



On the Verge of Liminality: A Pipe Dream or an attained Eldorado in Laila Lalami's *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*

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DOI: <http://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v7i1.1975>

APA Citation: Issafi, H. & Ouladhadda, A. (2025). On the Verge of Liminality: A Pipe Dream or an attained Eldorado in Laila Lalami's *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*. *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies*. 7(1).124-136. <http://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v7i1.1975>

Received:

16/11/2024

Accepted:

02/01/2025

Keywords:

Migration, diaspora, identity, hybridity, liminality.

Abstract

Laila Lalami's novel *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* (2008) presents a poignant exploration of migration and its associated motives and challenges, interwoven within the context of contemporary Morocco. The chief concern of this corpus-based, qualitative study is to analyse the central themes of the novel. Methodologically speaking, in analysing themes of this novel, the authors of this study utilise Postcolonial theory. Concepts such as liminality, hybridity, diaspora, orientalism and the politics of representation are used as tools of analysis. An understanding of the complexities of identity and belonging in a Postcolonial landscape can be attained through an examination of the characters' journeys, both physical and emotional.

1. INTRODUCTION

Laila Lalami is a Moroccan–American novelist and essayist². She was born in Morocco. She got her BA degree in English studies from Mohammed V University in Rabat. She moved to London where she studied and obtained her Master of Arts degree in Linguistics. She pursued her doctoral studies in the USA where she got a PhD degree in Linguistics from the University of Southern California. She is working as a professor of creative writing at the University of California, Riverside. Her books include a collection of short stories *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* (2005, 2008), and other novels: *Secret Son* (2009), *The Moor's Account* (2014, 2015), and *The Other Americans* (2019). She also wrote a nonfiction book titled: *Conditional Citizens* (2020).

Since Lalami originally belongs to a Postcolonial country, Morocco, a number of Postcolonial issues constitute the major themes of her books such as migration, social and economic problems as well as issues that pertain to racism that the immigrants encounter in Western countries. Her collection of short stories *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* provides an account of the pushing factors that induce four Moroccan individuals to opt for illegal

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² Lalami, L. About Laila. Laila Lalami's official website visited on November 10th, 2024: <https://lailalalami.com/about/>

immigration to Spain. *L'hrig* or *lhrig* (literally translated as “burning”) is a term in Moroccan Arabic that meticulously depicts the harsh situation of the illegal immigrant, who tends to “burn” their legal identification documents while crossing the sea to the European shore as Hakim Abderrezak (2009) contends:

“Benjelloun’s title *Partir* (“to leave”) is the closest French equivalent of the Moroccan Arabic *hrig* although “bruler” (“to burn”) translates more accurately the common practice of burning identification documents before undertaking the sea crossing in order to avoid repatriation.” (Abderrezak, 2009, p.463).

Hence, the illegal immigrant opts for *hrig*, burning his identification documents lest they should be arrested and deported to their country of origin. Some of them succeed in re-constructing their socially-shattered lives anew, like a Phoenix resurrection out of the ashes. Yet, many of them fail and their fate is flung into the unknown. The following sections discuss the major themes in *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*.

2. GENEALOGY OF THE PUSHING FACTORS TOWARDS THE SPANISH ELDORADO

In *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*, Laila Lalami makes use of *in media's res* as a narrative device, which means that the novel starts in the middle with the chapter titled ‘The Trip’. In this chapter hope for migration from Morocco to Spain through the Strait of Gibraltar unifies the four main characters of the novel Murad, Aziz, Halima, and Faten. They left Tangiers shore at a full moon night on a six-meter Zodiac primarily allocated for eight people. However, thirty illegal immigrants were crammed on board of it. However, the zodiac lost its balance and reversed in the water near the Spanish shores. Be that as it might, everyone faces their own destiny. Laila Lalami adopted a bunch of narrative techniques. For instance, in “Part I: Before”, she used the flashback technique to disclose the social, economic and political motives that made the main characters choose immigration; whereas in “Part II: After”, the author used the flash-forward technique to reveal the aftermath of the trespassing trip on each immigrant.

Still, the first part of the novel reveals the underlying contexts of the novel. Moroccan immigrants face hatred and racism. A case in point here is a scene when Aziz came back to Morocco and did not talk to his wife and mother about the racial discrimination he encountered in Spain:

“But he didn’t talk about the time when he was in El Carte Ingles shopping for a jacket and the guard followed him around as if he was a criminal. He didn’t describe how, at the grocery store, cashiers greeted customers with hellos and thank yous, but their eyes always gazed past him as though he was invisible, nor did he mention the constant identity checks that the police had performed these last two years. (Lalami, 2008, p.144).

Abdellah Laroui cast more light on this conflictual relationship in his trilogy *Mudjmal Tarikh Al Maghreb –Zoj’-I (The Entire History of Morocco-Part I)*. This hostility towards the Moroccans dates back many centuries of conflicts and crusades starting from Tarek Ibn Zyad’s conquest of Andalusia in 709 DC / 91 of the Hegira (Laroui, 1996, p.125). Within the same context, the Moroccan thinker Abdellah Laroui discloses the social and political situation in

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Andalusia in the eleventh century, which was characterized by conflicts between Christian states and their Muslim counterparts due to many taxes that burdened the inhabitants in the Northern country-sides; whereas in some cities and urban places, people were frustrated by the behaviour and tyranny of some rulers. (Laroui, 1994, p.122-3).

While the Muslim states were fighting each other, the pope launched crusades, whose outcome was the emergence of a noble class specialized in fighting Muslims. Muslim states were dispersed. Laroui contends that "Christian kings took advantage of this precarious situation and began to roam the depths of Andalusia as they wished, similar to what Al-Mansour Al-Amiri did in the previous century in the Christian lands." (Laroui, 1994; p.122-3). Hatred and hostility towards Muslims reached their utmost with the fall of Granada in 1492 DC.

Still, Laroui argues that as the result of the policy of Christianization or mass expulsion "came the displaced as masses, not as individuals, and of course they settled in various Moroccan metropolises." (Laroui, 1996, p.27). In addition to the systematic practices undertaken by the Spanish inquisitions against the Muslims, the relationship between Morocco and Spain was characterized by prisoner exchange and piracy. All of these factors fuelled the fire of xenophobia among the Europeans, especially the Spanish. However, *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* refer the readers to a number of objective reasons that push a minority of Moroccans to immigrate to Spain.

Among the causes of migration toward Spain in particular and Europe in general are the economic factors, namely unemployment among young people, which is epitomised by the characters of Aziz and Murad. Aziz dropped out of school. Although he obtained a vocational training diploma in the maintenance of automotive devices and he is skilful in precollege, he failed to get a job. Mohamed Benzidan (2011) highlights the notion of invisibility affecting Aziz's personality: "He seems invisible to his surroundings, which is a way to signify his inexistence, especially that his identity is constantly checked by the police." (2011, p.208). Likewise, Murad got his BA degree in English studies but remained jobless. Moreover, the standard of living in shanty-towns is very low and some marginalized towns are lacking in factories and multinational companies that could absorb the huge number of unemployed people. For instance, Lalami displays, through the description technique, huge disparities between the different areas of Casablanca in the chapter or short story title "Bus Rides". In Sidi Baitout near the old Medina where Halima's mother lives, a group of day-labourers sat cross-legged talking and smoking cigarettes. The smoke of rubber mingled with car exhausts. (Lalami, 2008, p.61).

In the bus station, there was a worn-out bus, whose bumper hung from its front and its smoke overwhelmed the place. Nevertheless, in Anfa, there are villas and appearances of extravagance. One of the factors that hinders economic growth is the widespread bureaucracy and poor management of human resources. The character of Larbi Lamrani, the civil servant in the Ministry of Education, is the epitome of this category of people. He is responsible for the appointment of new teachers who must complete two years of civil service. Larbi intermediates for his friend Toufik to put his daughter's name at the top of the list of new teachers so that she could get a position in Rabat while remote areas suffer from a lack of

teachers. (Lalami, 2008, p.18-9). Relatedly, apart from the chronic failure of some ex-governments in solving social, economic and political problems, neo-colonialism manifests itself in the influence of multinational companies that seek cheap labour force.

In addition to this, psychological factors induce a number of jobless young people to migrate abroad, because appearances have become the psychology of modern man., Mohamed Gharbi et al. (2014) summarize the psychological motives as follows:

“The psychological pressures generated among our youth lie as a result of seeing the success of some illegal immigrants, who were able to settle their legal status in the countries they immigrated to and ensure a decent living.”³ (Gharbi et al., 2014, p.84).

Psychologically speaking, the Moroccan illegal migrant hankers for the respect of others through success achievement. An instance of this is a scene where Aziz identifies with aspects of Western civilization, wishing to own a French or German make car while he is sitting with his friend Lahcen in a café contemplating the luxurious cars that bear foreign registration plates:

“They passed the time smoking and staring at the line of French and German cars waiting for the light, the drivers talking on their mobile phones while their stereos blasted American music. Aziz imagined that may be one day he would be like them, have a car and a place to go to, instead of sitting idle at a coffee shop while his wife was at work.” (Lalami, 2008, p.85).

The dream of showing off and dazzling others with the luxuries of life is one of the motives for illegal immigration. Additionally, the precarious situation of women, which differs from that of men, is another factor that induces women to opt for illegal immigration. An example of this category of women would be those who suffer from domestic violence as illustrated in the short story titled “Bus Rides”:

“The day after Maati beat her with an extension cord, Halima Bouhamsa packed up some clothes and took the bus to her mother’s house in Sidi Belout, near Casablanca. The cord had left bubbly welts on her arms and face, and she couldn’t hide them under her housedress. “ (Lalami, 2008, p.49).

Halima is, by further implication, the epitome of a minor category of women who seek to break free from under the yoke of domestic violence due to the fact that they constantly suffer from corporal violence and psychological pressure. Laila Lalami casts more light upon the difficulties women in such unbearable situations face while trying to get their divorce and child’s custody before issuing the new Family Code. This is manifested in this collection of short stories in the scene where the judge of Anfa claims corruption so as to issue Halima’s divorce without giving her the right to child custody, which induces her to claim back her money.

³ - "تكنم الضغوطات النفسية المتولدة لدي شبابنا نتيجة رؤية نجاح بعض المهاجرين غير الشرعيين، الذي تمكنوا من تسوية وضعيتهم القانونية في البلدان المهاجرة إليها وضمان عيش كريم هناك". (غربي وإخرون، 2014، ص 84).
Authors' translation

3. MOVING IDENTITIES AND THE QUEST FOR PANDORA'S BOX

In *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*, Faten Khatibi's identity is characterized by demolition and reconstruction depending on the peculiarities of the space in which she moves. The character of Faten is introduced to the reader through Larbi Lamrani's point of view. The latter assumes the role of the observer in the narration of events as "he thinks, feels and perceives, but he does not speak like the narrator." (Yaktine⁴, 2005, p.92). This radical change affecting Noura's personality stems from the precarious situation Faten lives in.

Upon excavating Faten's past, it is obvious that she had lived in a deteriorating socio-economic situation. At an early age, her mother took her to her aunt in Agadir, because her father abandoned his family responsibility. When Faten reached the age of fourteen, she moved to live with her mother in the shantytowns of Douar El Hajja in Rabat, "the kind of place where couscous pots were used as satellite dishes (...) and in that short time she had managed to graduate from high school, go to college (...) and join the Islamic organization." (Lalami, 2008, p.120).

Given that, a relationship has developed between Faten and Noura Lamrani at the university in Rabat. Noura lived in a Bourgeois milieu. Her father has a high position in the Ministry of Education, whereas her mother is a lawyer. Noura studied in private schools. Faten managed to pass the extremist, political Islam ideology to Noura. The latter abstained from listening to music, going to the theatre and wearing make-up. She gave up her project of pursuing her studies at the University of New York.

Faten's identity is characterized by ambivalence and conflict between her attitudes and her actions. She claims to be religious, but in fact, she is an opportunist, because she cheats on university exams to achieve her own goals. She got Noura involved in cheating. Due to his high-ranking position in the Ministry of Education, Larbi, Noura's father, exploits his acquaintances to protect his daughter, and at the same time, expels Faten from the university. Consequently, Faten decides to immigrate to Spain by hook or by crook.

Faten revolted against the social values and the status quo as well. These are the traits of people who transgress the criminalities, and "those whose identities are simply autonomous are sources of identity-based 'trouble' for society." (Caldas-Coulthard and Iedema, 2008, p.31) as Carmen Caldas-Coulthard and Rick Iedema assert in their book *Trouble Identity: Critical Discourse and Contested Identities* (2008). Differently put, the question of identity might be approached through the dialectic relationship between the individual and society. Most of the time the individual tends to juxtapose his thoughts and personal convictions and what they wish to achieve with the rules and traditions dictated by society. Likewise, Alex Michelle (2016, p.71-2) has the same stance, which is premised upon the thoughts of the landmark in Social sciences Emile Durkheim as Michelle asserts:

"According to Durkheim, there is within each of us a collective being and a private being. Our collective being corresponds to systems of thoughts and emotions that express in us not one personality but our original group or groups. This applies to

⁴ - "يفكر ويحس ويدرك، لكنه لا يتكلم مثل الراوي". (بقتين، 2005، ص 1-290). Authors' translation.

religious beliefs, moral beliefs and practices, normal or professional traditions and collective opinions of all kinds.”⁵ (Michelle, 2016, p.71-3).

Based on the above, Faten’s socio-economic situation is one of the major reasons that led to the shaping of her identity. Due to the difficult circumstances she had undergone and the void left by her biological father, Faten was fanatically indoctrinated by her Imam. Consequently, she adopted extremist ideas, such as refusing to accept the Other. Alex Michelle confirms this problem by saying: “The family situation of these children is characterized by the absence of a model related to the masculine role that can be internalized. On the contrary, independent children are common in families where the father is present.” (Michelle, *ibid*, p.87).

There is no doubt that Faten’s move from Morocco to Spain does not represent an attempt to improve his financial situation and social status, but it also represents a radical shift in Faten’s identity from the collective identity in the story of “The Fanatic” to the individual identity in the story of “The Odalisque”. Faten’s rape represents liminality between the “Fanatic” phase and “The Odalisque” phase. Bill Ashcroft et al. (2007) define liminality as follows:

“This term derives from the word ‘limen’, meaning threshold, is a word particularly used in psychology to indicate the threshold between the sensate and the subliminal, the limit below which a certain sensation ceases to be perceptible.” (Ashcroft et al., 2007, p.117).

Ashcroft et al. assert that liminality stems from a possible cultural change, which is apparently discernible in the character of Faten who has become more emancipated. When she was arrested by the Spanish coast guards and was put in a cell, Faten was the subject of the ‘male gaze’. In her book, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1989), Laura Mulvey conducted a study on the analysis of deriving pleasure from the cinema through the concept of the ‘male gaze’. In so doing, she adopted Sigmund Freud’s and Jacques Lacan’s psychoanalysis. Freud considers scopophilia as a male instinct regulated in childhood, which could be later on developed in art; whereas Jacques Lacan contributed to making the concept of the ‘male gaze’ more commonly used in psychoanalysis and he links it to the ‘mirror stage’. Mulvey asserts that the moment in which the child recognizes their subjectivity is very essential in shaping the ego. (Mulvey, 1989, p.15-7). So, although Faten could not speak Spanish, her body language was sufficient for her to get out of that awkward situation:

“Later, in the holding cell, she saw one of the guards staring at her. She didn’t need to speak Spanish to understand that he’d wanted to make her a deal. She remembered what her imam had said back at the underground mosque in Rabat – that extreme time sometimes demands extreme measures.” (Lalami, 2008, p.131).

In fact, Faten’s entry into the Spanish territory, which was hailed as the space of the different Other, was accompanied by corporal and psychological violence represented in Faten’s rape, on the one hand. On the other hand, Faten underwent epistemological violence which was associated with the power of naming as the Coast Guard continued to call her Fatime during the period of her detainment. (Lalami, 2008, p.131). The moment of penetrating Faten’s body

⁵ - Authors’ translation from the Arabic version, Alex Michelle, 2016 (Translated into Arabic by Abdelkebir Maaroufi).

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is symbolic in the sense that it is juxtaposed with her crossing of the Spanish geographical space, whose outcome is a radical shift in her identity: Faten, who has experienced liberation at its utmost, is now different from Faten, the extremist.

Put differently, Faten's crossing of the Spanish borders is intertwined with the fornication she had lived daily. She took off the veil to be imperceptible by the police in Madrid streets, which she shares with other immigrant women from Romania and Ukraine. These women opted to cross the frontiers of Western Europe to improve their social and financial situation.

Faten is frequented by many 'clients', among whom Martin was her favourite. However, when Faten asked him why he had insulted his father, he told her that he had been a fascist lieutenant who had served under the command of General Franco and that he used to hate immigrants. At that moment, Faten realized that Martin was not different from his father. Every time he wanted to engage in an erotic adventure with her, he made promises to settle her legal documents, which proved all lies. At that pivotal point, and to focalize Faten's disappointment in fulfilling her dream, Laila Lalami resorts to the allegory of the silkworm:

"She felt the same sadness that she had felt as a child when she'd discovered that the silkworm she'd raised in a shoe box and lovingly fed mulberry leaves had died despite all her care." (Lalami, 2008, p.125).

Faten's disappointment in caring for the silkworm means that her dream of improving her social status has vanished, which had been nourished by Martin's false promises. Yet, his sole concern was to satisfy his sexual whims. He had an objectifying view towards Faten, a look that places her within the category of the hareem that was deeply ingrained in the Western mentality in the nineteenth century. As Edward Said (1978) asserts in his book *Orientalism*, visual expressions of bizarre jouissance and beauty mingled in the encounter between the Western self and the Other. As a result, "the Orient becomes a living tableau of queerness." (Said, 1978, p.103).

From the above, the relationship between Faten and Martin refers the reader to the relationship between Gustave Flaubert and Kuchuk Hanem, whose character represents a mixture of dancing and prostitution as Edward Said states in the chapter titled: "Orientalist Structures and Restructures." (Said, 1978, p.186-7). It is worth pointing out to the difference in the chronological and historical context between the writings of Gustave Flaubert and Gerard de Nerval in the nineteenth century when French romanticism prevailed, which was influenced by German Romanticism and Laila Lalami's novel in the present time. Therefore, Kuchuk Hanem represents a moment of jouissance for Flaubert as he watches her performing "l'Abeille" dance before engaging with her in an erotic adventure. She represents female temptation in his historical novel *Salammbô*. Likewise, Martin initiates his sexual relationship with Faten by chatting with her for a while. For him, Faten symbolizes "Odalisque dreams".

Within the same context, in her book *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalism*, and specifically in the chapter titled "Orient as Women, Orientalism as Sentimentalism: Flaubert", Lisa Lowe (1991) introduces an epigraph from Flaubert's letter to Louise Colet in which he compares the Oriental woman to a machine, stripping her out of her human aspect. (Lowe, 1991, p.75). Low contends that Flaubert's use of Romantic and Orientalist motifs in

describing Kuchuk Hanem elevates the narration and adds an aesthetic tinge to it; however, it objectifies the woman as “a sex object”:

“Kuchuk Hanem is a masculine fantasy of pure erotic service pleasure, yet she is impassive, understanding, and insensate herself; her oriental mystery never fails to dream.” (Lowe, 1991, p.76).

There is no doubt that Dr. Ahmed Idrissi Alami from Purdue University establishes a juxtaposition between Faten’s role as a prostitute in the narrative serves as the opposite of Betoul’s character. (Alami, 2012, p.147). Betoul works as a nanny for a Spanish couple taking care of their three children in Gran. Alami argues that “here, Spanish anxiety over the role of the returned Moor can be seen in the position Betoul takes as a caregiver/substitute mother.” (ibid, p.147). when Faten sees Betoul preparing a herb blend called ‘*heb rshad*’ in Moroccan Arabic to cure the child of the cold, Faten pokes fun at Betoul that the child’s mother would have rejected this ‘native’ cure or laughed at Betoul. Faten and Betoul live in the same apartment due to the high cost of rent in Spain. Via. She has to take the bus at six o’clock in the morning when the lady of the house needs her help. Bettoul works hard to earn a living as a nanny. Hope for happiness is sometimes born from tragedy and pushes its owners to adhere to dangerous pursuits. The following section discloses this with the characters of Aziz and Halima.

The reason why Aziz, Halima, Faten and Murad rode the sea was attributed to their clinging to the hope of changing their social situation for the better. What distinguishes Aziz’s personality is his insistence on achieving his dreams. Despite having been arrested and deported to Morocco by the Civil Guards, he would attempt once again and convince his mother to sell her seven gold bracelets to pay for another perilous border-crossing on board harraga boats. (Lalami, 2005, p.3).

Aziz’s friend Lahcen sought to dissuade him from immigrating. So he arranged for him the opportunity to repair a dentist’s chair, in the hope that this would provide work opportunities with other dentists. However, Lahcen’s plan proved futile. Nevertheless, the dream of returning with huge sums of money and a luxurious car, which Aziz had five years before his migration, did not come true. As stated in the story titled “Returning Home”, Aziz did not bring a luxurious car but rather booked a ticket on one of the planes heading to Casablanca airport.

A few days after he arrived at Tarifa, Aziz met one of the smugglers who had promised him to work in one of the farms in Casablanca. The work was hard and he noticed the hunched figures of his fellow workers and the smell of the muscle ointment they carry with them in their trucks every morning. (Lalami, 2008, p.138). Aziz brought with him some gifts: dresses for his mother, some dresses for his wife, and perfumes for his wife, and an electric sewing machine. He told his wife that all he was able to save did not exceed fifty thousand dirhams because the first year was difficult. He had to pay the rent and the fees of the lawyer who obtained the legal residence documents for him. (Lalami, 2008, p.146). Zohra suggested that he should start a project with that amount of money. Yet, Aziz decided to return to Spain.

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In fact, the common denominator between Halima and Aziz is the quest for hope as it is the only thing left – according to the myth of “Pandora’s Box”⁶ – in this world, which is full of frustrations. Halima lives in a frustrating atmosphere due to constant domestic violence – as mentioned above. Hopeless as she was, Halima had no choice but to cross to the European side of the Mediterranean Sea. When Halima cleaned the office of Hanane Benomar, she realized that the latter was a translator of immigration documents. Halima inquired about the possibility of immigration. Hanane answered that she was a translator and not a lawyer. Halima then opted for the *Hrig* or illegal immigration. Nevertheless, her attempt failed as mentioned previously.

Despite her failure in crossing the sea to the Spanish territories, Halima’s border-crossing endeavour is symbolic in the sense that after this futile attempt, Halima’s independence crystallized. When Halima returned to Casablanca, she borrowed some money from one of her cousins and rented a room with her three children in Sidi Moumen shanty towns. She could not find work as a cleaner. Amid these tough circumstances, Halima got her divorce from Maati. She wondered why Maati had taken such a decision:

“Halima had heard that barely a month after she’d run away, Maati had tried to marry again, but the girl’s parents had heard about what had happened to Halima and turned him down.” (Lalami, 2008, p.108).

Despite their perpetual quest for the Eldorado, the four main characters’ moving identities – Murad, Aziz, Halima and Faten – are fraught with undecidedness and uncertainty. In this sense, Oladi and Portelli (2017) utilize Deleuze’s and Guattari’s concept of ‘nomad’ to depict the condition of the immigrant who is in “a constant state of *ongoingness* and *in-betweenness*”⁷ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, quoted in Oladi and Portelli, 2017, p.666). What the Postcolonial subject shares with the nomad are their hostility to fix modes of thought and inclination to “the open horizon of the plans with an infinite potential for movement” as Oladi and Portelli put it. (ibid, p.668).

Closely bound up with the unfixity of the ‘nomad’ term is the notion of hybridity. Bill Ashcroft et al. (2007, p.108) define hybridity as “the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization.” Aziz is the epitome of the Postcolonial hybrid subject seeking an anchor in the culture of the Metropolis and, at the same time, attempting to adhere to his Moroccan culture and origins. Aziz, by further implication, “finds himself torn between his Moroccan roots and his desire to assimilate into a new culture.” (Hussein, 2024, p.1236). Homi Bhabha contends that hybridity may be the most effective form of subversive opposition as it embodies all sites of struggle and displacement. (Bhabha quoted in Ashcroft et al., 2003, p.9).

⁶. Vincent Geoghegan (2008) establishes a connection between hope and utopianism. According to the myth of “Pandora’s Box”, the gods and men gathered to solve conflicts between the two groups; Prometheus slaughtered a bull and cut it into pieces. He tried to deceive the chief god Zeus by hiding meat and giving it to a group of men; he stole fire and gave it to them as well. As a punishment, Zeus offered Pandora to Epimetheus, Prometheus’s brother. Pandora was carrying a big jar, which Erasmus later designated as a box. When Pandora opened her box, all the vices and calamities spread all over the world, and when closing it only hope remained in the box. What serves this study is the part related to hope.

⁷. Oladi and Portelli’s emphasis (2017, p.666).

4. DEMYSTIFYING THE STEREOTYPICAL REPRESENTATION OF THE MOROCCAN CULTURE THROUGH THE USE OF ALLEGORY: THE STORY OF JENARA

Undoubtedly, Laila Lalami puts into question the Western stereotypical representation of non-Western cultures in general and Moroccan culture in particular through the story of Jenara, which Murad tells to the two tourists Sandy and Chrissa. When Chrissa asked Anas, Murad's assistant in the Bazaar shop, about the source of one of the Berber rugs, she departed from a stereotypical discourse that places Moroccan Amazigh motifs in a homogeneous position with other motifs from native or local American culture:

“Ah. Traditional Berber rugs are usually warm-coloured like this one. And look at the animal motifs. Brings to mind some of those Native American drawings, doesn't it?”
(Lalami, 2008, p.166).

In fact, all the cultures of the world differ from each other. They are characterized by heterogeneity because each of them has its own specificities that are closely bound up with the socio-economic and geographical space. From a Postcolonial lens, Homi Bhabha contends that cultural statements and systems are enacted or constructed in a space he designates as the “Thirds space of Enunciation”. (Bhabha, 1994, p.37). Bill Ashcroft et al. (2007, p.108) assert that cultural identity always crops up in an ambivalent and contradictory space where the claim for “a pure culture” is not tenable. For Ashcroft et al. (ibid, p.53-4) the space of hybridity bears the traces of other cultural meanings and identities of other meanings and identities.

Of paramount importance is the notion of hybridity, because as Ashcroft et al. (2007, p.109) argue, it is this ‘in-between’ space that brings to the fore the meaning of culture. Therefore, hybridity has often been adopted in Postcolonial discourse to entail cross-cultural ‘exchange’. There is no ‘pure’ culture that arose in isolation from the rest of the cultures of the world. Cultural interweaving and cross-culturalism marked different parts of the world throughout history. On the one hand, by telling the story of Jenara, Murad highlights the Moroccan carpet, as a contributing factor in moving the story of Jenara. On the one hand, when Chrissa asked him about carpet price, Anas suggested six hundred dihrms, but Murad corrected the price to one thousand and eight hundred. After bargaining for a while, the price was fixed at one thousand and two hundred dirhams, therefore, raising the value of the carpet as a reaction to Chrissa's and Sandy's stereotypical views towards the elements of Moroccan culture.

The story of Jenara revolves around a carpet weaver named Ghomari. People from different places flocked to buying the carpets he knits. Ghomari fell in love with a girl and they decided to get married. She was a daughter of a muezzin and her name was Jenara. Every now and then, Jenara would visit him and ask him how much time he had left to save the money for the dowry. He answered that he had to sell ten or seven carpets. One day, Jenara came to see the weaver busy at work and she revealed her face. At that moment, the evil midget Arbo was passing by and jumped into the shop, and when he saw the beauty of jenara, he began to harass her whenever he met her on the road. When she refused, he decided to take revenge. So, he rushed to his master, the Sultan telling him that he had seen the most beautiful woman in the kingdom, but he had promised to marry a simple carpet weaver. Arbo waited until the Muezzin went up to his minaret and kidnapped Jenara and took her to the Sultan's harem.

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The girl spent her days crying on her forced marriage to the brutal Sultan. His gifts did not silence her from crying. The only thing Ghomari could do was weave a rug that represents his intense sadness for Jenara:

“Poor Ghomri knew that there was no use fighting the Sultan who’d stolen his beloved, so he turned his tapestry and poured his sorrow into it. He weaved a rug that showed jenara in all her beauty, her face unveiled, and in her hand a long knife, representing his desire for revenge. When he was done, he marvelled at his own creation, which was so lifelike that it was as though Jenara was standing right before him, ready to strike.” (Lalami, 2008, p.170).

After Ghomari had finished his work, he displayed the wondrous carpet for people to watch every night. When the news reached Arbo, he informed the Sultan about that. The marvellous carpet was confiscated and Ghomari was put in jail. The Sultan showed the carpet to his entourage and hung it in his bedroom. When he saw Jenara, he told her that Ghomari would be executed in the morning. Jenara did not show any sadness towards her fiancé. When the Sultan asked Arbo about the reason for this, the dwarf told that maybe Jenara seemed happy due to a glimmer of hope.

One night Jenra told Arbo that she wanted a bracelet, but its owner in the Mellah did not want to leave it. Arbo reassured her that she would get the bracelet that night. So, he set off to the Mellah, leaving his master’s guard post vacant. So, jenara entered the Sultan’s bedroom with a knife in her hand. The Sultan woke up in horror, asking Arbo for help. Yet, the latter had gone to bring the imaginary bracelet:

«The Sultan cried and writhed in fear. Members of his court came rushing in, and Jenara retreated against the rug hanging on the wall. ‘She’s trying to kill me!’ he screamed, pointing at the young girl. ‘But Master, that is only your tapestry on the wall.’ The Sultan cried out to them that they were to seize her, but none of his retinue moved.” (Lalami, 2008, p.171).

The Prime Minister accused him of madness and left to convey the news to the Sultan’s brother, whom the Sultan had kept in a dark prison. The vizier was eager to do a favour to the man who would succeed the mad Sultan on the throne. After all the Sultan’s entourage left the room, Jenara killed the sultan. Thus Jenara and Ghomari’s revenge was achieved.

5. CONCLUSION

In a nutshell, this study sought to trace the pushing factors of illegal immigration to European countries in general and Spain in particular. As such, these factors are economic, social, political and psychological. The study also discussed the problem of moving identities. Moving to the extreme limits remains the dominant feature of Faten’s moving identity. What distinguishes Aziz and Halima is their instability and constant search for a new identity and a new home, which is evident in Aziz’s determination to return to Sian despite the hardships and impediments he underwent.

As for Halima, her goal is manifested in her emancipation from the restrictions of the patriarchal system on the one hand, and from the bureaucratic and administrative corruption, on the other. Such claim is confirmed by Rima Abunasser (2016, p.194) who contends that

although Aziz and Halima achieve financial independence, they hanker for reconciliation between their past experiences and current status.

As far as the findings of this research are concerned, it is through a detailed exploration of the four characters' life trajectories that this study discloses the depiction of collective trauma impacting Aziz, Halima, Murad and Faten. Their moving identities swing between the quest for the Eldorado and their desire to alter their status quo to the better. By the same token, analysis uncovers a dynamic interconnectedness between hope and anguish.

As a Postcolonial collection of short stories *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* encompasses multi-layered narratives, among which gender dynamics are inscribed. Laila Lalami grants the voice of the female figure to narrate the perilous *hriq* experiences these women dared to undergo. It is worth mentioning that the use of allegory in *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* is done purposefully. Upon reading Jenara's story with a critical eye, a couple of salient points can be discerned:

On the one hand, the Moroccan carpet, as one of the elements of Moroccan culture, cannot be reduced to a simplistic, homogeneous view. However, it is characterized by diversity depending on different regions. Thus, its colours and motifs are diverse. For instance, the carpet colours and motifs of Souss and Agadir differ from those from the Atlas region, Khemisset Rif or Moroccan Sahara. The two tourists' attitudes towards the motifs and colours of the Moroccan carpet is a sweeping generalization that has nothing to do with reality.

On the other hand, Ghomari's weaving of a carpet that represents the beautiful portrait of jenara reminds the reader that Moroccan carpets in particular and Moroccan culture, in general, are not fixed, but liable to the process of development, renewal and creativity. Hence, the Moroccan carpet gains continuity from one generation to another.

Funding

This research has not received any kind of funding.

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