

The Politics of Migrant Voices: Multicultural Tolerance in Abdourahman A. Waberi's *Transit*



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Abstract

Although mass media today graphically captures travel perils of African migrants to Europe, it is deafeningly silent on racist, xenophobic and human rights perils they encounter there. This paper examines the resistance of both African and French migrants against racism, xenophobia and human rights abuses as emanations of neo-nationalism in Waberi's novel, *Transit*. Waberi comes from Djibouti, a country located at edge of the horn of Africa between Somalia, Ethiopia, and Eritrea in which the political turmoil ushered in by the 1991 civil war and the 2008 border conflict with Eritrea still forces Djiboutians in their droves into exile to France, the country's former colonizer. Against this backdrop of mass migration to France, I argue that the monologues of different characters in the novel embody polemical calls for multicultural tolerance in the face of a new wave of racism, xenophobia and human rights abuses. To this end, the paper employs Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of heteroglossia in the analysis of multicultural tolerance in Waberi's *Transit*. The suitability of heteroglossia lies in the Bakhtian postulation that "The novel orchestrates all its themes...by means of the social diversity of speech types

(heteroglossia) and by the differing individual voices that flourish under such conditions” (263). Thus, in order to examine the depiction of multicultural tolerance in *Transit*, the paper will analyze how different character monologues contribute to the theme thereof.

Keywords: migrant, multicultural tolerance, neo-nationalism, Djibouti, heteroglossia