the meaning of Sihem's violence acquires the meaning of resistance against this oppressive cause. The violence assumes the role of clamoring for freedom from the clutches of colonization just as Fanon suggests. In his analysis of Fanon's works, Roberts (2004) states, "violence is a necessary factor in Frantz Fanon's concept of anti-colonial freedom, a necessary factor in creating a postcolonial polity championing freedom, self-determination, and the absence of domination" (P.139-140). Simatei (2005) opines, "violence (is) an anti-dote to colonial brutality and therefore a tool of liberation" (p.89).

Hence, Sihem's violence is redemptive of the essence destroyed by the colonizer. It is an effort to restore dignity, honour and humanity of the colonized that was destroyed by the colonial violence. In this way, Sihem's act assumes a religious, sacrificial interpretation where an individual commits to lose his/her life for the bigger good. Sihem chooses to die so that the dignity and freedom of her oppressed people can be restored. This is her form of resistance to the emasculative discourse of colonialism. It is similar to the aspect of sacrifice and martyrdom in a colonial condition which is pervasive in NgugiwaThiong'o works as studied by Simatei (2005). In relation to this, he says, "To structure the subversive impulses of his characters, Ngugi resorts to paradigms of self-sacrifice and messianic models grounded not only on Fanonist principles of redemptive violence, but also on materialistic interpretations and inverted models of Judeo-Christian doctrines of salvation" (Simatei, 2005, p.90). Consistent with Simatei observation, it can be asserted that, Sihem's act, which is altruistic, is martyrdom designed to contest the terrorist designation operationalized by the state, the colonizer.

Deemed as self-sacrificial, Sihem's violence fits within a postcolonial paradigm. Viewed from this perspective, her violence performs the act of re-ascribing the deprived agency of the colonized subjects. In a postcolonial condition, Young

(2016) affirms, "violence offers a primary form of agency through which the subject moves from non-being to being, from being an object to a subject" (p.2). This is the essence of violent resistance in post-coloniality. It compels a renegotiation of binary relations fostered by imperialism and sustained by colonial violence. In reversing the binary, the violence of the oppressed rejects the label of the other or the terrorist because it reaffirms the centrality of the colonized by recovering its lost humanity. Roberts (2004) opines that, "those lacking subjectivity perform violence in order to gain agency" (p.143). In Roberts view, the violence of the oppressed represents an active initiative to reclaim the personhood that colonial violence destroys. The forms of resistance violence such as Sihem's, are grounded on the efforts to humanize and then actionize the otherwise dehumanized and destroyed colonized subject.

3. Conclusion

YasminaKhadra's *The Attack* depicts the colonized embracing violence as a decolonization instrument. The discussion shows that, emasculation and oppression inherent in occupied condition of the Palestines in the text, provide a means for rationalization of their violence. Such violence, contrary to the state characterization as terrorist, is liberative and rehabilitative. Terrorists and terrorism are then shown to be politically charged terms which function as the colonizer's tools of oppression. In accepting violence as a means towards the recapture of their agency and humanity which colonization erodes, the colonized, as Sihem demonstrates, are effectively fighting the tag of terrorists. In this manner, the study shows, through their violence, the colonized are freedom fighters. Hence, when a character like SihemJaafari commits an act of violence that leads to fatalities, her sympathizers perceive her conduct as part of resistance against their colonized state. For them, she is a heroine, who as Simatei (2005) observes, constitutes an expression of the Judeo-Christian sacrifice.

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