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## Transcending borders and self-reinvention in Laila Lalami's *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*

Okache C. Odey

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### Abstract

*Due to the prospect of a bleak future in many African countries, people are increasingly looking for ways to migrate to Western nations. Socio-economic and political factors are fueling the migration crisis across Africa. This paper not only examines the experiences of the migratory characters but also how the process of migration transforms individuals in Laila Lalami's *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*. This paper draws from postcolonial concepts such as 'otherness,' 'marginality,' and 'liminality' to explore the lives of the four central characters in Morocco and Spain. Through the characters' experiences, the paper reveals how migration can change an individual's attitude and perceptions. This paper demonstrates that success is largely attributed to the individual rather than geographical location, thereby highlighting the significance of personal drive in achieving one's goals. The paper concludes that socio-economic prosperity is achievable for Africans both within their home countries and in the West, emphasising the crucial role of individual effort and determination.*

**Keywords:** *Transcending borders, self-reinvention, hope, dangerous pursuits, postcolonial theory.*

### Introduction

One of the prevailing issues in Africa in recent times is migration. Many Africans abandon their home countries in search of better opportunities abroad. Many Africans might choose to stay if conditions in their home countries were more favourable. The root cause of the mass exodus of individuals of African descent to Europe, North America, and other parts of the world lies in their perceived hopelessness of realising socio-economic aspirations in their home countries. The dire economic situations in many countries in Africa, according to Feldner, is driving the "African migration movement, which, albeit often caused by constrained circumstances, is largely voluntary, as many Africans leave homes to seek work and better opportunities else-

where, particularly in the United States and Europe” (15). Human beings have all through history, moved from one location to another. Lalami likens human beings to “migratory species” who when their natural habitat no longer offers safety or opportunity, “leave home and find shelter somewhere new” (59-60). Migration, therefore, is an integral part of human existence.

Africans’ desire to migrate is a natural survival strategy, with varied underlying motivations. Okolocha notes that the “circumstances leading to migration are diverse but most instances of migration are geared towards a desire for something better than that which exists in the home nation. That desire to improve one’s situation motivates the migration” (144). Post-colonial socio-economic and political realities have been nothing but a long nightmare for the majority of Africans from the south to the north. It is not yet Uhuru in many African countries because the people do not have access to quality education, good health care and socio-economic emancipation years after the end of colonial rule. This aligns with Adeniyi’s position that the “desperation to escape difficult socio-economic conditions” (5) is fueling the migration crisis in Africa.

Many African novelists, such as NoViolet Bulawayo, Imbolo Mbue, Dinaw Mengestu and Tahar Ben Jelloun, have captured the African migration crisis in their works. Ahmed notes that African literature cannot be separated from the global concern about the large displacement of Africans from their home country to the West and that “such concern for migration and the ensuing transnationalism is an inescapable responsibility for African writers of all shades, diasporic or home-based” (137). Ahmed further states that the works of these African writers offer fresh insights into psycho-social and economic challenges that confront African migrants in the West. Pfalzgraf equally observes that:

Since the turn of the new millennium, African writing in English has become increasingly concerned with the experience of migration, tracing its impact across the continent and on a global scale. The past two decades have seen the publication of a remarkable number of works which center on the experiences of African migrants in Europe or North America, in many cases relating to the return of migrant character as well .... Hence, the migrant occupies a central position in contemporary African literature and reflects many currents of mobility on the continent and in the diaspora. (3)

The image of African migrants portrayed in the media and public discourse, especially in Western countries, tends to deprive them of their humanity and their personal stories. African writers, according to Feldner, deplore the social function of literature which offers a “better understanding of the phenomenal of migration, which in the media is usually depicted either in the form of sober and abstract data or in a simplistic manner that leaves no room for the complexities and subtleties involved” (108). African novelists deploy the novel form to articulate the migratory experiences of African migrants and the impact this process has on them. According to Ashcroft et al, the migration process can profoundly impact an individual's sense of identity. They argue that the dislocation from crossing from one country to another can alter a migrant's “valid and active sense of self” (9). Again, this experience of dislocation can leave a lasting impact, as Lalami poignantly notes, “all immigrants walk around with a scar left behind by their crossing into a new country” (73). The central concern of this paper is to examine how transitioning from one country to another transforms the perception and attitude of migrants, as reflected in Laila Lalami's novel, *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*. The four main characters undergo profound changes as they transcend the watery borders of two countries and two starkly different continents. Also, this paper explores the notion that migration from Africa to the West is driven not only by economic factors, but also by socio-cultural and political ones.

## Theoretical Framework

This paper employs the postcolonial theory to examine the reality of migration and the characters' experiences in Lalami's novel. The theory is necessary to examine a text like *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* that depicts the notion of displacement arising from migration, which is a postcolonial issue. According to Feldner, postcolonial literature expresses “an interest in issues about aspects of mobility, migration, and diaspora, which is not surprising as migration and diaspora present excellent sites for rendering literary discussion of cultural differences and marginality” (27). This paper draws from postcolonial concepts such as ‘otherness,’ ‘marginality’ and ‘liminality’ to explore the characters' experiences in Morocco and Spain. In postcolonial discourse, the concept of ‘otherness’ refers to a situation where a dominant group within a society perceives another group as dissimilar based on factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, religion and nationality, as depicted in the novel. Marginality is the exclusion of migrant others or groups of people from accessing the socio-economic and political opportunities available in a society because they are perceived as the ‘other.’ Liminality, on the other

hand, describes a transitional state in which migrants move between socio-economic, cultural and geographic spaces.

The postcolonial theory, therefore, offers a nuanced and in-depth portrayal of migration, the impact on the four main characters, and lastly, that either at home or abroad, Africans need to devise strategies to achieve social and economic aspirations.

## Literature Review

Extensive research has been conducted on the migration crisis in Africa and the experiences of African migrants abroad. For example, a report prepared by Erf and Heering (2002) for the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) provides the strategies by the Moroccan government to curb migration, as well as highlighting the main drivers of migration in Morocco.

Haas (2007) highlights unemployment and the general lack of opportunities in Morocco as factors that continue to drive the migratory tendencies among Moroccans. Haas further adds that the demand for labour in Europe and demographical factors within Morocco are equally fuelling the desire by many Moroccans to migrate.

Benzidan (2011) examines how Lalami rephrases dominant ideas and perceptions about migration. According to Benzidan, Lalami's position in *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* is that illegal migration will only lead to suffering and disappointment for those who make it to Spain. Benzidan's paper concludes that the author rewards the characters who return to settle in Morocco but punishes those who reach Spain, thereby discouraging illegal migration.

Ouassif (2020) posits that the geographical position of Morocco and its colonial history make it a strategic country when it comes to matters of international migration. The paper offers an insight to help understand the issues driving migration in Morocco, such as family reunification, unemployment, and the quest for better opportunities abroad, even when it involves undertaking a dangerous journey as depicted in Lalami's novel. The paper also lists the pull factors to destination countries in Europe as improved living conditions, political and institutional stability and job opportunities.

In his paper, Hussein (2024) examines the notion of displacement and exile. The study deals with the challenges individuals encounter when they leave their homeland to settle in another country. Hussein argues that socio-cultural and religious differences often hinder migrants from establishing their own identity in a foreign land.

Bouallegue's (2025) analysis of Lalami's novel shows how illegal immigration can be considered a form of nomadic existence. The position of

Bouallegue's paper is that illegal immigrants share with nomads the ability to live in a place under restriction. Bouallegue argues, unlike the position of this paper, that Lalami's characters, like nomads, are unable to fit into the society of their host or even their homeland.

Issafi and Ouladhadda (2025) in their paper, deploy the push and pull theory to explain those factors pushing Moroccan migrants to embark on illegal migration and pulling them towards European countries in general and Spain in particular in Lalami's novel. The paper also discusses the desire by the four characters to change their social and economic situations for the better.

All the works reviewed deal with the idea of migration and the fate of Moroccan migrants in one form or another other but none examined how migrants reinvent themselves as a result of transcending international borders, and this justifies why this study is necessary. Again, none of the work reviewed examines how socio-economic success can be dependent on the migrant's effort and determination, and not necessarily on a geographical location. This leaves a knowledge gap that this study seeks to fill.

### **The Mediterranean Sea as a Threshold of Hope in Lalami's *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits***

*Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* is a 2005 novel by the Moroccan novelist Laila Lalami that follows the fate of four desperate characters as they move from Tangier to Spain in search of a better life. Ouassif notes how Morocco's proximity to Spain is one of the push factors in the quest by many Moroccan migrants seeking better socio-economic prospects, including job opportunities in Spain (1). The novel depicts how the hope of a better life uproots people from their homeland and forces them to embark on a dangerous journey across the sea in pursuit of what they believe Europe can offer them. Crossing the Mediterranean Sea to many African migrants is considered the pathway to good things in life, even though Adeniyi sees "the Mediterranean crossing as the deadliest sea route in the world" (167). Aside from the Mediterranean Sea being a dangerous pathway in the African migrants' quest for a better life in Europe, it separates not only two different countries but also reveals the vast difference in the socio-economic realities of the two different continents. Palladino, recalling Gramsci, asserts that the:

Mediterranean is a symptom of perennial ruptures that the rich north insists on maintaining, it is a literal translation of the hegemonic dynamics that regulate the relationships between the two shores – the European on one side and

the African/Middle Eastern on the other. The figures of contemporary migration – the ‘boat people,’ the asylum seeker, the refugee, the uninvited guest – speak of the failure of such a system, of the violence which borders entail, of colonial legacies and unequal power relations which reproduce poverty and cultivate wealth. (5).

The four major characters, Murad a graduate of English unable to find a job, Halima, an abused housewife, Faten, a fanatical student who vows to always uphold the tenets of Islam and Aziz, a husband in search of a decent means of livelihood, all leave Tangier in Morocco in a rickety boat to Tarifa in Spain through the perilous sea all because they have no hope of a better life in their country. They are propelled to undertake the perilous journey by the illusion that a brighter future lies across the turbulent sea. Bouallegue argues that “fantasy plays an important role in motivating Moroccans to emigrate (104). Murad thinks he is separated only by fourteen kilometres from the exhilarating prospect in Spain of “the job, the car, the house” and yet to realize his dreams he must confront the forbidding reality of the “the coast guards, the ice-cold water, the money he’d have to borrow” (1). He just cannot understand how fourteen kilometres “could separate not just two countries but two universes.” (1) The four major characters think that Morocco and Spain are not “just two countries but two universes” because as Salazar notes that “imaginaries play a dominant role in envisioning ... the green pastures” (586) by aspiring African migrants.

The occupants of the boat heading towards Tarifa in Spain are “a motley mix of people from the ex-colonies” (3), an intrusive presence of strangers that will trigger melancholic hysteria in the people of the former imperial power, Spain. This is a reminder of how the historical colonial past fuels migratory tendencies in many African people. The announcement by the captain of the boat that the migrants must swim to the shore shows the risk many people are determined to take in pursuit of a better life in Europe. The dream of Halima and her three children of a good life in Spain is abruptly brought to an end right at the beach of Tarifa and she is fortunate not to lose any of her children, a fate that some occupants of the raft are not fortunate enough to share. She, together with her children and Murad, is apprehended by the Spanish coast guards and they are taken back to Morocco. It is only Faten and Aziz among the four major characters who get to Spain on this very trip. Lalami’s characters show how the socio-economic and political situations in many African countries are pushing thousands of African migrants to embark on a dangerous journey across the Mediterranean Sea in the hope of

a better life in Europe.

## **Socio-economic and Political Realities of Postcolonial Morocco in *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits***

In the second section of *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* titled “Before”, Lalami explores the frustration and hopelessness that make the characters decide to migrate to Spain. The factors that compel the four major characters to embark on such a dangerous voyage in pursuit of hope in Spain are the usual issues of economic hardship, social pressure, hopelessness, unemployment, corruption, political crises and the myriad of other postcolonial failures that have made many Africans to be disillusioned with the state of affairs in their countries.

Murad Idrissi is a young man who is unable to use his degree in English to earn a living years after graduating from the university. His inability to get a job due to the high unemployment rate in Morocco is behind his decision to embark on the dangerous journey to Spain. He speaks Spanish fluently, unlike the other migrants on the boat to Tarifa. Murad is disillusioned with the state of things in his country, as he cannot even assist his mother, who is a widow, because he does not have a steady job. He acts as a guide to the tourists but it is an irregular kind of work and he does not earn enough. He is frustrated and ashamed that, as the eldest in the family, he cannot financially assist his younger siblings. He gets back home as a tourist guide most days “empty-handed” (99), and he regrets going to college “to study English, spending his time learning a language and its literature. No one cared about these things” (102). His comment highlights why some young Africans no longer consider getting an education as a means of social and economic empowerment. His inability to get a job also shows how unemployment is one of the reasons that not just Moroccans but people from other countries in Africa choose to go on an arduous journey by sea to Europe.

Halima Bouhamsa struggles to fend for herself and her three children as her husband, Maati, a cab driver, spends his money on drinks. She is not educated and the money she earns as a cleaner is barely enough for the family. Halima's dire financial predicament and the domestic abuse that she suffers from her husband, account for her resolve to embark on the dangerous trip to Spain as she fantasies that like her two brothers in France, “what would have happened had she, too, gone to Europe like her brothers. Would she have an apartment, a washing machine, maybe even a car? Would she have Maati?” (71). In the boat to Spain, Murad perceives Halima as someone who “had an aura of quiet determination about her, and it stirs feelings of respect in Murad, even though he thinks her irresponsible, or at the very

least foolish, for risking her children's lives on a trip like this" (5). Halima's domestic and financial issues drive her to endanger not just her own life but those of her three children in the pursuit of a better life in Spain. According to Uko, women who find themselves in difficult situations "make (sometimes very hard) decisions" (87). In a deeply conservative and religious Moroccan society that restricts what women can do, Halima is determined to live her life on her terms.

One of the major characters in the novel is Aziz Ammor, who has a certificate from a trade school but he has no steady source of income. His migration, just like that of the others, is voluntary. His inability to fulfill his role as husband in a patriarchal society pushes him to embark on the journey to Spain to provide a better life for his wife and his parents. Aziz's family members and his friend try to stop him from embarking on the risky trip to Spain but he "weighed their warnings against the prospect of years of idleness, years of asking them for money to ride the bus, years of looking down at his shoes or changing the subject whenever someone asked what he did for a living" and he decides to migrate. Aziz's decision to embark on the trip across the Mediterranean Sea despite the enormous risk illustrates the desperation of many Africans according to Ramsey-Kurz "to leave their home countries and risk everything for a life – elsewhere" (168) in the pursuit of the hope of a good life.

Faten Khatibi, one of the major characters in Lalami's *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*, flees to Spain after making derogatory comments about King Hassan within the earshot of an informant. She leaves Morocco following the advice of her imam, but before that, she is expelled from the university through the manipulation of a top government official whose daughter she tries to convert to radical Islam. In Morocco, Faten is marginalized by society because of her interpretation of Islam. Her migrating to Spain is not necessarily as a result of economic hardship as her situation is reflective of what Ashcroft asserts to be the "plight of people who must move across borders, must, flee the nation either as economic or political refugees or as subjects oppressed in some ways by state power" (13).

The underlying factors that motivate the four major characters to embark on the perilous journey to Spain, as illustrated in the text, are not exactly economic. To Whitehouse, social forces are the determinants for economic migration to the West (22). Again, Lalami's novel shows that many Africans may not even think of migrating, as Arnett argues, "if the places from which migrants and refugees flee were sustaining and supportive" (103). The harsh socio-economic and political realities in many post-colonial countries in Africa are fuelling the migratory tendencies of many individuals in Africa.

## Crossing Borders and the Impact on Migrants in Lalami's *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*

*Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* by Lalami highlights the notion that crossing a transnational border is not just one of transiting from one location to the other but also a space for migrants' self-reinvention. People hardly remain the same when they move from one place to another. Indeed, transitioning from one cultural milieu to another can profoundly shape not only the migrant's perception of things but also of self. Bhabha posits that transiting between traditions reveals a "hybrid form of life" (xiii). The migratory quest for a better life shapes migrants' worldviews. McGarrigle argues that the "search for a better way of life and self-realisation is anchored in the idea that mobility itself is transformative, providing a way of life that is more meaningful and the opportunity for reorientation hinged upon imaginaries" (171). Lalami's four major characters show that when migrants cross international borders, they cannot remain the same again.

Halima is deported with her children to Morocco but she decides to rent a place to stay instead of moving back with her husband. She is no longer willing to tolerate the beating from a husband who is unable to hold on to any job for long. The attempt to migrate to Spain and her near-death experience with her children profoundly transformed Halima. The migratory experience builds self-esteem and confidence in Halima for her to be able to confront her abusive husband and demand a divorce. Issafi and Ouladhadda assert that Halima transformed after her deportation into a "woman who seeks to break from under domestic violence" (126). She gets the divorce papers from Marti, which illustrates her determination to chart her path without the inhibiting control of her husband. Instead of seeking employment, Halima decides to start up something on her own. It was something she never thought of before embarking on the trip to Spain, as she now "enjoyed working for herself and was good at sales. Things were working for her after all" (122-123). The Halima who returns from the Mediterranean Sea is far different from the one who left on a boat. The migration process thus becomes a liberating experience for her.

Like Halima, Murad is apprehended by Spanish border guards and deported to Morocco. According to Hussein, the physical act of crossing borders can bring about a transformative shift in a migrant's sense of self and identity (1233). The Murad who returns to Morocco is no longer the one who makes a precarious living as a tour guide. There is a shift in the way he begins to perceive things. He gets a job in a shop where he sits behind the counter reading a novel, he "caught himself editing and rewording the characters' dialogue – but that wasn't it. Something was missing" (168) and so when one of the American tourists who visits the shop says the American novelist, Paul

Bowles, who lived and died in Morocco knows the country “Better than the Moroccans themselves” (174), it dawns on Murad that he has to do something. Before the trip, he takes American tourists to Bowles’s house, and he has read many of his novels, but after the trip, Murad experiences a shift in the way he views things. Just like Halima, instead of reading the works of Bowles and others, he decides to write one himself:

Murad went back to sit behind the counter, leaving Anas to run the credit card and wrap the rug for them. He picked up his books, smoothed the edge of the page he’d marked by folding the corner, and closed it for good. There was no use reading stories like this anymore; he needed to write his own. He thought about his father, who’d told stories to his children, and how they were almost forgotten today. Anas closed the cash register with a loud ring, but Murad hardly paid any attention; he was already lost in the story he would start writing tonight. (185-186)

Through the characters of Halima and Murad, Lalami highlights the possibility of achieving socio-economic success in Africa, thereby challenging the notion by some Africans that migration to the West offers the only path to prosperity. As Benzidan notes, the author appears to reward characters who return to Morocco (209). Halima makes good profit selling beghrir at the market, as people love the taste of the beghrir that she makes, while Murad is likely going to sustain himself financially because he has the prospect of writing a bestselling novel. Before migrating, Halima never imagined starting up a business, the same way Murad only thought of reading Bowles’s novels rather than writing for others to read. Bouallegue asserts that by crossing the borders of Spain, Lalami’s novel “presents characters that can transcend the limitations of their bodies to experience new dimensions of themselves” (107). Lalami’s artistic message in *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* conveys the idea that Africans can achieve socio-economic prosperity in their home country if they are resourceful.

Unlike Halima, Faten finds her way into Spain by compromising her virtue. The Faten who arrives in Spain is quite unlike the one before the journey. To avoid deportation as she awaits extradition, Faten interprets the words of her imam back in Morocco to suit her situation, so when:

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 times sometimes demanded extreme measures. The guard had taken her to one of the private exam rooms, away from everyone else. He lifted her shirt and thrust into her with savage abandon. He was still wearing the surgical gloves he'd had on to examine the group of migrants who'd landed that day. And, all the while, he kept calling her Fatma. And he said other words, words she didn't understand, but that she'd grown used to now. (141)

There is no turning back for Faten after the Spanish guard ravishes her. The event in the exam room illustrates how the former colonial power continues to exploit the former colony. She becomes a commercial sex worker in Spain to survive, and from the Faten who "Before this, back home, it was always flats or sneakers, an ankle-length shirt, and a second-hand sweater" (130), she transforms to one who wears high heels and short shirts in Spain. Faten's case buttresses Cooper's argument that "migrants who become unanchored from the solid realities of material life at home may lose their sense of identity and place in the world" (30). In Morocco, Faten was a strong advocate for the chastity of women, but across the border in Spain, she loses her dignity as a woman as a result of the type of work she decides to do. She finds herself in the liminal space of her new society. She becomes the object of her former contempt. The argument that undocumented status often forces women, like Faten, to become commercial sex workers is not entirely convincing. Her roommate Betoul's decision to pursue a decent job as a nanny highlights the personal choices undocumented migrants make to improve their lives in the West. Faten fits into the category of migrant women who feel obligated, according to Agustin, to sell sex to make more money (32). Faten's life in Spain is a sharp contrast to when she was in Morocco. Again, the novel reveals how migrants are transformed as a result of migration or how the true nature of an individual is revealed as a result of moving across international borders. Faten's decision to engage in sex work in Spain illustrates the desperate measures people may resort to survive in a foreign country. The marginal position of Faten in Spain as an undocumented migrant limits her access to socio-economic opportunities. Her decision to offer her body to men for financial gratification represents the complex realities and desperate choices faced by some African migrant women in Western countries. Agustin asserts that "migrants widely understand that any migratory project carries with it risks and dangers; leaving home represents a momentous life change" (33). Faten's migratory experience in Spain reflects Agustin's assertion.

Aziz migrates to Spain, leaving his wife behind with the promise of coming back in two years but five years will pass before he returns to his country. He nurses illusory ideas that making money in Spain is very easy. His experience as an immigrant in Spain affects his sense of self-worth as he is unable to do all that he promised his wife, even after five years in Spain. Aziz's experience in Spain purges him of those dreams he nurtured before he left Morocco:

FOR FIVE YEARS, Aziz had imagined the scene of his homecoming. In his carefully rehearsed fantasies, he would come home on a sunny day, dressed in a crisp white shirt and black slacks, his hair gelled back and his moustache trimmed. His new car would be stacked to the roof with gifts for everyone in the family. When he rang the doorbell, his wife and his ageing parents would greet him with smiles on their faces. He would take his wife into his arms, lift her, and they would twirl, like in the movies. Within days of his arrival, he would move them from the decrepit apartment in a poor neighbourhood of Casablanca to one of those modern buildings that sprang up daily in the city. But as the date of his return to Morocco approached, Aziz found that he had to alter the details of his daydreams. He had imagined he'd arrive in a late model car, but now he thought that a car trip would be better." (146-147)

Aziz finds out that in Madrid, as an immigrant, he is tagged with the badge of an unwanted settler. He encounters hostility from certain members of the host society, exemplifying what Gilroy terms "postcolonial melancholia" (104). This concept describes the feelings of aggression and fear directed by citizens of ex-imperial countries towards those from former colonies as a reactionary response to diversity, plurality and differentiation (109). While he interacts well with his neighbour and his boss at the restaurant, a lot of Spaniards seem to be apprehensive and suspicious of him in shops and grocery stores. Tension often arises between migrants and citizens of the host country, thereby highlighting the complexities of cultural integration and social cohesion in multicultural societies in Western countries. When Aziz recounts his experience in Spain in Morocco, he says the good things,

But he didn't talk about the time when he was in El Corte Inglés shopping for a jacket, and the guard followed him around as if he were a criminal. He didn't describe how, at

the grocery store, cashiers greeted customers with hellos and thank you, but their eyes always gazed past him as though he were invisible, nor did he mention the constant identity checks that the police had performed these last two years. (155)

The above incidents vividly depict the concept of otherness, illustrating how the members of the dominant group react to the presence of an unfamiliar group within their society. The idea of designating some people within a given society as the other, as seen in the case of Aziz, limits his social and economic mobility in Spain. Through the character of Aziz, Lalami shows that migrating to the West does not necessarily translate to accumulating wealth. Aziz is unable to move his family “from the decrepit apartment in a poor neighbourhood of Casablanca to one of those modern buildings that sprang up daily in the city” as he has “to alter the details of his daydreams” (147). Migrating to Spain enables Aziz to realise the difference between illusion and reality. Despite the drawbacks as an immigrant in Spain, Aziz is determined to stay as he finds life better than in Morocco. He fits the type of immigrants that Yitah and Okyerefo argue will “remain abroad and endure hardship and setbacks, either because their downward social mobility renders them unable to fulfil their roles and expectations back home, or because they hope to attain victory over adversity” (91).

Through Faten and Aziz’s experiences, Lalami conveys the message that achieving socio-economic emancipation in Europe is not as easy as many Africans assume. Again, the experience of Aziz reveals that migrating to the West may not be the way out of poverty for many African migrants.

All four main characters never remain the same after the journey to Tarifa. Murad discovers in the end that he can earn a living as a writer in Morocco, while Halima can fend for herself and her children. Just like Halima, Faten resolves at the end to be a new woman, not one who is at the mercy of men, as she rejects Martin’s condescending offer of getting her Spanish immigration papers. There is an indication that she is going to earn money without resorting to sleeping with men. Aziz’s five years in Spain made him realise that the West does not offer a quick fix to a migrant’s financial challenges. The four main characters experience what Bhabha describes as “the re-creation of the self in the world of travel” (12).

## Conclusion

This paper examined the socio-economic and political factors pushing Moroccans to embark on the perilous journey to Spain in search of a better

life in Lalami's *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*. This study established that aside from economic reasons, there are socio-political factors that equally influence migratory aspirations in Africans as reflected in the lives of the four major characters in this novel. The experiences of the four major characters show how the identity and the perception of individuals can change as they move across international borders. In conclusion, through the experiences of the four main characters, this paper revealed that the quest for a better life is determined more by the effort of the individual than by the geographical location. Furthermore, through the different experiences of the characters in Morocco and Spain, this paper establishes that both the homeland and the host country can serve as transformative sites for hope and a new beginning.

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