Missives from abroad: The refugee crisis and binaries of contradictions

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Abstract
The refugee crisis continues to draw the attention of scholars due to the increase of people seeking asylum in the developed nations of the world. This paper is dedicated to the analysis of the impact of the crisis on the migrant and the host. Adopting the psychoanalytic literary theory to analyse events and character’s personality, and drawing illustrations from the Helon Habila’s model in Travellers, the paper discovered that through the assemblage of binaries of contradictory metaphors of hope and disillusionment, love and alienation, marriage and separation, harmony and disharmony, and life and death, the impacts of the refugee crisis on the migrant and host are equalised.

The impact of the binaries on the duo is highlighted through the motifs of journey, suffering, resilience, adventure, lack and rejection. The beauty of the art in the model is developed through the use of literary techniques of flashback, irony, paradox, allusion, anecdotes and parallelism. At the end, the paper surmised that Habila’s model is a contradictory message of exile and return for survival migrants based on their circumstances.

Keywords: Refugee Crisis, Impact, Contradictory metaphors, Equalised, Survival migrants

Introduction
The resilience of literature and its criticism lies in the ability of content creators to create new forms to capture the intriguing and evanescent environment of human experience. This is the situation with the refugee crisis in the world today. As part of the need to highlight the causes, modes and effects of the refugee crisis, critics of literature have scurried through migrants’ literature to assess the physical and psychological causes of the mass movement of people from one location to another in order to understand the phenomenon and also create an awareness for possible solutions to the enigma. Moreover, there is the need to undertake wholesome evaluation of the contradictions that are accentuating and attenuating the frictions that galvanise the refugee crises in literature. This is the focus of this paper; it is a continuous research into the impact of the refugee crisis on the migrant and the host. The paper argues that through the deployment of binaries of contradictory metaphors, there is an equalised impact of the refugee crisis on the migrant and the host. The term “migrant”, as used in this paper, means the person leaving his or her country of origin to another country while the host refers to the citizens of the receiving country.

The history of human mass movement is not unmindful of the greatest forced migration of humans across the Atlantic Ocean otherwise referred to as the slave trade. Jennifer Farley (2006) describes this forced migration as “the kidnapping of millions of free West Africans by slave traders, who then sold them to wealthy merchants and plantation owners” (1). Conservative estimates put the number of persons trafficked for about 400 years at about twelve million soul. Robert Bone (1968) observes that due to the transnational experiences of the forced Negro migrant in American society, there is a dual cultural
and psychological experiences to interpret (3, 4). In this vein, Sunny Awhefeada (1999) explains that the double consciousness of the forced migrant points to “the basic ironies of Negro existence, which is hearing without being heard, feeling without being felt and seeing without being seen which make up the coupling of visibility and invisibility” (2). In surmising the impact of the dual experiences of these migrants as represented in their creative works of literature, Frank Birbalsingh (1986) says that apart from the memories of Africa after the forced migration occasioned by the slave trade, there are the motifs of poverty, exploitation, social security, racial discrimination and alienation, which are reoccurring themes issues in the life of the migrant (17). The interaction of the twin representation of the home and exilic experiences in the works of these migrants gives birth to what Awhefeada (1999) describes as coalescing “into the metaphors of visibility and invisibility, dispossession and assertion, repudiation and memorization…” (3, 4).

In recent times, a new phenomenon of migration is being witnessed daily. This is a mixture of both forced and voluntary migration. This is referred to as “mixed migration (Van Hear, Brubaker, and Bessa 2009); or the “survival migration” (Betts 2013). In this paper, mixed migration and survival migration will be used interchangeably to represent both forced and voluntary migration. As stated earlier, this paper is preoccupied with the representation of the impact of survival migration on the migrant and the host. The paper factored into the earlier theory of the dual heritage of the Negro in America to argue that in the case of the present refugee crisis, there is an equalised impact of the refugee crisis on the migrant and the host. In testing this hypothesis, this paper will adopt the psychoanalytical theory to analyse the fictional model designed by Helon Habila in Travellers.

Migrants’ stories and binaries of contradictions
Travellers is a compendium of tales highlighting the diverse experiences of migrants seeking refuge in Europe. As a migrant’s fictional work, Habila’s model of the impact of migration on the migrant and the host becomes a complicated design which utilize sets of contradictory metaphors and images to present a piquant scenario. These binaries can be delineated into five sets –hope and disillusionment, longing and alienation, marriage and separation, harmony and disharmony, and life and death. Through the exhibition of several themes and techniques, Helon Habila is able to document the experiences of several migrants in different countries and environment to the delight of the reader. As a result, through the synchronisation of these experiences, a model is developed that exhibits an equalised effect of migration on the migrant and the host.

Independence from the colonial masters held so much hope for most of the colonized world. However, due to several factors like neocolonialism, inter and intra tribal wars and religious conflicts, corruption, and economic woes, fear, terror and kidnapping have become the order of the day. In this atmosphere of despair, some of the citizens of these failed states have no option but to migrate to places where they believe they can develop and raise their families in peace. Therefore, for the migrant, the journey to America and Europe is the only hope in a sea of despair. In Habila’s model, the story of Karim Al-Bashir, who is originally from Somalia, captures the degeneration from hope to despair. In the anecdote of his story, Karim explains that he was born and brought up in Somalia, in Africa. Though the society is not perfect, but
at the least, there is peace and through hardwork, prosperity can be achieved; so, Karim is able to continue the father’s business after the father’s death but according to Ola Rotimi, “peace has a slender body that breaks too soon”, and the Somalia peaceful society is not different. In the words of Karim,

> With support from his uncles he was able to continue his father’s business, buying and selling. He got married at twenty and had his first daughter before he turned twenty-two. And then gradually things began to change. In 1990 President Siad Barre died and overnight Somalia descended into political chaos. (168)

This is the kind of situation that makes the border between hope and disillusionment fluid. Instead of staying in his country to face the odds, Karim decides to migrate to another country thinking there will be peaceful conditions there to raise his family. Having crossed the boundary between hope and delusion, it is one hardship after another for Karim.

The issue of hope as the key for the survival of the migrant is developed further in the story of Manu. Manu has a wife and two children before they left Libya. On the way, they were separated when their boat was sunk off the coast of Africa. Manu is able to make it to Germany. But before they left Africa, Manu has impressed it on his wife that whenever they are separated, he is going to wait for the wife at Checkpoint Charlie in Berlin, Germany. It is this hope of the return of his wife after they were separated at sea that continue to sustain Manu and his daughter, Rachida, as they go to Checkpoint Charlie every Sunday to wait for the wife and his son, Omar. Even when Hannah, a close friend of Manu and fellow migrant, try to sway Manu to forget the past and focus on the present by insisting that the wife and son are dead, Manu ruminates that “he won’t give up. He will go to Checkpoint Charlie every Sunday. Rachida will come with him. They will walk the souvenir shops and ice dream stalls, together. If they keep their memories alive, then nothing has to die” (97).

In the refugee crisis documented in the Habila’s model, the issue of hope is reciprocal. It is not only the migrant that derives hope from the movement across the Mediterranean Sea; the host also finds hope in the arrival of the migrant. Such is the situation of some of the women hosts in the story. This is the case with Brigitte, the first Swiss wife of Moussa. Moussa is a farm hand for the parents of Brigitte. At first, Brigitte was hostile to Moussa but as time goes on, Brigitte finds hope in Moussa and decides to marry him. Though the marriage does not stand the test of time, the fact that this female host finds hope in the coming of the migrant cannot be disputed. In order to further buttress this case, the meeting between Moussa and Katrina and the immediate establishment of a relationship between them that later leads to marriage in just two months even when it is glaring that the marriage of the same Moussa to Brigitte failed can only be ascribed to optimism felt by the women host. This line of thought is demonstrated in the flashback of the events of the meeting between Moussa and Katrina. Katrina explained that, “that night, after the dance, my friends wanted me to go, but no, I said. I stayed talking with him till the bar closed at midnight. I was in love” (146). The impact of the newfound hope is exhibited straightaway when Katharina takes some drastic action that changed her life. Accordingly, Katharina narrates that,
that was the day they met, at the twilight of their first marriage. After that night, after that dance, she told Sven their engagement was not going to work. ‘I didn’t love him. He was a good, decent guy, but I wanted more at that time.’ She shrugged. ‘I was not so young any more. Time was passing for me. I wanted more . . . excitement.’ (146,147)

Though, not stated outright, the feeling of optimism that envelops these women host is difficult to comprehend, even for the migrant woman. As such, it is not commonplace for Portia, the sister of Moussa, to question that “what is it about black men that acts like a super-magnet to these white women: curiosity, the exotic factor, love, or is it pity?” (110) What Portia does not comprehend is that the European having been disillusioned by their society, the arrival of the migrant offers a new hope for excitement and a sagacity for varieties.

The hope that brought the migrant to Europe often ends in disillusionment. This is the other side of the coin of hope. And as usual with the binaries, it is also multifaceted. On the part of the migrant, they often become disillusioned immediately they set foot on Europe. Once again, Karim’s story guides us on the result of the loss of hope. Eventually, Karim is able to make it to Europe, precisely Bulgaria. In Bulgaria, the easy life he has envisioned turned out to be a hoax. Instead of the hope that Karim and his boy’s “suffering is over”, they discovered that “this was just the beginning of our bad luck” (180). Karim’s family is taken to prison where they stayed for one year without job and freedom. In the midst of the physical and psychological suffering, Karim loses his son, Fadel, in a figurative way. Fadel had forsaken his family and bound up with the Jehovah’s Witnesses. The effect of this blow on Karim’s family is depicted vividly when Karim’s wife refuses to join Karim in Germany until he brings back Fadel to the family. Karim describes his disillusioned state this way:

‘When I tell my wife about Fadel she get angry. She start to cry, all the time on the phone. She say I lost her son. She say is my fault. She say she will never join me in Germany if I don’t find Fadel .... We stay with friends Sonia introduce us to, and we ask everywhere, all Jehovah’s people, but no Fadel. We can’t find him. I don’t know what to do. May be I go back to Bulgaria. Maybe I wait. Maybe my wife will change her mind.’ (190)

The disillusioned state of Karim is summed up by the hero of the story that Karim “was hungry for hope, hungry for a break” (191). Such is the emptiness of the hope of the migrant when they steps into Europe.

The psychological dislocation of the host in the story also reveals a lot about the revolving disillusionment arising from the refugee crisis. The situation Gina, the wife of the hero, finds herself after her marriage to the hero, enables the critic to explore the impact of the migrant crisis on the host’s hope. Gina became pregnant two months after her marriage. But seven months into the pregnancy, she had a miscarriage. The effect on Gina is devastating. According to her husband, Gina “stopped going out; she cried all day; she stopped eating”. The resulting cynicism created a gulf in their relationship. Against all tenets of hopeful living, Gina does not allow herself to be consoled. The hero surmised this sad circumstances of Gina’s condition when he reminisces that “how suddenly and
unexpectedly everything had changed, one moment we were a normal married couple, young, with our future before us, the next moment we were stricken by misfortune, prone and helpless” (12). This evidence helps to solidify the argument that the boundaries between hope and disillusionment is fluidic for both the migrant and their host.

There is also the binary of longing and alienation in the Habila’s model. In the exposition of this binary, the events highlighting longing and alienation are paralleled. The case of Manu, whose father is originally from Nigeria, but settled in Libya reflects the permeability between longing and alienation. As the nation of Libya prospered under the rule of Colonel Gadhafi, the Nigerian adopts Libya as his country. In the words of Manu, his father “never considered himself different from any Libyan …” (84). So, in the same vein, when Manu was born, he does not see the need to say he is Nigerian. But when the maximum ruler, Gadhafi, was toppled, the situation of the country changed. Suddenly, Manu’s family become a pariah among the people of their neighbourhood. Manu recalls that “his neighbours, some of them his patients, began attacking whomever they thought looked different, foreign” (84). Therefore, when Manu migrates to Germany, the effect of his denial and abandonment by the people of his adopted country and the loss of his wife and son at sea coupled to alienate him from his roots. As such, when Angela, Manu’s friend, asked him that “your partner told me you are from Libya. Do you miss your country?” Manu replied that “I have no country” (87). Manu’s cryptic answer depicts the issue of invisibility of migrants in host nations as documented by Awhefeada when he observes that negation of one’s identity “serves as an appropriate metaphor for the social condition of the blacks” in America (4).

On the identity level, the migrant is alienated from his own personality when the disenchantment resulting from the failure of hope and love creates a gap in the life of the migrant. After the unsuccessful deportation of Mark, a Malawian migrant, the hero of the story saw Mark’s lawyer, Julius” in Gina’s art exhibition. Their conversation reverts to Mark’s case with the authorities. The following exchange ensued:

‘This is none of my business … you know, his real name is Mary. But I guess you knew already? After all you are very close.’

I looked blankly at him. Mary?
‘He is a girl, or rather she is a girl. Mary Chinomba.’

Mark, a girl? ‘Are you sure?’ was all I could manage.

‘Yes, of course I am sure. I saw the official documents. I see, you looked surprised. You didn’t know.’ (54,55)

Mark’s decision to hide his identity does not arise from being hunted for deportation by the German authorities. Rather, her opting for invisibility is due to his alienation from his family roots as a result of domestic pressures. So, Mark, the daughter of a preacher, decides to cover up her failure to complete her education by killing Mary and adopting Mark’s identity because “he didn’t want to be traced by accident” (67).

As the impact of alienation affects both the migrant and the host, it is therefore necessary to portray the alienating effect of the refugee crisis on the host. In order to vividly represent this group, the experience of Katharina is reflective of the situation. When he met Moussa and decided to marry him, her parents were ambivalent about the relationship. The impact of marrying a ‘stranger’ on the family is depicted thus:
My father is a theologian, you know. I am the only child. He is a good man, he didn’t object to my relationship, but he didn’t say yes. Every year we used to go on retreat, we go with my family and the people in my father’s church, and I wanted to bring Moussa, but my father said no. I either come alone, or I should not come at all. It was the most painful thing … Everything they had taught me was a lie then. They said we should love strangers, we should never judge people by how they look. It was the most disappointing time of my life. I was very close to my father, you know. I looked up to him. I asked him. What if he turns up in your church, would you turn him away? (147)

The failure of the religious admonition of loving one’s neighbor as oneself further widens the gulf of alienation. At the end, Katharina explains that “we got married. Just the two of us. I didn’t invite my family. My mother wanted to come but I told her no, I had no family” (147). As Moussa is being alienated from his roots in Africa and all that communal living stands for, so also, Katharina is drifting from her family in Europe. This shows that the refugee crisis is a double edged sword cutting both the migrants and their hosts. As both the migrant and the host witnessed the magnetic force of love and alienation, the binaries of marriage and separation, and harmony and disharmony are objectified in their relationship.

Marriage is one of the most unifying factors in man’s relationship. But in the relationship of the migrant and the host, Charles McGrath and Leslie Jamison’s (2015) admonition that “happiness is harder to depict than its opposite, and the best fictional marriages, the really interesting ones, tend to be failure” (1), best captures the marriages contracted between migrants and their hosts. In the Habila’s model, four marriages are contracted between migrants and hosts. They are those of the story’s hero and Gina, Moussa and Brigitte, and Moussa and Katharina; there is also the marriage between Portia and Hans, the German, in Lusaka. As an illustration, the marriage between the hero and Gina exhibits a turbulence typical of all the rest of the marriages in the story. The fragile foundation of the migrant’s expectation contributes to the turmoil in the marriages. This is in tandem with the hero’s idea that “the immigrant’s temperament, hoping for home and permanence in this new world, at the same time fearful of long-term entanglements and always hatching an exit plan” creates a gap between expectation and commitment (11). In spite of these fears, the hero and Gina get married.

As the boundary between hope and disillusionment, longing and alienation is reedy, so also the border between marriage and separation is thin. Some months into the marriage of hero and Gina, trouble starts. After the sad experience of the stillborn child of seven months, Gina moves to her parents place. There, she wins the prestigious Berlin Zimmer fellowship. This reunites the couple as they move to Berlin to pursue the fellowship. One year in Berlin does not help the domestic squabbles and separation seems the only option as the hero refused to go back to the States with Gina. Symbolically, the call of the cuckoo during the last conversation between the couple in Berlin signifies the end of the marriage as the cuckoo is heard “chittering, … then it was gone” (69). For, as the hero puts it, “our story was over, the ink has dried, each of us must move on now and it will be as if we
had never met, never loved, and never dreamt together” (232). One may think that it is the socio-economic, religious and political situation in America or Europe that is the cause of the sudden separation of loved ones; in this regard, one may be excused. This is because the separation of Fadel and his father in Bulgaria helps to buttress this point. However, the marriage between Hans and Portia punctures holes in this line of argument.

Portia had met Hans online through couch-surfing. Later, when Portia, who is from Zambia, meets Hans again in Zambia, when the later was on a business trip to Namibia, they agreed to marry after six month of courtship. Then, the couple moved back to Berlin. But Portia could not cope with the Berlin’s environment. So, Hans agreed that Portia can travel back to Zambia to deliver as she is pregnant. But Portia does not find the peace of mind she wants. According to her, “I felt myself descending into depression, I was losing track of time, of my mind, and, I feared I’d harm myself … the marriage had lasted less than a year” (245). The question is why is it that the marriage between the migrant and the host cannot endure the test of time? The alienation from the diverse and opposing culturally entrenched traits in the migrants and the hosts contributes majorly to the domestic disharmony.

Closely related to the binary of marriage and separation is that of harmony and disharmony. This binary will be explored along the domestic and communal lines. In the harmony between individuals in the story, once again, the relationship between the hero and Gina stands out. Before the first separation, the hero explains that they “used to sit by the windows in the evenings, drinking white wine, watching the empty parking lot across the street, kids step-pushing their skateboards on the concrete, roaring down the pavement, jumping high in the airwith skates glued to their soles … (51,52). This harmonious living is also replicated in Berlin when Gina hosted her Zimmer fellows. There is also the picture of conviviality between the hero, Mark, Gina, Dante and Anna. So, when Anna inquired from Mark if “he had experienced any racism in Berlin”, Mark is unequivocal when he replies that “I like it here. Even in Berlin I miss Berlin” (42). Though, the relationship between the migrant and the host is not perfect, there are various instances of friendship and togetherness.

Perhaps, the greatest show of public love between the migrant and the host is portrayed in the relationship between Moussa and Brigitte’s parents. Moussa is a hired hand in Brigitte father’s chicken farms. In the words of Katharina, Brigitte’s “father and mother liked him very much because he is very nice, and sometimes he stayed for dinner after they work on the farm and they talk about things, what he planned to do. They even wanted to get a lawyer for him to help him with his asylum application”. Katharina sums the personality of the migrant that Moussa is “easy to talk to … very charming” (107). This harmonious relationship between the migrant and the host accounts for the eventual marriage between them after a short period of courtship. But as McGrath (2015) puts it, the relationship is “not ecstatic, but a shifting arrangement of trade-offs”; disharmony is just at the side of the coin (1).

The motif of disharmony is a deliberate representation of the tensed, underlying conflict between the migrant and the host, even in the facade of harmony. In the domestic front, the hero and Gina, even though they are staying together as husband and wife in the same house in Berlin, are somehow aloof from each other. The underlying tension is described by the hero when he says that “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” (46). As the situation nears breaking point, the hero wishes to make amend but “it required so much energy to do that, more energy than I possessed”. Instead of interacting with Gina to find solution to the widening gulf between them, the hero just leaves home to walk the lonely streets of Berlin coming into grip with the fact that “there is no loneliness like the loneliness of a stranger in a strange city” (47).

The edgy relationship between the migrant and the host is further exacerbated by the mutual distrust between them. Once, in the company of the Zimmer fellows, Dante had asked the hero about his experience as an migrant in America. The hero narrated this anecdote:

… the first time I went to New York. I had approached a policeman at Penn station to ask for directions, which is the logical thing to do anywhere in the world, and as I got closer to him I noticed his hand inching toward the gun at his waist. I had stopped and looked behind me, thinking surely it was someone else he was reaching his gun for, not me. Now he was gripping his gun tightly, but still I asked him for directions, my voice wavering, and he looked at me, unsmiling, and said, ‘Keep moving.’ (43)

This anecdote surmised the simmering tension at the background of the overt cosy harmony between the migrant and the host. Apart from the suspicious attitude of the host, the overbearing nature of the women also contributes to the friction from the viewpoint of the migrant. This is what Moussa is trying to establish when he complains that his marriage with Brigitte could not last because “she wanted too much to be in charge, all the time, and his life became hell … his life was better when he was living in the refugee camp” (110). This highlights the tension between the patriarchal African society and the egalitarian gender culture of Europe. The result of the tension in both domestic and public sphere of the migrant and host’s relationship is magnified in the struggle between life and death.

The last of the binaries is that of life and death. In the case of the typical migrant, the vision of life is enunciated by Mark allegorically that life is like, a man in a tunnel. A long and endless tunnel, at the end there is his lover waiting for him. But he begins to realize that also, next to his lover, there is death waiting. But we never see him reach the lover, or death, just a single continuous shot of him in the tunnel, nothing more. The journey is the thing, the monsters that leap at him from the dark are all in his mind. (61)

The historical allusions to Dambudzo Marechera, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Michelangelo Caravaggio, and the Nobel Laureate, Knut Hamsun, point to a blend of resistance, resilience, pragmatic realism and psychological versatility as the chemistry of life. In this vein, while there is “beauty and death, side by side”, “to desire is to die” and “not to desire is also to die” (61). Therefore, for Mark, life is all about disguise, struggle and resistance. So, for the migrant, the past hurts and continue to hunt them. This means continuous journey to escape the past just like the hero and Karim.

But for the host, the vision of life is quite different; the past is meant to guide the individual, not to hurt or hunt one forever.
The allusion to the reconstruction of Dresden, a city in Germany that was destroyed during the Second World War but was rebuilt using archaeological artifacts and modern 3-D computer technology, does not elicit awe from Gina, the American. Instead, Gina has this to say:

-They had the choice to do something new, make a clean break from the past, but they decide to rebuild the city like it was … Not all of us have that luxury, of a past. My history doesn’t offer much in that respect. Once I go past Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks, there is nothing else but the plantation and after that the insurmountable Atlantic, so, I have learned to look forward, to embrace the new and shape my future. I find it weird, this clinging to the past. (248)

The “clinging to the past” is what constitutes the stumbling block to the progress of the migrant. This is what is dramatized by the futility of Juma’s struggle to resist the deportation policy in Europe.

Juma is a Nigerian who formerly taught in a secondary school in northern Nigeria before the advent of the Boko Haram crisis in the Lake Chad region. When his town was attacked, he escaped to Cameroon and then to Niger Republic where he stayed for six months in the refugee camp. He joined others taken by human traffickers to Libya for onward journey to Europe. In Libya, he is arrested and jailed. According to him, “… we had to drink our own urine … I had sworn to myself I was going to make it. I had already started training for hunger” (287). At last, he is able to get to England where he is arrested and detained for deportation. In detention, Juma starts his hunger strike to coerce the British authority to change their policy of deporting illegal migrants and refugees. In Libya and Greece, Juma’s strategy of adopting hunger as a weapon of survival is highly successful in saving his life. In England, Juma is supposed to adapt to the situation and adopts a different strategy for survival but he continues to ‘cling to the past’ even when the reality has dawned on him that the strategy is not changing anything. In the words of Juma,

I have gone a hundred days without eating. I have no illusions about how this is going to end. The government thinks I am going to relent and give up. I can’t. I am tired, actually, and I know in the end this will not change anything, they will continue to detain people, long after I am gone and forgotten. (293)

This ironical presentation of Juma’s view of life is inconsistent with the zeal, resilience and urge to survive that is the hallmark of the migrant’s struggle for existence. It becomes unequivocal that Juma’s illusion of life in Europe has been shattered by reality. He died a pathetic figure without relations and dreams.

Death is the other side of the binary of life, especially for the migrant. The death of Mark who is pushed and falls “from the roof to the concrete pavement” by fellow migrants during a protest against eviction and deportation “because he was different” exposes the hazards the refugees face in Europe. For Moussa, he is murdered by his estranged wife, Katharina. She narrates the incident this way:

I turned and he was there, coming toward me. I stood there, I was terrified. He looked so serious … I stood there, paralysed. I wanted to scream for help … he said nothing, he came
and hugged me. I remembered a train was coming in then. It honked, very loud, and that added to my panic, and at that moment the train lights flashed into my eyes and it was as if I was released from chains. I … pushed him with all my might. I thought he was going to kill me. (156)

The frightful and sad death of Moussa got Portia asking if the soul of Moussa will find peace in a foreign land or if it will “fly back to Africa, back to where he was born?” (157). Philosophically, among the things that enticed the migrants to Europe or America, death is not at the front burner. For the host, the scars of being behind the death of the migrant cannot be wished or washed away. The resultant psychological trauma is what Katharina means when she says that “I caused his death. I kept seeing his body cut into pieces” (156). Even if the hosts do not die physically from the impact of the refugee crisis, the death of their conscience can be gleaned from Katharina father’s statement that “what is the use?” of Katharina killing herself over poor Moussa (156).

**Conclusion**

The journey of the migrant from their home to exile symbolises the movement from one side of the binary to the other. This paper has argued that through the motifs of journey, suffering, resilience, adventure and rejection, Helon Habila has been able to express the contradictions in the binaries of hope and disillusionment, longing and alienation, marriage and separation, harmony and disharmony, and life and death in the relationship between the migrant and the host. So, in allusion to the three witches’ statement in *Macbeth* that, “*When the hurly-burly is done / When the battle is lost and won*”, it is both the migrant and the host that share the joys and pains of the refugee crisis. Therefore, rejected at home and abroad like Juma, the future of the refugee crisis is hung in the balance; the longing for a happy life and the attendant alienation and disillusionment, harmony and separation, life and death, will continue to hunt the migrant and their host.

**References**


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