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Article

Leaving to Live but Not Without Scar: Trauma of Departure in Helon Habila's *Travelers*

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Abstract

Having been pushed out to search for greener pastures outside their homelands in view of hardship, socio-political, and economic problems that have become the major postcolonial indices in most African countries, African migrants are faced with some challenges, which often threaten their lives and identities in the strange land. Predicated on the postcolonial theory, this study, therefore, examines the representations of migrants' ordeal following their "escape" from home in Helon Habila's *Travelers*. These traumatic encounters are occasioned by their host community's austere ambience. Anderson (2015, p. 354) rightly maintains that "Fear among and of migrants is often perpetuated via rhetorical measures that bespeak the overlay of racism and economic intransigency." For some of the restless migrant characters, they only end up moving out of the frying pan into the fire. The narrative reveals migrants' loss in terms of relationships, emotion, economy, identity, spatiality, and justice. Thus, their hellish realities-induced exodus does not leave them without scars, which smear their identity and search for better opportunities as they are physically, emotionally, and psychologically altered.

Keywords : trauma of departure, *Travelers,* Helon Habila, migration, postcolonial theory

Introduction

Helon Habila is a Nigerian-born writer who resides in the USA, where he teaches creative writing at the George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia. Though an émigré writer, his depiction of bizarre happenings in his nation proves the nonfissile connection between him and

his homeland. Thus, though he is physically separated from the homeland, he remains psychologically close to his homeland. His novels—*Waiting for an Angel, Measuring Time, Oil on Water*, *The Chibok Girls: The Boko Haram Kidnappings* and *Travelers*—are representations of African socio-economic instability and Africans' endless navigation amid crises-laden contexts where they find themselves either at home or abroad.

Among the contemporary migrant/diasporic African novelists, Habila has been particularly successful in creating a realistic representation of Africa and Africans with locale setting at home or abroad. He is one of the major writers from the African sub-continent who have given a new direction to African literature by capturing the African experience and giving expression to a sense of increasing disgust and unrest within his cultural milieu. For instance, in his first novel, "*Waiting for an Angel*," Habila depicts the plight of the nation-Nigeria that is constantly waiting for the arrival of an angel that would sweep the mess in the political sector; however, the devils keep coming. Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* decries the bastardization and ruination of the country by the military.

> Habila's novels appear to be an attempt to come to terms with a struggle, or, "as it were, to sensitively register his encounter with history, his people's history" (Thiong'o, 1975, p. 39) as well as to help his "society regain belief in itself and put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self-abasement" (Achebe, 1975, p. 43). Habila's writing often centers around the subjugated and exploited majority of the African population, and their vision of the future after gaining independence from colonial rule and emerging from the "colonial complex" (Duerden & Pieterse, 1972, p. 8).

Habila often employs realism through his depiction of life in his polity by mentioning specific historical personalities, places, events, and dates; and chronicling the real experiences of people whom he knows or comes across. Although his first novel "*Waiting for an Angel"* has

some autobiographical tendencies, "*Measuring Time"* is free from autobiographical element; however, it is more of a historiography, while "*Travelers"* seems to combine both testimonial and historicist tempos.

Habila's "*Oil on Water*" reveals the gripping details of terrorism, abandonment, and the struggle for justice. It makes use of the Niger Delta spatiality as a microcosm of the post-independence Nigerian condition. In their study titled "The City in Crisis: Terrorism and Kidnapping in Helon Habila's *Oil on Water,*" Agofure and Yushu'a (2017) state that the narrative conveys the extent to which oil resources have generated immense profits for the Nigerian government, the privileged few and multinational corporations, however, they have triggered untold hardship and complex side effects for the oil producing communities, their inhabitants, and landscapes. His commitment to representing topical issues of immediate concerns, out of his regional extraction proves him as a "visionary and nationalist writer that rises above ethnic concerns to capture thematic concerns of national and global interest." (Agofure & Yushu'a, 2017, p. 303). Thematic concerns in Habila's works include politics, leadership crisis, environmental issues, security challenges, and migration.

His latest novel *Travelers* is an account of the traumatic encounter of African migrants in faraway Germany where they sojourn as refugees. Most of the migrants from the African continent converge on Berlin in their search for greener pastures. They are products of unhomeliness in their various homelands. However, in their individualist struggles for survival, there exists some collective unconscious. The migrants, whose encounters in the strange land are depicted in the novel, grow up in different contexts; they, however, encounter life in a similar manner and develop the same psychic reactions to their disheartening circumstances. It is against this backdrop, therefore, that this study investigates the representations of migrants' trauma following their "escape" from home occasioned by their host community's inclementness in Habila's *Travelers*.

Being a relatively new text, the novel *Travelers* has not received much attention in terms of critical investigation. In her interrogation on

the novel under the title "Meanings and Experiences of Home and Belonging Away from Home: Migration, Exile and Identity in Habila's *Travelers,*" Hager (2020) investigates the multi-dimensional issues of home and belonging, migration, exile, and identity crisis. According to Hager (2020), "For many migrants, whether forcibly displaced or voluntarily, home is no longer the same as pre-migration. Some lose home and feel as if they do not belong anywhere anymore. For others, the concept of home changes during migration processes and they find different ways to make themselves at home in different places" (p. 2). Specifically, the scholar explores what home and belonging mean to the characters portrayed, how they experience these aspects as they find themselves in completely new environments, and in which ways being away from the old home and encountering new ways of being influences their identities. Furthermore, Ramsey-Kurz's study (2020) titled "Precarity in Transit: *Travellers* [sic] by Helon Habila" interrogates the embodied act of narration and its exploitation by Habila as a mode of cultivating a compassionate understanding of forcibly displaced persons and their precarious lives in prolonged transit.

The above extant studies on Habila's *Travelers* are importantly relevant to this present study because they examine the narrative from a migration stance. However, this study pays particular attention to the bewildering challenges encountered by a crop of involuntary migrants.

The study is premised on the postcolonial theory. As a theoretical postulation, postcolonialism interrogates the representations of such issues as colonial enterprise, xenophobia, racial discrimination, exploitation, bipolarization of the society into "self" and "other," and the estrangement of the "other." In the same manner, the postcolonial theory evaluates the position of the colonial or postcolonial subject and engages in a counter-narrative so as to balance or correct the distorted European narration. The theoretical framework investigates the nature of relationship and power relations that exist between the colonizers and the colonized in literary production. The theory is, therefore, employed to x-ray the *othering*, estrangement, non-belongingness, unhomeliness, and disillusionment

witnessed by migrant characters in Habila's *Travelers.*

Migration Factors in African Literature

The subject of migration has come to be a recurring thematic focus of contemporary African literature. Most often, migration is represented as a reactionary mechanism installed by the despondent and disillusioned citizenry as a result of unresolved(able) socio-political, economic, cultural, and religious plagues that have beclouded the serenity of the African polity. Unbridled internal crises ravaging the black race, therefore, mastermind uncontrolled mammoth dispersals of African offspring across the globe. The kind of unhomeliness and homelessness that Africans are subject to both at home and abroad respectively has been transferred to their literature.

Ojaide (2008), a migrant writer himself, bares his mind on the current of global migration and its implications:

> African writers have become part of the worldwide phenomena of migration and globalization with the attendant physical, sociocultural, psychic, and other forms of dislocation, which permeate their individual writings. Migration, globalization and the related phenomena of exile, transnationality, and multilocality have their bearing on the cultural identity, aesthetics, content, and form of the literary production of Africans abroad. (p. 43)

Hence, migration has an impact on the physical, psychological, cultural, and character formations of émigrés, including migrant writers who also fit in their narrations.

Migration in African studies is a manifestation of different challenges in the African continent. In his *On the Postcolony,* Mbembe (2001) lends his voice to the seemingly "impracticability" of positive possibilities in Africa:

> First, the African human experience constantly appears in the discourse of our times as an experience that can only be understood through a *negative interpretation.* Africa is never seen as possessing things and attributes properly part of "human nature." Or, when it is, its things and attributes are generally of lesser value, little importance, and poor quality. It is this elementariness and primitiveness that makes Africa the world par excellence of all that is incomplete, mutilated, and unfinished, its history reduced to a series of setbacks of nature in its quest for humankind. (p. 1)

The foregoing passage establishes the mutilation and backwardness of the African continent, which is responsible for its citizens' loss of interest in the continent.

In most African countries where postcolonial disillusionment has been entrenched in the socio-political and economic experience of the people, citizens live as aliens in their land.

According to Rushdie (1991):

> The effect of mass migrations has been the creation of radically new types of human being: people who root themselves in ideas rather than places, in memories as much as in material things; people who have been obliged to defend themselves—because they are so defined by others—by their otherness; people in whose deepest selves strange fusions occur, unprecedented unions between what they were and where they find themselves. The migrant suspects reality: having experienced several ways of being, he understands their illusory nature. To see things plainly, you have to cross a frontier. (pp. 124-125)

The above quote elucidates some effects of migration on the migrants and certain survival mechanisms they put in place to keep going on the other side where they now find themselves.

According to Adeyanju and Oriola (2011), some migration drivers proliferating migratory movements of Africans to the West in recent times include the biting and abject poverty, the institutionalization of social disorganization, which has become a major characteristic feature of many African societies, paucity of economic opportunities, and a huge disparity between the West and Africa in terms of development. In addition to the above, it is observed that the alluring and fascinating presentation of the living conditions of African migrants overseas often fires would-be migrants' temper to embark on relocation abroad. However, the obnoxious experiences of immigrants' living condition in the form of unemployment, racism, non-belongingness, estrangement, loneliness, and other distasteful concerns are frequently masked by those who have escaped the harsh realities at home (Adeyanju & Oriola, 2011, p. 943).

Bulawayo (2013) succinctly captures the recent trend of Africans' predilection for migration and trauma of departure in the following words:

> Look at the children of the land leaving in droves, leaving their own land with bleeding wounds on their bodies and shock on their faces and blood in their hearts and hunger in their stomachs and grief in their footsteps. Leaving their mothers and fathers and children behind, leaving their umbilical cords underneath the soil, leaving the bones of their ancestors in the soil, leaving everything that makes them who and what they are, leaving because it is no longer possible to stay. They will never be the same again because you cannot be the same once you leave behind who and what you are, you just cannot be the same. (pp. 145–146)

While the migrants are pushed to migrate by unwholesome realities, their departure is not without its physical, psychic, emotional, and cultural scars. In other words, the chronicle of the migrants' exodus and its associated pains has been given adequate thematic treatment in recent African novels such as Habila's *Travelers.*

Narrativizing Trauma of Departure in Habila's Travelers

They are gone, far away, where it's dangerous.
They are gone, the sea below, the sky and the rain above them.
They are gone, where the wave decided they should go.
Where the death is present and news gets lost.
They are gone, as they were still young.
They are gone, on a boat in the sea.
They are gone, where the lives end.
They are gone, where the fishes eat.
They are gone, where the mothers cry.
(Balti-Samir Loussif, Mchaou, Tunisian pop-rap song, 2010)

The travelers in Habila's *Travelers* are compelled to embark on migration by certain factors that could be described as postcolonial indices. Among these factors are unwholesome realities, dystopic feelings and post-independence disillusionment, lack of job security, violence, religious fanaticism, economic instability, and socio-economic othering or dis/ordering. However, while they are "fortunate" to have escaped the harsh realities that mastermind their unhomeliness at home, they are not free from some challenging encounters that threaten their identities and living. Thus, within their migratory movement, the migrants pass through an epiphany as they are faced with diverse issues which transform into their character formation.

Habila's *Travelers* undoubtedly reverberates the effect of migration on marital relationship. It is revealed that some marriages that are initially united and emotionally bonded are soon exposed to emotional detachment and consequently breakdown. Before the migration of the narrator and his wife, Gina, from the US to Berlin, their marriage is shown to be good and stable. However, the narrator has some premonition about an unknown crisis that might soon befall the marriage in the strange land, "What if we went and things changed between us? What if Berlin transformed us beyond where we wanted to go?" (p. 10). The presentiment

expressed here soon becomes the reality as their home suddenly crumbles upon getting to Berlin. The narrator's sudden vinculum and affiliation to a group of African migrants in Berlin, including Mark, snowball to instability in the narrator's marriage. While Gina spends all her time in the studio on her fellowship program, which relates to a series of portraits called *Travelers*, the husband (Narrator) is usually with Mark and other young African migrants. Gina intends to take portraits of real migrants. Some migrants come to her studio in response to a flyer she has released and Mark is one of those who have gone to Gina's studio; however, Gina turns him down. From the moment of Mark's rejection by Gina, the narrator develops an uncanny interest in him, which eventually leads to comradeship and ironically, the collapse of Gina and the narrator's matrimonial relationship. Moreover, the narrator takes some unilateral decisions such as hosting Mark in his nuptial home without consulting Gina, which makes Gina ask him: "How could you invite him without asking me first? If anything goes wrong [⋯]" (p. 33). From that night, things start going sour in the family. As the narrator says, "She slept with her face to the wall, far away from me" (p. 33). This foregrounds emotional detachment between the couple. The couple starts avoiding each other and keeping secrets. Their communication soon breaks down: "Recently she seemed to be always coming in when I was going out the door, or going out when I was coming in; she was waking up when I was getting into bed" (p. 35).

According to the narrator, "We came to Berlin in the fall of 2012, and at first everything was fine" (p. 6); however, the severance of their bond becomes evident when the couple begins dodging each other. Meanwhile, the farther the couple is, the closer each of them is to an affiliative relationship especially on the part of the narrator. Although the couple still stays under the same roof until the end of Gina's fellowship, it is clear that they are no longer together emotionally. Following the conclusion of the fellowship, the narrator decides to stay back in Berlin, while Gina travels back to the US. The expectation of the couple that their migration would be therapeutic gets shattered due to the en-

trance of silence in the marriage. Gina attests to the fact that "We used to be so happy" (p. 51). Not all the dreams of migrants come to fruition. The husband does anticipate their coming to Berlin will heal them following the miscarriage that Gina has before they travel to Berlin. Meanwhile, the miscarriage serves as a foreshadowing of the abortion of the marital relationship.

Moreover, migratory temper fueled by some identified "push factors" masterminds family separation. For instance, one of the migrant characters, Manu, whose father is originally from Nigeria but settles in Libya, migrates to Berlin with his daughter, Rachida, while his wife is not with them. They all set out together as a family to go to Berlin because of the violence in Libya; however, they are separated during their exodus. Manu tells his wife that "If anything happens on the way and we are separated, continue on to Berlin. Look for me at Checkpoint Charlie. I'll wait there, every Sunday" (pp. 65–66). Thus, due to his love for his wife, coupled with the fact that Rachida needs motherly care, Manu and Rachida travel by train to Checkpoint Charlie every Sunday with the hope of seeing his wife. Unfortunately, he persists in this practice but without a trace of his wife. Rachida feels the noxious effect of the vacuity of her mother: "He looks down at her walking quietly next to him, her face set, trying to avoid the pedestrians, trying to keep up. She needs her mother" (p. 59).

Furthermore, the story of David who is said to be "so obsessed with emigrating" (p. 90) also establishes the effect of migration on kindred relationship. David deserts his family and decides to marry Katharina with whom he settles in Switzerland. David follows the example of his father who similarly leaves his family and travels out. The only difference, however, between David and his father is that, while his father comes back home although irreparably damaged by exile, David does not come back home alive. The father emigrates to Berlin in search of a better existence and leaves his family in America. Migrants often get attached to strangers away from home, while they are cut-off from their relations. While navigating several migratory spaces, they come across

transitory affiliative relationships, which sever their age-long consanguineous relationships. The *temporarity* of emotional bonds is so strong that it can make the migrants completely forget about their family. In other words, migrants' temperament is capable of creating a gulf between them and their families thereby depriving them of their blood relationship.

Moreover, to remain alive, James Kariku leaves his entire family in Libya and migrates to the Europe. Portia asks James Kariku, her father: "Why don't you want to stay with us, Baba? Why do you want to leave?" (p. 100). As a matter of fact, the absence of fathers in the home has an immense impact on the family. For instance, Portia abandons her studies due to the denial of filial warmth from her father. According to her, "The next day I left for Zambia, abandoning my studies. I knew if I stayed a day more, I'd lose my mind." (p. 102). Portia's mother decries the recurring desertion of family by men when she says "Something is wrong with us. Our men keep deserting us." (p. 102). The "us" in this context does not necessarily refer to the immediate family, but the panoramic ghoulish African polity that makes life difficult for people. Also, Portia's mother's voice metaphorizes the voice of mother Africa who has lost her illustrious children to other continents due to push factors responsible for the demonization of Africa. The unquenchable urge for better life elsewhere, which is beyond the horizon and their grasp impassions men and indeed some other migrants to ad infinitum be on the move. Even when James Kariku later meets Portia in the Europe, that sense of loss of fatherhood remains indelible in her psyche as she finds it difficult to restore her emotional attachment to the father:

> He gave me a hug. He introduced me to his friends, "My daughter." He looked happy to see me. But it was awkward. I didn't know how to be a daughter, and clearly, he had forgotten how to be a father. Plus, I didn't know what to call him, Dad, or Father, or Baba. (p. 101)

The long period of fatherhood absence created by migration strongly

affects Portia's expression of her daughterly affection to her father and vice versa.

David and Katharina are other characters that reflect the negative consequence of uninhibited migration on familial relationships. The two of them get married to each other without inviting their respective families. In the case of Katharina, she does not only get disconnected from her family, but also denies them. When her mother becomes aware of her impending marriage to David, she offers to grace the occasion but Katharina pointedly tells "[…] her no, I had no family" (p. 107). Thus, the standoffish parent-child relationship later magnifies to disavowal. In the same vein, David rejects his family and "adopts" another family in Mali as his family. From what Portia soliloquizes, "[…] he was ashamed of his real family" (p. 107). Another implication of emotional and familial detachment is mixed or interracial marriages. While African migrants are cut-off from their people, they form new relationships, both marital and social, with people of other races. Katharina recounts that she and her husband belong to the community of mixed families in Geneva.

The travelers in Habila's *Travelers* are subjected to estrangement, non-belongingness, and in-betweenness. In the study entitled "Fugitive Borders: Estrangement and Violence at the Centre of Temporary Permanence," Anderson (2015) interrogates the imperative of critically understanding the migrant's body as a mobile border by bringing together the violent narratives and spatial conditions incurred by and through the processes of migrations in the Mediterranean. "Transgressing those limits that attempt to 'secure' and ultimately deny access to European nations, the migrant's body is posited as that which imperils the juridical and temporal underpinnings of sovereignty, humanitarian ethics, and the formation of borders in the postcolonial contemporary architecture" (Anderson, 2015, p. 345). A high percentage of the émigré experience trauma of departure in their newly-found habitation. The unnamed narrator declares his estranged feeling with Berlin: "I felt the already unbridgeable gap between me and this city widen" (p. 7) which is similar

to Mark's intermittent comment on the city, *Even in Berlin I miss Berlin.* (p. 12). This implies that while the migrants live within the walls of Berlin, they still long for Berlin. In other words, even though they are in Berlin, they do not feel its *Berlinness.* This further foregrounds the unhomeliness of the city. Migrants' estrangement precipitates their loneliness in the crowded city. The narrator declares his lonely state thus, "Instead I would put on my jacket and walk the lonely Berlin back streets, and there is no loneliness like the loneliness of a stranger in a strange city" (pp. 35–36). This reiterates the character's non-belongingness, loneliness, and isolation in the strange city. It also signifies the cold attitude of the city and its inhabitants towards migrants. While the world has been reduced to a global community through various technological advancements and globalization, it is glaring that moral and relational spaces remain operative and have matter-of-factly increased, along with pandemic borders and budding global inequalities. According to Anderson (2015), estrangement as partly embodied by the disappearance of innumerable persons on migratory journeys "ultimately speaks to an ontology of borders that is punitive not only by design, but also in their perilous construction" (p. 345). This re-echoes the experience to which the disillusioned migrants are subjected.

Moreover, the living condition of most of the migrants establishes their *rejectedness* and forlornness. They are made to dwell in a place called *Heim,* which means "home." The state of the *Heim,* however, betrays it as a home. For instance, below is one of the descriptions of the Heim:

> The Heim was an abandoned school building, most of its windows had no panes, and its yard was overgrown with grass and trash. The front gate opened into a driveway that led to the big gray building. On one side of the driveway was a smaller structure, which must have originally been the security post or an office building, now its windows were boarded with plywood turned black and peeling from rain and sun. (p. 42)

The abandonment of the building referred to as Heim metaphorizes and embodies migrants' suppression, estrangement, and abandonment. Lack of assimilation and absorption of migrants into the host community is further brought to the fore by the experience of Mark, Stan, Mark, Uta and Eric who live in an abandoned church building. Not only that, the employment of scatology in the depiction of the Heim shows its uninhabitability. The narrator bares his mind on the putridity of the Heim: "The smell hit us even before we entered the building: fetid and moist and revolting. Heim, Home. This was the most unhomely place I had ever seen" (p. 43). "A rancid smell hung over the room, rising from the cooking and the shoes and the unwashed bodies" (p. 44). While the migrants who are compelled to live in the Heim are frustrated to leave their various home countries because of their unhomely atmosphere, they are equally confronted with unhomeliness abroad. The Heim is also characterized by congestion. It houses an amalgam of migrants from different parts of the globe, including Nigerians, Malawians, Syrians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Afghans, and Senegalese. Thus, the Heim represents a global community. It also implies that different countries of the world have internal crises, which are responsible for mass migration of their citizens in search of greener pastures elsewhere.

In addition, the displacement and dislocation of the migrant characters occasion their entrapment in Berlin. The narrative establishes the imprisonment of the émigrés who have only succeeded in being disentangled from socio-economic and political entanglements in their home countries through their (in)voluntary exit. Indeed, the living condition of the Heim authenticates its enslavement, confinement, and thraldom. The nomenclature given to the migrants dwelling in the Heim also restates their prisoner hood-inmates. The location of the Heim is said to be outside the city, which exemplifies the migrants' outsidedness, vagabondage, and mistreatment as pariahs. Writing on *Where Are Our Sons? Tunisian Families and the Repoliticization of Deadly Migration across the Mediterranean Sea* Oliveri (2016) observes "Mechanisms of depoliticization that affect migration, disappearance, and death at the

Euro-Mediterranean border" (p. 155). According to him, these anti-migrants' mechanisms are capable of depriving "Migrants of their identity and autonomous subjectivity, and even of their humanity. They represent deaths at the maritime border as almost natural accidents. They present border technologies of control and selection as neutral tools of security risk management. And, they normalize structural inequality in life opportunities and mobility that detrimentally affects non-European people" (Oliveri, 2016, p. 155). The above further recapitulates and aggravates the trauma of departure in the migrants. The *thingification* and dehumanisation of migrants by their host community only compounds their unquenchable hunger for homeliness and greener pastures devoid of all the problems in their home countries.

Living in the Heim, which signifies Berlin is devoid of normal warmth that humans crave for:

> The inmates, especially those with children, come out on warmer days to sit on the benches and gaze at the slate-gray skies, enjoying a moment of quiet, pretending they are somewhere else, not at a Heim in a strange city thousands of miles from home. (p. 59)

This *Heim away from home* is full of coldness; even when they pretend that all is well, they are not oblivious of the precarity of their living condition. Although socio-economic and political cold in the home countries pushes the inmates away, they equally come face to face with both physical and relational cold in terms of their acceptance into the heart of Berlin.

For the exilic migrants, their trauma of departure is also demonstrated in their loss. While navigating within their migratory spaces, some lose their lives, some their economic base. During migration, for instance, many migrants sink into the bottomless Mediterranean Sea. Oliveri (2016) avers that:

> So far migrant deaths in the Mediterranean Sea have not produced any real change in the dominant paradigm of immigration controls. The management of the European Union's (EU's) maritime border continues to oscillate between securitarian and humanitarian approaches: Authorities select the people to be admitted or rejected through flexible legal rules, legitimized by recurrent "states of emergency" reacting to an almost enduring "migrant crisis." European public opinion goes monotonously in a circle, moving from indifference to daily updates of the death toll, to empathy for the dramatic shipwrecks that periodically occur. Yet, hostility against "illegal migrants," represented as "invaders" or as a "burden" on public budgets, has spread extensively, especially during the economic crisis. (p. 154)

In line with the finding of this study, the submission of Oliveri (2016) corroborates the deadly experience of migrants who are subject to repression, hostility, othering and, of course, physical, socio-economic, and emotional submergence. Their encounter with the Mediterranean Sea implies that both biotic and abiotic beings are hostile to the presence of despair and unappeasable émigrés. Similarly, the imagery of the sea metaphorizes the turbulence of traumatic happenstance with which the characters are confronted in their exilic journey.

Furthermore, Karim recounts the genesis of his family's life on the road: "I leave everything we own, everything, including the goods in my shop. I tell my in-laws to sell everything they can sell and send us the money after. This is the beginning of our life on the road" (p. 123). Due to the rising insecurity and threat to life in Somalia, Karim and his family have to abandon their business venture. Karim's son, Mahmoud, who is born without any disability becomes physically and psychologically maimed during migration. While the narrator and Karim converse, Mahmoud is found to be silent throughout as a result of the psychological effect of the restless passage on him. Mahmoud's life ambition is that he wants to be a footballer; however, he is involved in an

accident in Yemen which leads to his leg breaking thereby causing the miscarriage of his dream. This reveals that migration driven by unfavorable realities could lead to the mutilation of one's life ambition.

Conclusion

As Schouler-Ocak (2015) posits, "Whether in crisis areas in their native countries, during the journey of migration itself or on arrival in their host countries, most of these people have had experiences which may result not only in adjustment disorders, but also in chronic psychiatric disorders such as anxiety, depression and somatoform disorders" (p. 3). Habila's *Travelers* reveals the migrants' relational, emotional, economic, identitarian, spatial, and juridical losses. Their exodus fueled by postcolonial indices does not leave them without scars, which smear their identity and search for better opportunities outside of their homelands. The study particularly explores some push factors responsible for characters' migration from their home countries, which include obnoxious socio-political happenings, unhomely situations, deprivation, post-independence disillusionment, insecurity, religious violence and fanaticism and socio-economic imbalance. It is equally revealed that migrant characters that are able to escape the difficulties at home are later exposed to some challenging situations in their newly-found home abroad. The travelers in the narrative experience hostility, non-belongingness and in-betweenness. Some of them are also subject to material and immaterial losses before, during and after their migration. It is, therefore, established that migration, even though occasioned by unfortunate situations, could make life exacerbating.

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