

Acknowledgments

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Dedication

To my beloved parents for their endless love, prayers, and encouragement that lit the path forward.

To my sister and three brothers their presence, support, and faith in me have meant the world.

To my three best friends thank you for standing by me with laughter, advice, and inspiration.

This work is dedicated to all of them and to the journey that has shaped who I am today.

KAMILIA

I dedicate this work To my beloved parents, for their love and support throughout my academic career, my kind sister Hanane and loving brother Idir , who have been by my side,

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SONIA

Abstract

This study explores the complex realities of migration through a comparative analysis of *The Devil's Highway* (2004) by Luis Alberto Urrea and *Leaving Tangier* (2009) by Tahar Ben Jelloun. Both works address the universal human desire for a better life and the harsh disillusionment that often follows the migrant journey. The main aim of this research is to examine how these two authors represent the physical, emotional, and moral consequences of migration and how displacement reshapes identity. The analysis is based on Everett S. Lee's Push-Pull Theory of Migration, supported by postcolonial and psychosocial perspectives, particularly those of Frantz Fanon and Bhugra and Becker. The findings reveal that Urrea exposes the systemic and physical erasure of migrants at the U.S.–Mexico border, while Ben Jelloun portrays the psychological and cultural fragmentation of Moroccan migrants seeking hope abroad. Ultimately, this research concludes that both texts humanize the migrant experience, challenge political indifference, and invite reflection on the moral and emotional costs of crossing borders.

Keywords: Displacement , Exile ,Identity , *Leaving Tangier* , Luis Alberto Urrea , Migration , Push-Pull Theory ,Tahar Ben Jelloun ,*The Devil's Highway* .

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I. General Introduction

The themes of migration and identity have long occupied a central place in literature and cultural discourse, reflecting the enduring complexities of the human condition in a world marked by borders, displacement, and cultural encounters. From ancient epics recounting exile to contemporary novels narrating the plight of refugees and undocumented migrants, literature has persistently returned to these questions as a way of examining human resilience and vulnerability. In the context of globalisation, growing migratory flows, and persistent socio-political inequalities, these issues have gained renewed urgency and relevance. Literary representations of migration offer a powerful means of exploring the personal and collective implications of exile, the quest for belonging, and the transformation of self in unfamiliar environments.

Authors, through their narratives, often act as cultural witnesses and interpreters: they give voice to the silenced, challenge official discourses on migration, and highlight the tensions between memory and assimilation. By weaving individual stories into broader historical and political frameworks, they remind us that migration is not merely a demographic phenomenon but a profound existential experience that reshapes identities, communities, and even literary forms themselves.

Two works that address these themes from distinct yet complementary perspectives are Luis Alberto Urrea's *The Devil's Highway* (2004) and Tahar Ben Jelloun's *Leaving Tangier* (2009). While Urrea's nonfiction narrative recounts the tragic attempt of Mexican migrants to cross the Arizona desert, Ben Jelloun's novel portrays the dreams and disillusionments of Moroccan youth drawn to Europe. Despite their different cultural and narrative frameworks, both texts reflect on the risks, hopes, and dislocations that accompany the migratory experience.

They depict migration not merely as a movement between places, but as a profound encounter with the boundaries of identity, belonging, and survival.

Tahar Ben Jelloun, a Moroccan Francophone novelist and poet, is widely known for his works on exile, social injustice, and identity. In contrast, Luis Alberto Urrea, a Mexican-American writer and Pulitzer Prize finalist, has become a central voice on U.S.–Mexico border issues, blending documentary detail with human empathy. Mentioning these two authors together highlights how migration is not limited to one nation or culture, but a shared human experience. They depict migration not merely as a movement between places, but as a profound encounter with the boundaries of identity, belonging, and survival.

In this sense, the present study aims to show how these two works, though shaped by different literary traditions, converge in their portrayal of migration as both a dream and a disillusionment. By comparing Ben Jelloun’s fictional narrative with Urrea’s documentary account, this study underlines how literature can reveal the sacrifices, struggles, and transformations that define the migrant journey.

Literature Review

Since their publication, *Leaving Tangier* (2009) by Tahar Ben Jelloun and *The Devil’s Highway* (2004) by Luis Alberto Urrea have received attention from scholars interested in migration, identity, and social justice. Both works have been analyzed from different angles, offering valuable insights into the emotional and structural dimensions of the migrant experience.

In the case of *Leaving Tangier*, two studies in particular are relevant to this research: Calaivanane R. (2019) and Esmá SönmezÖz (2024). Although they focus on similar themes such as identity and migration they approach the novel from different perspectives.

In his article “Identity Crisis in *Leaving Tangier*,” published in the *International Journal of Science and Research*, Calaivanane (2019) explores how the novel portrays the deep psychological struggles of migrants. He argues that Ben Jelloun shifts the focus away from how society views immigrants as potential threats and instead highlights their personal pain, confusion, and alienation. The novel shows how migration is often traumatic, leading to a loss of cultural, social, and even religious identity. According to Calaivanane, the characters in the novel find themselves caught between two worlds, unable to fully belong to either one.

Esmá SönmezÖz (2024), on the other hand, uses a sociological and literary framework based on Lucien Goldman’s genetic structuralism. In her study “A Genetic-Structuralistic Approach to Tahar Ben Jelloun’s *Leaving Tangier*,” she argues that the novel reflects the social, economic, political, and religious realities of Morocco, which influence the characters’ decisions to migrate. Öz also draws attention to the novel’s narrative style. By using an omniscient narrator, the novel gives readers access to the characters’ inner thoughts especially those of Azel, the protagonist. She also interprets the sea as a powerful symbol of both hope and danger. In her view, *Leaving Tangier* is not just a personal story, but a reflection of Morocco’s wider social tensions.

Similarly, *The Devil’s Highway* has been studied by scholars interested in its political critique and focus on human suffering. A notable example is Ewelina Bańka’s (2020) article, “Walking with the Invisible: The Politics of Border Crossing in Luis Alberto Urrea’s *The Devil’s Highway*,” published in the *Polish Journal for American Studies*. Bańka explains that Urrea tells the true story of 26 Mexican men who tried to cross a deadly part of the U.S.-Mexico

border in 2001. She shows how the book challenges the usual political focus on illegality by highlighting the real-life conditions poverty, violence, and systemic neglect that drive people to migrate. According to Bańka, the book also reveals how migrants are often dehumanized and made invisible by border authorities and the media . But Urrea, through his storytelling, restores their dignity and shows their side of the story.

Together, these studies offer useful perspectives for understanding how the two authors approach the themes of migration and identity. They also provide a foundation for the present thesis, which seeks to compare these two texts through a shared theoretical lens.

Issue and Working Hypothesis

The Devil's Highway by Luis Alberto Urrea and *Leaving Tangier* by Tahar Ben Jelloun are two powerful texts that explore the difficult realities of migration. Each has received individual scholarly attention, particularly in the field of migration literature. However, to the best of our knowledge, no comparative study has yet brought these two works into dialogue. Moreover, Everett S. Lee's Push-Pull Theory commonly used in sociology to explain migration dynamics, has not been applied to both narratives within a literary framework.

In light of this, the present study seeks to explore how each author, through different cultural and narrative approaches, conveys the disillusionment of migration and the transformation of identity in contexts marked by exile, poverty, and marginalisation. By comparing these two works, this research aims to fill a gap in literary scholarship and offer new insight into how fiction and nonfiction can represent the shared struggles of displaced individuals.

The central hypothesis is that, although set in different parts of the world, Mexico and Morocco, both texts portray similar migrant experiences, including shattered hopes, identity crises, and social exclusion. Through this comparison, the study will highlight both commonalities and contrasts in how the two authors treat the themes of exile, identity, and political critique.

Beyond its comparative aim, this research also contributes to a broader reflection on the human cost of migration and the complex relationship between individual agency and structural forces. It underscores how literature can amplify marginalised voices and challenge the myth of migration as a guaranteed path to progress. Ultimately, this thesis argues that narrative, whether fictional or nonfictional, can question dominant narratives of mobility, belonging, and human dignity in a globalised world.

Methodological Outline

This research follows a structured approach based on the IMRAD model (Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion). The analysis compares *The Devil's Highway* by Luis Alberto Urrea and *Leaving Tangier* by Tahar Ben Jelloun to explore how migration is represented in both works.

The main theoretical framework used is Everett S. Lee's Push-Pull Theory of Migration, which helps examine why the characters leave their countries, what challenges they face during their journeys, and how migration affects their identities.

The work is organised into two main analytical chapters. Chapter One focuses on the reasons behind the characters' desire to migrate, linking personal motivations to broader social and political conditions. Chapter Two examines the difficulties migrants face after leaving, such as discrimination, culture shock, and loss of identity. The research concludes with a summary of the main findings and reflects on how both texts contribute to current debates on migration and identity.

II. Method and Materials

A. Methods

This work compares two works from different socio-cultural and geographical contexts , Tahar Ben Jelloun's *Leaving Tangier* and Luis Alberto Urrea's *The Devil's Highway* , it requires a theoretical framework that can explain both the causes and consequences of migration. Among the many approaches in migration studies, Everett S. Lee's push-pull model remains one of the most cited and influential (Massey et al., 1993; de Haas, Castles, and Miller, 2020). This makes it particularly suitable for analyzing the factors, processes, and challenges described in these two works.

This study adopts Everett S. Lee's influential theory of migration, first introduced in his 1966 article in *Demography*, as the main analytical framework. Lee defines migration as a permanent or semi-permanent change of residence and identifies three essential components in every migratory process: the place of origin, the place of destination, and the intervening obstacles between them.

At the heart of Lee's theory are the concepts of push and pull factors, which help explain why individuals choose to leave one place and settle in another. Push factors refer to negative conditions in the place of origin, such as poverty, political repression, lack of employment, or war, that compel individuals to migrate. As Lee explains, these include "insufficient jobs, few opportunities, inadequate conditions, political fear or persecution, poor medical care, loss of wealth, and natural disasters" (Lee, 1966). In contrast, pull factors are the positive conditions of the destination, such as "job opportunities, better living conditions, political or religious freedom, education, security, or family links" (Lee, 1966).

In addition, Lee introduces the concept of intervening obstacles barriers that can complicate or prevent migration. These include distance, travel costs, migration laws, ethnic discrimination, and personal or familial constraints. Such obstacles affect both the decision to migrate and the experience of migration itself. In *Leaving Tangier*, Azel's attempts to reach Spain are shaped by restrictive laws, corruption, and the financial cost of travel, while Kenza faces the social constraints of being a woman in a patriarchal society. In *The Devil's Highway*, the desert itself, the reliance on smugglers, and the strict U.S. border enforcement act as deadly barriers. These examples show how Lee's concept of intervening obstacles is central for understanding both fictional and real accounts of migration.

This theoretical model is particularly well suited to the present research, as it offers a clear and structured lens for analysing the causes, stages, and consequences of migration in *Leaving Tangier* and *The Devil's Highway*. Both works depict characters who are pushed by difficult conditions such as unemployment, corruption, or violence and pulled by hopes for a better life abroad . At the same time, they highlight the many challenges that migrants face on their journeys, including dangerous border crossings, legal insecurity, and psychological hardship. Applying Lee's theory allows this study to approach migration as a dynamic process shaped by both individual agency and structural forces.

B. Materials

1. Biographical Notes on the Authors

Tahar Ben Jelloun is a prominent French-Moroccan author, born in Fès, Morocco, on December 1, 1944. He grew up in a modest household and studied at the Lycée Regnault in Tangier, where he was exposed to both Arabic and French. In the 1960s, while studying philosophy at Mohammed V University in Rabat, he contributed to the influential literary

magazine *Souffles* and became active in intellectual circles. In 1966, following his involvement in a student protest against police repression, he was drafted into the military. Later, he moved to Paris to pursue further studies in psychology and obtained a PhD in social psychiatry in 1975.

Ben Jelloun gained international recognition with his novel *L'Enfant de sable* (1985), which explores themes of gender and identity in Moroccan society. He won the prestigious Prix Goncourt in 1987 for its sequel, *La Nuit sacrée*. His literary work, written primarily in French, frequently addresses topics such as immigration, racism, gender roles, and the tensions between tradition and modernity. Beyond fiction, he is known for his public engagement on issues related to North African communities in France. He currently lives in Paris, where he continues to write and contribute to media.

Luis Alberto Urrea is a Mexican-American writer born on August 20, 1955, in Tijuana, Mexico. The son of a Mexican father and an American mother, Urrea grew up between two cultures and on both sides of the U.S.–Mexico border. This binational experience plays a central role in his writing. He studied at the University of California, San Diego (BA in Writing), and later pursued graduate work at the University of Colorado Boulder. He has also taught creative writing at universities such as Harvard and the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Urrea is the author of several novels, nonfiction books, and collections of poetry and essays. Among his most well-known works are *The Hummingbird's Daughter*, *Queen of America*, *The Devil's Highway*, and *The House of Broken Angels*. His writing often centers on border experiences, immigration, and bicultural identity. In 2005, *The Devil's Highway* was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in General Nonfiction. Widely praised for his vivid prose and humanizing portrayal of marginalized communities, Urrea continues to teach and write in Naperville, Illinois.

2. Summaries of the books

Tahar Ben Jelloun , *Leaving Tangier* (2009)

Leaving Tangier (Partir, originally published in French) tells the story of Azel, a young Moroccan man disillusioned by the poverty and unemployment in his country. Frustrated with corruption and the lack of opportunities, he dreams of escaping to Spain. With the help of Miguel, a wealthy Spaniard, Azel manages to cross the Strait of Gibraltar. In Spain, however, he discovers that life is far more difficult than he imagined, and he feels increasingly lost and dependent on Miguel. His sister Kenza later joins him, hoping to build a better life, but she too is confronted with hardship. Around them, other young Moroccans also attempt to leave Tangier, driven by the same desire for a better future, yet most face disappointment, betrayal, and danger. The story follows these intertwined destinies, showing how migration shapes the lives of Azel, Kenza, and those around them.

Luis Alberto Urrea , *The Devil's Highway* (2004)

The Devil's Highway: A True Story is a nonfiction narrative that recounts the real life tragedy of 26 Mexican men from Veracruz who attempted to cross the Sonoran Desert in May 2001 through a deadly route known as the “*Devil's Highway*.” Guided by smugglers, the group set out toward the United States in search of work and a chance to support their families. As they walked deeper into the desert, they endured extreme heat, exhaustion, and dehydration, with little food or water. Many collapsed under the harsh conditions, and only 12 survived while 14 died in the desert. Urrea reconstructs their journey step by step, describing their departure from their villages, their reliance on guides, their suffering during the crossing, and the rescue efforts that followed. The narrative tells the story of their desperate attempt to reach the United States and the terrible cost of the journey.

III. Results and Discussion

A-Results

This section presents the main findings resulting from the comparative analysis of *Luis Alberto Urrea's The Devil's Highway* (2004) and *Tahar Ben Jelloun's Leaving Tangier* (2006). Our analysis aimed to understand how both authors represent the disillusionment of migration and the transformation of identity in contexts shaped by exile, poverty, and social exclusion. To guide our interpretation, we relied on *Everett S. Lee's* Push-Pull Theory of Migration, which helped us explore the structural forces that motivate migration and the personal consequences that follow.

One of the central findings of this study is that both works present migration not as a path to liberation, but as a process filled with hardship, failure, and shattered expectations. In *The Devil's Highway*, Urrea uses real-life testimonies and journalistic narration to depict the deadly journey of Mexican migrants crossing the Arizona desert. Migration here is represented as a forced act of survival rather than an act of free will. The pull of the American Dream is sharply contrasted with the push of poverty and violence in Mexico, in *Leaving Tangier*, Ben Jelloun explores the desperation of Moroccan youth who dream of a better life in Europe. However, once they arrive, they are met with racism, exclusion, and legal insecurity. Migration in both works becomes a source of pain rather than hope.

Another key result of our research is the portrayal of exile as a destabilizing force on identity. In *The Devil's Highway*, the migrants lose not only their physical lives but also a part of their dignity and identity. They become anonymous bodies, reduced to numbers and stereotypes by border patrols, governments, and even the media. This dehumanization is central to the narrative and reflects how migration often strips individuals of their agency. In *Leaving*

Tangier, the theme of exile is shown through Azel, who faces personal fragmentation abroad ,showing how exile creates insecurity .

A third important finding concerns disillusionment with the so-called "promised land." In both books, characters are initially driven by dreams of success, freedom, and dignity in the host countries. However, these dreams quickly fade. In Urrea's work, the promise of "easy money" and a better future turns into a deadly trap in the desert. The American border, instead of being a gateway to opportunity, becomes a graveyard. In *Leaving Tangier*, Europe is imagined as a space of progress , but the characters face exploitative situations.

Identity transformation is also central to both texts, but approached in different ways. In *The Devil's Highway*, migrants are reduced to "walking ghosts",stripped of identity . In contrast, in *Leaving Tangier*, identity is more internal and psychological. Azel's identity is fractured by his experiences in exile, while other characters, like Kenza, attempt to reinvent themselves in Europe but constantly feel torn between two worlds.

In conclusion, our comparative analysis reveals that while *The Devil's Highway* and *Leaving Tangier* are rooted in different cultural and historical contexts, they share striking similarities in their portrayal of migration as a painful and disillusioning journey. Both authors use their narratives to explore how exile leads to identity loss, psychological trauma, and social rejection. Through their characters' suffering, they invite the reader to reflect on the human cost of migration and challenge the myth of the migration dream.

B-Discussion

Chapter One: The Migrant Dream

Life in the homeland is often marked by hardship, inequality, and social limitations, which can push individuals to dream of a better life elsewhere. This chapter focuses on the motivations behind migration, exploring the hardships people face in their country, the dreams they nurture abroad, and their search for stability. Through the narratives in *Leaving Tangier* by Tahar Ben Jelloun and *The Devil's Highway* by Luis Alberto Urrea, we examine how characters imagine new opportunities, escape from difficulties, and hope for security and a better future. By analyzing these elements, this chapter highlights the emotional, social, and cultural factors that inspire the desire to migrate, setting the stage for understanding the realities and disillusionments discussed in later chapters.

1-Hardships in the Homeland

This section explores the difficult conditions that push people to leave their countries. In *Leaving tangier*, poverty, unemployment, corruption, and repression leave young Moroccans with no future, While in *The Devil's Highway*, poor education, weak healthcare, and rural poverty push Mexican families into despair. Both works show that migration begins with the weight of hardship at home.

This chapter presents the findings related to the representation of migration in *Leaving Tangier* by Tahar Ben Jelloun and *The Devil's Highway* by Luis Alberto Urrea. The discussion is informed by Everett S. Lee's Push-Pull Theory of Migration, which highlights the conditions that drive individuals away from their homeland and attract them toward new destinations.

One of the central issues revealed in both texts is that migration is not portrayed as a matter of free will or ambition, but rather as a necessity imposed by economic hardship and the lack of opportunity. The narratives show characters who leave their countries not out of desire alone, but because poverty, unemployment, and corruption make survival at home increasingly impossible, while the promise of a better life abroad becomes the only alternative.

In *Leaving Tangier*, Azel is a university graduate with a law degree, yet he remains unemployed. His situation is not due to laziness or lack of effort, but the failure of a system that rewards connections over merit. The novel states that “Azel had given up looking for work,” and that he feared entering the world of “predators” in the commercial and public sectors (Ben Jelloun, 2009, p. 22). His character represents thousands of educated Moroccan youth who are stuck in a cycle of hopelessness, corruption, and social stagnation. The café in Tangier where Azel and his friends meet becomes, as Ben Jelloun writes, “an observatory for their dreams” (p. 7), where the lights across the Strait of Gibraltar offer only the illusion of escape.

Kenza, Azel’s sister, later joins him in exile, hoping for a better life in Europe. But like her brother, she faces not just economic hardship, but a growing sense of emotional and cultural dislocation. Both characters feel the consequences of being pushed out of their home country not only financially, but psychologically. They are caught between love for their homeland and anger at a society that offers no future. The novel uses their personal stories to explore the emotional cost of being pushed to leave, rather than choosing to.

Ben Jelloun’s narrative reflects real economic data: according to the World Bank (2023), youth unemployment in Morocco remains one of the highest in North Africa. Reports by the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2020) confirm that economic instability is a primary driver of irregular migration. This connection shows the relevance of the novel, as it does not only tell an individual story but also mirrors broader socio-economic realities that

continue to shape migration patterns today. In this way, *Leaving Tangier* blends personal narrative with larger structural critique.

Urrea's *The Devil's Highway* illustrates a parallel situation in rural Mexico, where poverty leaves individuals with few viable options. As he notes, "The small peasant farmers couldn't get good enough prices to cover the costs of planting and harvesting their coffee" (Urrea, 2004, p. 51). The migrants portrayed in the narrative are not pursuing prosperity but struggling to secure basic survival. Urrea evokes their limited choices: fishermen unable to catch enough to eat, cane cutters whose labor cannot sustain them, and families who cannot afford food or education. Their decision to migrate emerges not from ambition but from desperation.

One powerful testimony from a migrant captures this,

[...] I decided to leave my family and look for work... since they didn't have enough economic means to send all four of us children to school... The wages were truly very low, and that was my reason for getting involved in the smuggling business. (Urrea, 2004, p. 74).

This shows how migration is not a personal failure, but a last resort. Urrea also draws attention to the dehumanization migrants face. Because they cannot afford safer ways to travel, they are packed into car trunks so-called "coffin-loads" and strapped to engine blocks (Urrea, 2004, p.74). The term itself suggests how poverty kills dignity. Migrants become "bodies," not people, and the border becomes a space where human life loses meaning. Urrea's tone is both journalistic and poetic. He writes,

Prices kept rising, and all families, mestizos and Indian, Mexican and illegal, Protestant, Catholic, or heathen, were able to afford less and less. Food was harder to come by :forget

telephones, clothes ,cars, furniture .Even chicken feed ,being maiz, was expensive .
Pampers, milk, baby formula, shoes, tuition, tools, medicine . (Urrea, 2004, p. 51).

This list, almost like a litany, shows how economic collapse touches every aspect of daily life. It is not just hunger, but the inability to care for children, get medicine, or dream of a future. Like Azel in *Leaving Tangier*, the migrants in *The Devil's Highway* are pushed not only by poverty, but by the feeling that they are invisible, excluded, and trapped.

Both authors show that economic struggle is not just a backdrop but the very engine driving the stories forward. In their narratives, poverty and unemployment are not presented as distant social conditions; they shape every decision, every journey, and every sacrifice the characters make. In *Leaving Tangier*, Azel embodies the frustration of an educated man who cannot transform his qualifications into opportunity, reflecting a society where youth are systematically denied prospects for advancement. In *The Devil's Highway*, Urrea details the desperation of rural Mexican families whose labor no longer guarantees even basic survival, turning migration into the only option left. By placing economic struggle at the center of their plots, both authors emphasize that migration is not an individual adventure but a response to deep systemic failures. Lee's theory helps clarify this dynamic: what pushes the characters out of their homes is not personal weakness, but structural injustice that leaves them no choice.

Migration is rarely just about economic need. In both *Leaving Tangier* and *The Devil's Highway*, the decision to leave one's homeland is also shaped by deeply rooted political oppression, social norms, and the weight of corruption. This section explores how both works show the emotional and social burden placed on individuals specially women and the poor who try to escape systems that deny them dignity and hope. Using Everett S. Lee's theory, we understand these forces as key "push factors" that drive characters toward uncertain and dangerous futures.

In *Leaving Tangier*, Ben Jelloun uses Kenza to show how migration affects women differently from men. While Azel dreams of leaving to escape poverty and disappointment, Kenza's decision is filled with pressure, sacrifice, and emotional burden. Her migration is not a free act but is tied to family responsibility, patriarchal authority, and limited social space. Unlike her brother, she cannot move freely or make independent choices; her journey depends on male approval and on compromises that reflect traditional gender roles. Kenza explains: "I had to leave my country, my family, and first become the wife of a charming person, then by sheer chance meet Nazim..." (*Leaving Tangier*, p. 132–133). This passage illustrates that Kenza's migration is not shaped by personal desire but by dependence on male figures, which restricts her agency and reinforces gendered expectations.

Ben Jelloun also portrays Siham, a secondary character who accepts difficult caregiving work in Spain, not because she is prepared, but because remaining in Morocco is even worse. Her story mirrors the experiences of real Moroccan women, whose attempts to migrate are often restricted by social judgment and legal barriers. According to the World Bank (2023), women's labor force participation in Morocco remains below 20%, which means that many women lack economic independence at home and face additional isolation abroad. Through Kenza and Siham, Ben Jelloun shows that migration for women is not just a physical journey but a negotiation with shame, family duty, and social vulnerability.

While *The Devil's Highway* focuses mostly on male migrants, Urrea does not ignore women's experiences. In fact, some of the most painful moments in the book come from what is said briefly but powerfully about female migrants. Border agents recall scenes of pregnant women dying in the desert, of mothers collapsing with babies in their arms, doors closed in their faces: "*Pregnant women with dying fetuses within them are not uncommon... A mother staggers into a desert village carrying the limp body of her son; doors are locked in her face*"

(Urrea, 2004, p. 31). Other accounts mention women who fall behind in the desert ,unable to keep pace with group ,or mothers who try to shield their children from the heat until they collapse themselves .These passing images remind the reader that women’s journey .though less described,are marked by exhaustion and silence .These glimpses show that gender-based suffering in migration is not only real but often invisible, hidden beneath headlines or absent from public debate.

Urrea uses the phrase, “*In the desert, we are all illegal aliens*” (Urrea, 2004, p. 121), to erase any protective status. Everyone man or woman is reduced to a statusless being. He includes testimonies of women carrying children who fainted along the way,or who tried to continue walking even as their strength gave out. Yet, the stories of female suffering suggest that women often face more danger, and even less support. Unlike Azel or other men who may find informal networks to rely on, women in these stories are truly alone. Their presence is fleeting in the narrative, but when mentioned ,it is always in scenes of pain, abandonment, or death ,leaving their voices hidden within the larger account of migration.

In *Leaving Tangier*, Ben Jelloun does not only describe poverty; he also depicts how fear and surveillance control daily life. The narrator observes: “Everyone in Tangier watches everyone else; the walls can hear you” (Ben Jelloun 2009, p. 22). This image of walls “hearing” captures how suffocating and inescapable the environment is. Azel grows up in a world where dissent is impossible. Silence becomes political: people do not protest, not because they are content, but because fear and mistrust prevent collective action.

Corruption is another central theme. It is not limited to individual dishonesty but is presented as systemic. Al Afia, a local criminal, explains that “This country is one huge marketplace: everybody’s for sale” (p. 11). This line suggests that social mobility depends less on merit than on bribery and manipulation, leaving young people like Azel without hope for

honest work or dignity. In this corrupt world, exile appears as the only escape. As Ben Jelloun emphasizes: “Leaving Tangier is not a decision lightly chosen; it becomes the only way to survive morally and emotionally. ” (p. 15). Through these depictions, Ben Jelloun shows that migration is not only an economic choice but also a reaction to political suffocation. Poverty, corruption, and repression combine to make exile feel like the only possible future.

Urrea presents a parallel picture in *The Devil’s Highway*. The Mexican government is not openly brutal, but it fails its people through neglect. Even basic food staples such as beans are exported to the United States instead of feeding local communities: “You’d think that at least there would be beans to eat. But the great Mexican bean-growing farms sold much of their crop to the United States” (Urrea, 2004, p. 52). This kind of economic betrayal turns survival into a privilege. Families starve, not because food does not exist, but because the system prioritizes profit over people. Neglect becomes a hidden form of violence, where hunger itself is the weapon.

Urrea adds another dimension by exposing how migrants are stripped of humanity. Smugglers reduce them to mere commodities, calling them “pollos”—chickens: “Not men. Not fathers. Chickens” (p. 65). This language is not neutral: by renaming people as animals, smugglers normalize their mistreatment. Migrants are shoved into car trunks, tied to engine blocks, or left to suffocate in the desert sun. In these “coffin-loads,” people are transformed into cargo, objects that can be discarded. The reader feels the collapse of human worth and dignity.

In both *Leaving Tangier* and *The Devil’s Highway*, migration emerges not from a single choice but from the crushing weight of multiple forces: poverty, corruption, repression, silence, and political failure. *Leaving Tangier* dramatizes this pain through Azel and Kenza, showing how corruption and humiliation make life unbearable. *The Devil’s Highway* shows the same desperation through a journalistic lens, detailing how real men suffer and die, often unnoticed.

Together, the two works insist that migration is not about chasing prosperity but about escaping indignity, refusing silence, and fighting to survive.

In both *Leaving Tangier* and *The Devil's Highway*, the failure of educational and healthcare systems emerges as a major reason why individuals feel compelled to migrate. These systems, which are meant to guarantee opportunity and well-being, are shown as inaccessible or corrupt, pushing people toward the dream of a better life abroad. As Everett S. Lee's Push-Pull Theory suggests, poor public services can be strong push factors when individuals no longer see a viable future in their home countries.

In *Leaving Tangier*, Tahar Ben Jelloun shows the frustration of young educated Moroccans who discover that their degrees do not open any doors. Azel, a law graduate, is unable to find a job and feels completely disillusioned. His uncle, Maître El Ouali, loses his legal practice because of his refusal to participate in corruption: "*You can't work out a deal with him, so he loses every case*" (Ben Jelloun, p14). The implication is clear in a system where integrity is punished, there is no room for honest professionals.

This sense of betrayal by the education system is echoed in the sit-in scene in Rabat, where unemployed graduates declare: "*We had believed that our studies would open doors for us, that Morocco would finally abandon its society of privilege and arbitrary misfortune*" (Ben Jelloun, 2009, p52). This fictional scene mirrors real-world frustrations. According to the World Bank (2023), Morocco continues to face youth unemployment rates above 32%, largely due to a mismatch between educational qualifications and labor market needs. Despite educational expansion, many graduates remain unemployed or underemployed, which aligns with Lee's theory: when there are few rewards for investing in education, emigration becomes the only rational choice.

Ben Jelloun also critiques Morocco's public healthcare system. Through the character of Malika, a girl who falls ill after working in unsafe conditions in a shrimp factory, the novel portrays how working-class families suffer from poor access to care. When her mother takes her to the hospital, the doctor says dismissively, "*Another victim of those shrimp!*" (Ben Jelloun, 2009, p. 127). Malika's mother is forced to sell her jewelry just to afford medication: "*She immediately pulled off one of her gold bracelets and ran to sell it*" (Ben Jelloun, 2009, p. 128). These scenes reveal how basic healthcare becomes a financial burden for the poor.

The novel's portrayal is supported by reports from the World Health Organization (WHO, 2022), which note that Morocco's healthcare system remains underfunded and unevenly distributed. Access to quality medical services is often limited to wealthier urban centers, leaving poorer citizens with few options. In this context, migration represents a search for dignity not just in economic terms, but also in access to basic services that should be guaranteed by the state.

Meanwhile, in *The Devil's Highway*, Urrea does not center education and health as explicitly, but their absence is strongly felt. Most of the migrants come from poor, rural areas where access to good education and healthcare is minimal. One migrant explains: "*I was forced to leave school because [my parents] didn't have enough economic means to send all four of us children to school*" (Urrea, 2004, p. 74). This testimony reflects how poverty limits educational access and how dropping out of school increases vulnerability to exploitation and misinformation.

While the characters dream of work and survival, they often lack critical knowledge about the journey they are undertaking. Urrea makes it clear that many migrants underestimate the danger, or are misled by smugglers. This reflects what the International Organization for

Migration (IOM, 2021) refers to as “migration under constrained agency,” where people migrate not with full information or freedom, but because they feel trapped and uninformed.

Urrea also highlights the life-threatening consequences of poor access to healthcare. In the desert, lack of water becomes deadly. “Water. Cold water!” is the cry of the dying men (Urrea, 2004, p.17). Urrea provides a haunting physiological description of what migrants endure,

Your blood is as low as it can get. Dehydration has reduced all your inner streams to sluggish mudholes. Your heart pumps harder and harder to get fluid and oxygen to your organs. Empty vessels within you collapse. Your sweat runs out. (Urrea,2004,p. 128).

This passage shows the extreme health consequences of desert migration, showing how exposure, dehydration, and physical exhaustion can lead to systemic failure and death.

In both works, the failure of education and healthcare systems is not just background it is part of the push that sends people into exile. *Leaving Tangier* shows educated youth who cannot use their degrees, and sick workers who cannot afford medicine. *The Devil’s Highway* shows how limited schooling leaves people unprepared, and how physical suffering becomes inevitable in the absence of health protections. Lee’s theory helps us understand these conditions not as personal problems, but as systemic forces that “push” people to leave.

2-Dreams Abroad In The Two Books

This part explores the hopes and illusions that attract migrants to Europe and the United states .For Azel and his friend ,Spain represents independence and dignity ,while Urrea’s migrants imagine the US as a place pf work and justice .Cultural myth about the “promised land” make the dream stronger ,even if reality turns out to be harsher .

While push factors force individuals to flee difficult conditions, pull factors attract them with the hope of a better future. In both *Leaving Tangier* by Tahar Ben Jelloun and *The Devil's Highway* by Luis Alberto Urrea, the United States and Europe appear as lands of opportunity, dignity, and financial stability. Using Everett Lee's Push-Pull Theory, this section analyzes how economic attraction motivates the characters' choices, shaped by real-world inequality and a desire for autonomy.

In *Leaving Tangier*, Azel sees Spain as the solution to years of humiliation and financial dependence. His excitement at finally receiving a work contract reveals how migration is linked not only to money, but also to the hope of regaining agency,

Ready to live free, to be useful, to attempt things that will transform me into a man standing on his own two feet, no longer afraid, no longer dependent on his sister for cigarette money".(Ben Jelloun, 2009, p. 51).

This quote echoes Lee's pull factors especially the promise of better work and the recovery of self-worth. In Morocco, Azel is trapped by nepotism, corruption, and limited access to jobs. But in Spain, he imagines himself as an independent man, no longer reduced by circumstances. At the same time, his emotional message to his sister "*I hope I will find you in good health and free from those brutes who know the law only to twist it*" (*Leaving Tangier*, 2009, p. 52) shows that even as he chases a better life, he remains emotionally torn. Migration here is both logical and deeply personal, as Lee highlights in his theory by noting the role of "personal factors" and "intervening obstacles."

Likewise, in *The Devil's Highway*, the men from Veracruz are not simply chasing wealth they are seeking survival, respect, and a way to support their families. Urrea makes this painfully clear: "*There was no work, no future, no money, and no mercy*" (*Urrea, 2004, p. 50*).

For many, the only hope is the United States. The narrator explains that for some, crossing the border means the chance to send children to school or repair their homes,

Perhaps he could build a better house. Add a room. Send the children to school in good pants, with new backpacks. Maybe he could buy Irma new furniture... Pick oranges. How bad could that be? (Urrea, 2004, p. 59).

Here, economic pull factors are not about luxury but about dignity. The man dreams of basic improvements shoes, a school bag, a roof. These details, grounded in everyday reality, humanize his decision and remind us that migration often begins with simple hopes. Lee's theory emphasizes that pull factors like job prospects and improved living conditions strongly attract migrants, and *The Devil's Highway* makes this visible through the migrants' desire for "just enough."

Urrea also shows how migrants idealize the U.S. based on second-hand stories and rumors. The belief that one can "make it" in America persists despite the deadly risks of the desert. Yet the dream remains strong: "*If only Mexico paid their workers a decent wage...*" (Urrea, 2004, p.195).

This sentence delivered almost as a lament points to the deep inequality between the two countries. It also echoes real-world economic imbalances shaped by policies like NAFTA, which disrupted rural farming economies in Mexico and fuelled northward migration. According to the OECD (2022) and World Bank (2023), economic asymmetries between Mexico and the U.S. remain a major driver of irregular migration.

In both works, economic pull factors are powerful motivators, but they are never disconnected from human emotions. Azel's hunger for independence and the Mexican migrants' longing for family security show that migration is not just about income—it's about identity, dignity, and survival. As Lee's framework makes clear, economic hopes combined with personal needs and broader structural forces shape how migrants weigh their choices. Both *Leaving Tangier* and *The Devil's Highway* give voice to these silent calculations and remind the reader that behind every border crossing is a human story.

Beyond the material desire for jobs or basic services, cultural perceptions play a central role in shaping the migration journey. According to Everett S. Lee's Push-Pull Theory, "perceptual factors" how migrants *imagine* life at the destination are just as influential as the actual conditions. In *Leaving Tangier*, Azel imagines Spain as a place of freedom and dignity, far removed from the humiliation he feels in Morocco. In *The Devil's Highway*, the men from Veracruz set out believing that the United States will offer steady work and security for their families. Both *Leaving Tangier* and *The Devil's Highway* illustrate how these cultural myths of freedom, order, and dignity draw individuals toward migration, even when the reality may turn out to be much harsher.

In *Leaving Tangier*, Azel expresses admiration for Spain's post-Franco democracy: "*Democracy arrived, followed by freedom and prosperity*" (Ben Jelloun, 2009, p. 52). To him, Spain is not just geographically close—it is also culturally modern, fair, and full of possibility. This belief fuels his desire to escape a Moroccan system he sees as repressive and unjust. The cafés in Tangier, where Azel and his peers gather, become symbolic "launchpads" of hope, where dreams of Europe are shaped by stories, gossip, and media. "*Spania*," as Rachid keeps repeating like a spell, becomes a word loaded with promise, a utopia they long to reach even if the cost is immense. Rachid even stops eating, convinced that he might "*soar on the angel's*

wings” (p. 52), as if belief alone could lift him across the Strait. This idealized image, while emotionally powerful, also illustrates the danger of distorted expectations one of the paradoxes Lee describes in his theory.

Similarly, *The Devil’s Highway* shows how cultural beliefs about the United States act as powerful magnets. The migrants come from rural areas like Veracruz, where corruption, crime, and failed institutions dominate daily life. In their imagination, America is the complete opposite a land of order and opportunity. Urrea explains that for many, the U.S. represents not just jobs, but justice: “*Back home, the criminals had just as much power as the cops*” (Urrea, 2004, p.112). In contrast, the U.S. is seen as a space where laws are applied fairly and dignity is possible.

But, as in *Leaving Tangier*, this cultural image is often misleading. The desert journey becomes a brutal confrontation with reality. When Urrea writes “*Just one drink, brothers... Cold water!*”, the words are more than a physical need they symbolize a longing for renewal, a metaphorical baptism into a better life (Urrea, 2004, p.17). Yet, as the narrative shows, many never survive the passage. The cultural myth of rebirth is tragically interrupted by death.

These examples show how pull factors are not always based on fact, but on hope and projection. Cultural myths, though motivating, can blind migrants to danger. Azel’s excitement about democracy and Rachid’s dreamlike fantasies echo the same hopes that push the Mexican walkers to cross the deadly border. In both cases, the myth of the “Promised Land” offers emotional escape, but it also hides the risk of disillusionment.

In the end, both works suggest that cultural myths are powerful but fragile tools. They sustain hope and courage, but also create the conditions for deep disappointment. Through the

eyes of Azel, Rachid, and the men of the Yuma 14, the stories show that the imagined paradise can turn out to be a desert, a prison, or simply another form of injustice.

3-Search for Stability In New Country

This part explores the deeper wish for safety , freedom, and social justice .In Ben Jelloun’s novel , migrants hope for laws that protect the weak, while in Urrea’s account ,the U.S appears as a space of order compared to rural Mexico .Both texts reveal that migration is not only about money ,but also finding dignity and stability.

While economic need and cultural myths push people toward migration, the desire for stability, justice, and protection under the law also plays a key role. Both *Leaving Tangier* and *The Devil’s Highway* highlight how political repression, institutional failure, and social insecurity act as powerful motivators, not only pushing people away from their homelands but also pulling them toward places imagined as more fair, orderly, and protective. These perceptions align closely with Everett S. Lee’s theory, which includes institutional and legal conditions under “pull factors” the features that make a destination appear safer and more promising than the place of origin.

In *Leaving Tangier*, Azel’s reflection captures this hope for institutional justice: “*To breathe freely, to live in a place where the law protects the weak and the future is not stolen*” (Ben Jelloun, 2009, p. 51). This simple but loaded sentence reveals how Azel sees Europe as more than a land of economic opportunity it is a space where dignity is possible. In contrast, Morocco is described as a country where the corrupt flourish and the poor are ignored: “*Thugs who feed off your blood*” roam freely, with little fear of the law. This longing for legal protection and fairness reveals the emotional depth behind the pull toward Europe. It is not just about escaping poverty it is about escaping injustice.

In *The Devil's Highway*, Luis Alberto Urrea presents a similar situation. Although the U.S. is not described as a perfect refuge, it stands in contrast to the chaos and danger of life in rural Mexico. “*The gangsters had as much power as the police,*” Urrea writes, showing how state neglect and violence dominate everyday life (Urrea, 2004,p.107).He also recounts how men leave their villages because they see no protection from authorities and no future for their children . Families are caught between poverty ,crime, and fear, which makes the dangerous journey north seem like the only choice . For the migrants ,the idea of crossing into the United States is tied to survival itself ,even if the risks of the desert are extreme.

The migrants in the book are not just hoping for better wages they are seeking safety, and their imagined version of the United States includes functioning institutions and the rule of law. The perception that “at least in America, the law works” becomes a kind of emotional lifeline, even if it is later shattered by the reality of discrimination and exploitation.

In both works ,the hope for justice is as strong as the hope for economic change . Azel longs for dignity in Spain ,while the Yuma 14 believe that the United States will offer order and fairness. This shows how the dream of migration is built not only on material needs but also on the search for protection and respect .

One of the important pull factors in migration is the hope of education ,seen as a pathway out of poverty . In *The Devil's Highway*, education is not directly depicted, but it lurks in the background: migrants hope to send remittances to pay for their children's schooling. As Urrea writes,

Perhaps he could build a better house. Add a room. Send the children to school in good pants, with new backpacks, known as mochilas *Maybe he could buy Irma new furniture. The rumors said he could get to Florida, where it was*

warm like home. Pick oranges. How bad could that be? He liked oranges. He wasn't afraid to work. He added his name to the list. . (Urrea, 2004, p. 59).

This passage shows how even simple dreams a better house ,decent clothes for children ,and the chance to study become central motivations for migration.

In *Leaving Tangier*, education is described more directly . The novel opens with graduates protesting in Rabat,

We had believed that our studies would open doors for us, that Morocco would finally abandon its society of privilege and arbitrary misfortune. school in good pants, with new backpacks, known as mochilas. Maybe he could buy Irma new furniture. The rumors said he could get to Florida, where it was warm like home. Pick oranges. How bad could that be? He liked oranges. He wasn't afraid to work. He added his name to the list., (Ben Jelloun, 2009,p.52).

Their disappointment is not only personal but systemic: the failure of the educational system to translate degrees into jobs feeds the decision to leave. Azel, who studied law, finds himself helpless because he lacks the right “connections.” For many, migrating to Europe represents a second chance at social mobility, especially when the Moroccan system seems locked by nepotism and corruption.

Both authors show that pull factors are not just political or economic they are deeply human. The dream of dignity, safety, and a better future often comes at the cost of personal sacrifice, pain, and even death. In *The Devil's Highway*, Urrea notes how migrants become invisible until they suffer: “*You had to almost die for anybody to notice your face.*”(Urrea ,2004,p.75).

The story of Mendez, who was recruited and later replaced, shows the disposability of migrant bodies, the dark underside of an economic system that values labor but not lives. Similarly, in *Leaving Tangier*, Azel's emotional turmoil shows that even the pull toward Europe is filled with fear, regret, and ambivalence. He worries for his mother and sister and struggles with the guilt of leaving them behind.

Through their portrayals of characters longing for a just society, both *Leaving Tangier* and *The Devil's Highway* emphasize that social and political stability is not a luxury, it is a form of survival. Migrants are pulled toward places that promise legal protection, social justice, and educational hope, even when those promises are not always kept. These dreams, however partial or distorted, reveal the emotional depth of migration decisions and show how hope itself can be both a guide and a risk.

Chapter Two: From Hope to Disillusionment – The Harsh Realities of Migration

This chapter examines the theme of migration disillusionment, the growing gap between what migrants hope for ,before leaving and what they actually experience once abroad. While migration is often imagined as a path to freedom, dignity, and opportunity, the realities awaiting many migrants are far more complex and frequently painful. Drawing on Everett S. Lee’s Push-Pull Theory, as well as insights from both *The Devil’s Highway* and *Leaving Tangier*, this chapter explores how economic hardship, legal restrictions, social exclusion, and emotional suffering challenge the idealized image of migration. It also considers the ways in which characters in both books gradually come to recognize that their pursuit of a better life can lead to isolation, loss of identity, and broken expectations. Through close analysis and reference to scholarly research, this chapter argues that disillusionment is not just a personal feeling, it is shaped by broader structural forces that determine the lived experiences of migrants.

1-Economic Hardship And The Myth Of Prosperity

Migration is widely imagined as a gateway to economic advancement, but the lived realities depicted in *Leaving Tangier* and *The Devil’s Highway* reveal a much harsher truth. As De Haas (2020) notes, “*migrants often remain trapped in precarious labor markets, where they face wage exploitation and limited upward mobility.*” This academic observation is vividly brought to life through the experiences of Azel , Soumaya , Siham, and the Yuma 14, who discover that the so-called “promised land” is often just another site of struggle and disappointment.

Azel’s dreams of success quickly unravel upon his arrival in Spain. Although he is educated and hopeful, he soon finds himself trapped in a relationship of dependency and humiliation with Miguel, a wealthy Spaniard who helps him emigrate under exploitative

circumstances. This dynamic is vividly shown in a scene where Miguel forces Azel to perform a degrading dance for guests, mocking and humiliating him,

Miguel was holding Azel firmly by the hand while the guests filed past him, one after the other, pretending to caress the young man. 'Now,' Miguel whispered in Azel's ear, 'you're going to dance. And you'll dance like a whore... You're that man, a bearded woman!' Azel could not understand why Miguel was trying so hard to show him off and humiliate him. (Leaving Tangier, 2009, p. 78).

This moment encapsulates the intersection of economic exploitation and social degradation: Azel's economic survival depends on submitting to Miguel's control, but this comes at the cost of his dignity and identity. His disillusionment deepens as he realizes that the "promised land" is not the affluence he had envisioned but rather a place rife with exploitation, loneliness, and identity conflicts. The Spanish job market offers him only menial, unstable work, and his relationship with Miguel becomes a symbol of the new forms of dependency that migrants often endure.

Soumaya, another young Moroccan in *Leaving Tangier*, also face a journey marked by economic defeat. Lost and desperate in Spain, she is forced to accept whatever work she can find: "*When she'd had no idea where to go anymore, El Caudillo's wife had taken her in, offering her a job in the kitchen*" (leaving tangier, 2009 p. 73). Her sense of humiliation and resignation is clear in her reflection: "*I would never have believed that one day I would be slaving in a bistro kitchen*" (leaving tangier, 2009, p. 73). These daily realities long hours in a hot kitchen, the endless piles of dishes, the dismissive glances from customers are not just about low wages, but about the erosion of dignity and hope. The economic crisis is not abstract; it is lived through daily struggle, anxiety, and compromise.

Siham, another migrant, voices the exhaustion and instability that define their lives,

I'm fed up, too. I'm not happy, I live like a leech, and things just got more complicated. Kenza will need to find some sort of job and I'll have to keep pretending, when I desperately need stability, clarity (Leaving Tangier, 2009, p. 97).

Behind these words lies a world of shared rooms, precarious housing, and the constant threat of eviction or police raids. Their routines are shaped by economic necessity: waking up early for underpaid shifts, enduring long commutes, and returning home too exhausted to dream of anything more.

The work available to migrants is not only low-paid but also stigmatized. Soumaya's job in the kitchen marks her as an outsider, someone who does the work others refuse. The economic hardship is compounded by social exclusion, as seen when "she felt the stares on the metro, the way people clutched their bags tighter when she sat down." This is the lived reality of DeHaas's "precarious labor markets" not just low wages, but social invisibility and constant vulnerability. The migrants' hands, once used for study or skilled labor, are now raw from endless dishwashing, cleaning, or manual work.

A parallel story of economic desperation unfolds in *The Devil's Highway*. The men who cross the Sonoran Desert are not seeking adventure; they are fleeing poverty so severe that risking death seems preferable to staying. Urrea writes: "*They were walking into hell in search of work*" (Urrea, 2004 p. 18), and describes how, in Veracruz, "*things weren't going well. The people were killing themselves working the ranchos on the outskirts*" (Urrea, 2004 p. 50).

Upon arrival, the promise of prosperity is immediately shattered. Migrants are funnelled into the most dangerous, least protected jobs, confined to the periphery of the labor market, working in hazardous, low-paying positions without any rights or safeguards. The system treats

them as disposable, as seen in the story of Mendez: It didn't take long for El Negro's agents to find Mendez. He was exactly like the walkers he would later lead. Poor, alone, looking for a better life, willing to do what it takes. Like them, he was recruited. Like them, he was welcome to die for the Cercas brothers. There were many more waiting to take his place. There were so many more of him that he did not even exist .

Even the language of the authorities reveals the economic dehumanization of migrants:

In the strange military poetics of Border Patrol, the big kill itself is known not only as the Case of Yuma 14. It is officially called 'Operation Broken Promise' Of all the catch phrases of the event ,this is perhaps the most accurate . (Urrea ,2004,p. 44).

Here ,Urrea's choice of words forces the reader to confront the coldness of official language, where tragedy becomes a coded operation . It is only the migrants who are dehumanized ,but even their deaths are reduced to files and labels.

Both works ultimately expose the myth of prosperity as a powerful but misleading narrative. Migrants are not lifted out of poverty; they are trapped in new cycles of exploitation, humiliation, and invisibility. The "promised land" becomes a place where survival is a daily battle, and the cost is often one's dignity, health, and hope. As De Haas (2020) argues, these cycles of poverty and exploitation are not exceptions but the rule for many migrants, especially those with irregular status. The stories of Azel, Soumaya, and the Yuma 14 show that migration rarely delivers the economic security that migrants seek; instead, it often leads to new forms of poverty, vulnerability, and disillusionment.

2-Identity and Belonging

This part explores the struggles with identity and belonging .Characters experience psychological pain,cultural conflict, and racism,which make it difficult for them to find their

place in the host society. Migration is not just a movement from one country to another. It is a deep human experience that affects a person emotionally, culturally, spiritually, and mentally. Migrants often leave behind their families, languages, habits, and identities to start a new life in a place that may not welcome them. This difficult journey causes them to lose their sense of belonging. They feel confused, tired, rejected, or even ashamed. Many studies, such as those by Bhugra and Becker (2005), show that migrants face mental health problems because of stress, sadness, and the loss of their cultural roots . These difficulties are not abstract ,they are reflected in the experiences of characters like Azel,Kenza ,and Soumaya in *Leaving Tangier* ,and in the lives of the Yuma 14 in *The Devil's Highway*. In this section, we will look at four major types of personal crises that migrants face: identity crisis, psychological crisis, cultural crisis, and religious crisis. These are clearly shown in the books *Leaving Tangier* by Tahar Ben Jelloun and *The Devil's Highway* by Luis Alberto Urrea.

In *Leaving Tangier*, Azel's story illustrates how migration can destroy a person's sense of self. He says: "Walo! Walo! I've become a walo, nothing, an absence, the memory of a man, a shadow..." (*Leaving Tangier*, 2009, p. 134). The Moroccan Arabic word walo means "nothing," and the repetition shows how deeply he feels erased. Azel also admits, "I'm done for, I can't be a man anymore" (p. 134), expressing the loss of his masculinity, pride, and social identity. His despair pushes him to imagine becoming someone else: "I'm going to transform myself, become someone else... a bit of treachery, a touch of denunciation" (p. 164). These words reveal how exile destroys his original identity and forces him into a distorted version of himself. Azel is not simply leaving his country; he is abandoning the very image he once had of himself as a man, a brother, and a citizen. His migration is therefore presented as both a physical departure and a personal disintegration.

In *The Devil's Highway*, a similar crisis appears among the migrants crossing the desert. Urrea writes that “there are ghosts of dead walkers” (Urrea, 2004, p. 36), a description that suggests they had already lost their identity before dying. In the desert, they are reduced to shadows of themselves, invisible to society and stripped of recognition. The desert transforms them into anonymous figures, remembered only as numbers in official reports or as nameless bodies discovered by patrols. Their individuality disappears, just as Azel’s sense of self dissolves in Spain

Migration brings not only physical change but also emotional suffering. Many migrants feel deep sadness, fear, anxiety, or even trauma. These feelings are called acculturative stress, a term used by psychologists like Bhugra and Becker (2005) to describe the mental strain of adapting to a new culture while losing the old one. In the books, this inner pain is described through the daily experiences of the characters, who struggle to balance the weight of the past with the uncertainty of the present. Migrants often carry invisible pain that becomes heavier over time.

In *Leaving Tangier*, Azel expresses his emotional fatigue in cold Madrid apartment, he says: “*I’m impatient, exhausted, wiped out by the change of climate, and by fear, too...*” (p.55). Later, he uses sarcasm to hide his real pain,

[..] What fatigue, what stress? And why not the dollar exchange rate and a plague of migratory locusts? I’m done for, I can’t be a man anymore, I don’t know what to do [..] (Leaving Tangier .2009 ,p.134).

Behind this joke is a real suffering. He even says: “*How could he find peace? There was someone inside him driving him to sabotage his own life.*” (Leaving Tangier, 2009 ,p.165).

This sentence shows how migration has created a conflict inside him he no longer controls his thoughts or decisions. Azel becomes an example of how migration affects not only external conditions but also the deepest layers of personality ,where fear and despair replace confidence.

Kenza, Azel's sister, also experiences a deep psychological crisis. She falls in love with a Turkish man named Nâzim. When she finds out he is already married, her heartbreak pushes her to tears: "*She couldn't hold back the tears trickling down her cheeks*" (*Leaving Tangier* ,2009 ,p.156). This emotional pain eventually leads her to attempt suicide, which is a tragic sign of how serious her psychological crisis becomes. Her story shows that the dream of migration , instead of protecting her ,places her in situations where her vulnerability grows stronger . Another example is Abbas, who lives alone in a room far from his family. He says: "*Just cry all alone in my little room... I miss my mother terribly.*" (*Leaving Tangier* ,2009 ,p.113). This sentence shows how migrants often feel isolated and miss the emotional support of family. Abbas's confession adds another voice to silence of exile ,where longing for home becomes as painful as the physical hardships of migration

In *The Devil's Highway*, psychological breakdown also happens during the desert crossing. Migrants are described as hallucinating from dehydration: "*They were seeing God and devils, and they were dizzy from drinking their own urine...*" (*Urrea* ,2004,p.16). This terrifying image shows how the journey physically and mentally destroys them. Even the smuggler Jesús Méndez feels guilty and emotionally broken after the tragedy,

I ask forgiveness and pardon for what happened in the Arizona desert, it honestly wasn't my intention to lead those people to their deaths .Rather ,my intention was to help them cross the border .But we never imagined the tragedy would happen[...] (p.180,181).

These examples confirm that migration is not only about geography it is a deep emotional struggle.

Another important problem migrants face is the cultural crisis. When someone leaves their country, they bring their culture, language, values, and habits. But in the new country, people may act, dress, and speak differently. Migrants are often asked to change who they are to be accepted. This creates internal conflict and can lead to feelings of shame or rejection.

In *Leaving Tangier*, Kenza says clearly: “*An Arab woman is called upon to change her behaviour, and if she doesn’t change, she is ground down, bullied, despised.*” (*Leaving Tangier*, 2009, p.139). This quote shows how much pressure is placed on migrant women to abandon their traditional values. She also says: “*In our country, we don’t sip, we don’t drink.*” (*Leaving Tangier*, 2009, p.115). This simple sentence points to the small cultural differences that can become big problems. In order to feel like a man again, Azel decides to visit a brothel: “*Azel decided to visit the brothel at least once a week.*” (*Leaving Tangier*, 2009, p.98). This shows that he tries to follow the new country’s behaviors, but in doing so, he loses a part of himself.

In *The Devil’s Highway*, migrants also experience cultural shock. After facing danger and sacrifice to arrive in the U.S., they feel lost and confused. Urrea writes: “*They’ve already forgotten why they ever left home.*” (*Urrea*, 2004, p.177). This powerful line shows how migrants become disconnected from their past and unsure of their future. Once again, Urrea reminds us: “*Unexplained radiating lines lead away from the center like ghost roads.*” (*Urrea*, 2004, p.19). These words suggest that migrants are led into confusion and disappearance, they become like ghosts, lost in a landscape that offers no true belonging. It reflects how migrants are culturally excluded in the new country: they do not belong and are not welcomed, becoming invisible to the society they enter.

Religion is an important part of life for many migrants. It gives them strength, identity, and comfort. But when they move to a new place where religious values are different, they can feel confused or judged. Some become more religious to feel secure; others start to question their beliefs.

In *Leaving Tangier*, Abbas refuses to convert to Christianity even though he is not a perfect Muslim. He says,

The idea being that I'd turn Christian, but that, never, I'm not a good Muslim, drink, don't always do the right thing, I don't pray, but change religions for selfish reasons, no way I've got principles. (*Leaving Tangier*, 2009, p.113).

This means that even though he drinks and does not always follow the rules, he still believes in the religion of his parents and culture. Soumaya, another character, questions religious rules openly. She says: *"I'm also good in bed! Why is loving males so socially unacceptable?"* (*Leaving Tangier*, 2009, p.101). This shows how migration allows her to question the taboos she raised with. Meanwhile, some migrants try to find peace in religion. The narrator explains: *"Some of his friends found relief from despair by taking up religion and soon became regulars at the mosque."* (*Leaving Tangier*, 2009, p.15). For these characters, religion becomes a medicine for the pain of migration.

In *The Devil's Highway*, even in the middle of suffering, religion is still present. Urrea writes: *"Jesus led the walkers gathered by Moses into the desert called Desolation."* (Urrea, 2004, p.73). This biblical reference shows that the migrants, even in the desert, maintain religious hope even if their faith is tested. As we have seen, migration is not only a change of location. It is a deep and painful experience that affects the migrant on many levels. It destroys identity, causes emotional suffering, creates cultural confusion, and brings spiritual challenges.

In *Leaving Tangier* and *The Devil's Highway*, we discover how people suffer silently. Azel, Kenza, Abbas, and the anonymous migrants of the desert all show us the high human cost

of migration. These stories remind us that behind every migrant, there is a human being who has lost something , home, family, faith, peace, or self-respect.

The main causes of disillusionment with migration are not only economic but also institutional and legal problems. Many migrants face legal uncertainty, particularly in the face of strict immigration restrictions. Castles et al. (2013) claim that migration regulations are often “*mechanisms of exclusion*”, placing migrants in a vulnerable condition that never goes away. Complete integration is very hard because of strict immigration restrictions and administrative barriers that prevent many people from obtaining stable employment, housing, and social services.

Even for those with legal status, there are still substantial societal barriers to assimilation. It is hard for migrants to feel accepted because racism, xenophobia, and prejudice are prevalent .According to Castles et al: “*Biases in the labour market often push even highly educated migrants with professional abilities into downward occupational mobility*”.

As a result, many migrants experience a stark contrast between their pre-migration aspirations and the exclusion they actually confront upon arrival. Even if they manage to cross the border, they are still subject to a complex web of social and legal limitations. They live in fear of expulsion, have no documents, no rights, and are mistreated by their employers. The difficulties faced by migrants are exacerbated by racial discrimination. Systemic racism is fuelled by the portrayal of brown bodies as dangerous, inferior, or unlawful. The racial persecution that North African refugees encounter in Europe, especially in Spain and France, is depicted graphically in Tahar Ben Jelloun’s *Leaving Tangier*.

The story examines how racism methodically erodes the aspirations of migrants, resulting in their social and psychological estrangement, through the characters of Mounir and others. Although Europe is frequently portrayed as a place of equality and opportunity, the reality is one of exclusion, marginalisation, and monitoring. For instance, Mounir is frequently

denied respect and agency, stereotyped, and viewed with distrust. He becomes into a symbol of the “*immigrant threat*”, rather than a real person in the perspective of many Europeans.

Ben Jelloun uses common place every day processes like police checks, discrimination in the work place, segregated housing, and covert social exclusion to show how racism functions. “*Here, we are just shadows passing through their streets*“ notes Mounir. We really do not belong. He is reduced to a racialised and foreign presence by this dehumanising gaze.

The colonised subject is only “known” through repeated and distorted images, according to Homi K. Bhabha’s idea of stereotyping in colonial discourse. This effect endures in post colonial contexts through the racialisation of migrants (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 1994).

Furthermore, the book criticises internalised racism among Moroccan elites like Abbas in addition to external racism. Abbas removes himself from impoverished refugees after securing his place in Europe, repeating the same exclusionary reasoning that was applied to them. Frantz Fanon’s observations in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), in which he contends that colonised subjects frequently internalise colonial systems, resulting in self-alienation and division, are echoed by this dynamic.

Ben Jelloun also invokes the idea of hospitality as an ethical ideal based on openness and solidarity, reflecting on his own experience as a Moroccan migrant in France. European societies, however, fall short of this ideal, providing what Jacques Derrida referred to as “*conditional hospitality*” in which only those who are acceptable or assimilable are accepted (Of Hospitality, 2000). This rejection causes a severe identity crisis for the characters in *Leaving Tangier*. The realisation that ethnic and cultural differences frequently trump human dignity in European environments shatters the refugees’ hopes of belonging.

Racism is shown in *Leaving Tangier* as a structural and psychological force that undermines migrants’ sense of self and interferes with their goals, and social integration rather than just as personal prejudice. This is particularly evident in the violent outburst against Azel’s

friend: *'I don't like Turks. I don't like their language, I don't like their loukoum candy, I don't like the way they look at people.'* (Leaving Tangier, 2009, p.125).

When Azel calls this racism, the response is unapologetic: *'So what? I have the right not to like Turks, or Greeks either...'* (Leaving Tangier, 2009, p.125). This moment reveals how normalized and internalized racial hostility can be, especially when the speaker admits, *'I'm an Arab who doesn't like himself,'* (Leaving Tangier, 2009, p.125) showing the extent of self-alienation caused by systemic prejudice. Here, racism is not simply expressed as hatred toward others, but also as self-hatred rooted in historical, cultural, and migratory tensions.

The novel adds to a larger conversation on the post-migration dilemma by exposing the delusion of acceptance in Europe through its postcolonial lens. Moroccan migrants are not the only ones who experience this racial intolerance.

According to Urrea, the narrative surrounding migrants is frequently dehumanising: *"They were illegals"*. Wetbacks. These slurs are tools of social exclusion that undermine dignity and excuse cruelty; they are more than just insults. Racism makes migrants feel alienated and solidifies their status as outsiders.

Consequently, the free-way in the rear. Instead of being welcomed with safety, migrants are met with animosity, exceptions, and legal procedures meant to evict them. The path leads not to hope but to a society in which security becomes supervisor and law becomes death. Urrea draws attention to the dehumanising terms used to characterise the migrants, such as "illegal", "illegally" or "back" of personality, right from the start. These phrases express racial hypotheses about who belongs and who does not, rather than legal status. The narrative reveals that the border is a geopolitical frontier as well as a geopolitical boundary for a state that is the keeper of exclusion .

In *The Devil's Highway*, racism is not only expressed through slurs or mockery, but through bureaucratic and institutional language that erases humanity. As Urrea notes, "(Bodies) was one of the many names for them. Illegal aliens, dying of thirst more often than not..." (Urrea, 2004, p.27) the U.S. migration system transforms suffering migrants into faceless threats, emphasizing the structural violence that underpins border control.

4-Insecurity and Isolation

This part explores the insecurity and exclusion migrants face. Legal restrictions, fear of deportation, and social loneliness deepen their isolation and disillusionment. In *The Devil's Highway*, Luis Alberto Urrea explains how the United States' paranoid system of criminalisation, enforcement, and systemic neglect supplants the promise of safety and justice, turning the journey into a dangerous and often fatal pursuit of a better life. From the start, the Wellton 26 are caught in a web of criminal activity. By virtue of their presence in the United States, they are classified as criminals. This criminalisation burdens them and exposes them to both legal and physical risks.

Urrea underscores that migrants are not seen as human beings seeking dignity, but as threats to be eliminated. Rather than offering a route to hope, the desert becomes a space of mythic punishment. As Urrea writes,

Desert spirits of a dark and mysterious nature have always traveled these trails. From the beginning, the highway has always lacked grace. Those who worship desert gods know them to favor retribution over the tender dove of forgiveness. (Urrea, 2004, p.18).

The border becomes a death corridor rather than a portal, guarded not only by laws and armed men but also by a violent political and natural landscape. The U.S. government's strategy is to increase the danger, making the desert deadlier in order to deter migrants from crossing. For those who survive the journey, the legal system offers no protection. Migrants face immense

challenges in accessing justice, legal representation, and documentation. The U.S. legal system, which presumes guilt rather than humanity, is portrayed by Urrea as a threat rather than a refuge.

Those who reach the border are often detained and deported under inhumane conditions. The law ignores desperate motives for migration, such as domestic violence or family responsibilities. As Urrea states that they were unaware that they were entering the killing fields. This environment of insecurity finds echoes in *Leaving Tangier*, which critiques increasingly militarised European borders and the surveillance systems that accompany them.

Miguel, a Spanish art dealer, offers Azel a visa only if he agrees to be his partner, forcing him into a coercive and morally troubling situation. This reflects how restrictive immigration systems strip migrants of agency and dignity. Legal pathways such as marriage are also depicted as complex and emotionally costly.

Kenza, Azel's sister, marries Miguel to obtain Spanish citizenship, but instead of gaining stability, she finds herself in a new form of emotional alienation and dependency. Ben Jelloun thus shows how legal systems in both Morocco and Europe leave migrants in a state of uncertainty, caught between rejection and exploitation. The contrast between the dream of legal protection and the harsh reality reinforces the central theme of disillusionment in both books.

The emotional and social fragmentation Moroccan expatriates undergo after leaving their hometown is shown in dramatic detail in Tahar Ben Jelloun's *Leaving Tangier*. The narrative shows that emigration is a significant social upheaval in addition to a physical voyage. Once overseas, migrants frequently find themselves torn between two identities and cut off from both. The breaking of community ties is one of the main social effects of emigration. The personalities are firmly established in well-known social systems in Morocco.

Emotional support comes from friendships, family, and local connections. One example is the relationship between Azel and his cousin Nouredine; "*Azel's first cousin, Nouredine, had been more than a friend he'd been like a brother to him*" (*Leaving Tangier*, 2009, p. 12)

However, as Azel migrates, this sense of unity rapidly disintegrates. The increasing gap between his ideals and those of his birthplace has caused him to become emotionally and physically estranged from his family.

Furthermore, *Leaving Tangier* examines the ways in which performance in exile is used to reconstruct social identity. For example, Azel needs to meet the success standards set by both his home country and his new one. While tarnished with humiliation, he becomes a symbol of financial success: “*The men in the café saw Azel as someone who had succeeded, but at a shameful cost*” (*Leaving Tangier*, 2009, p. 129). Ben Jelloun demonstrates here that emigrants are not totally accepted in their new country or abroad. Rather than being integrated, their new identity is frequently defined by appearances.

The author also draws a comparison between Morocco’s deteriorating social structure and the false hope of opportunity overseas. “*Tangier no longer had any shape, any centre... The city was changing, and its walls were cracking*” (*Leaving Tangier*, 2009, p. 7) describes Tangier as a fragmented area rather than a unified community. This metaphor implies that the issue starts even before the migrants leave and gets worse after they do, foreshadowing the societal unrest that will accompany them into exile. The strained family dynamics exacerbated by migration are further reflected in Azel’s connection with his mother. “*She was obsessively concerned about the future of her son... Azel was feeling more and more stifled by her possessive love*” (*Leaving Tangier*, 2009, p. 45). describes how her possessive love suffocates him.

Once overseas, Azel looks for a sense of belonging through strategic social connections rather than family, like his friendship with El Haj: “*This young man’s story fascinated El Haj, who wanted to help him... El Haj welcomed Azel warmly at his beautiful house on the mountain*” (*Leaving Tangier*, 2009 p. 23). However, these relationships lack the depth of home ties and are frequently transactional and transitory.

A crisis of identity and belonging is one of the social impacts of emigration in *Leaving Tangier*. Along with their geographic origins, migrants also lose the social networks that formerly characterised them. As they strive for better lives, they usually encounter loneliness, performative identities, and eroding familial bonds. Through these portrayals, Ben Jelloun critiques the social consequences of emigration, showing that social isolation is often the penalty of success abroad.

Parallels in *The Devil's Highway: Emotional and Social Fragmentation Amidst Desperation*. Luis Alberto Urrea's *The Devil's Highway* offers a harrowing complementary perspective on the emotional and social fragmentation migrants endure, focusing on the tragic journey of the Wellton 26 Mexican migrants who attempt to cross the deadly Arizona desert. The work's setting a militarized, hostile desert zone symbolizes not only a physical barrier but also a space of profound social and emotional dislocation Like Azel in *Leaving Tangier*.

The Wellton 26 are caught in a liminal space between worlds, belonging fully to neither Mexico nor the United States. The book explores the social breakdown migrants experience as they are stripped of community and support. The Wellton 26 are isolated physically in the desert and socially by the U.S. legal system, which offers little protection. Unlike Azel's familial ties, these migrants often travel alone or in fragmented groups, lacking the social networks that might provide emotional sustenance.

Urrea shows the loneliness and vulnerability of migrants through characters like Faustino and his companions, whose hopes for a better life are met with brutal realities. Moreover, *The Devil's Highway* illustrates how migrants must perform certain identities to survive or gain limited acceptance. The narrative reveals how migrants are forced into roles shaped by fear, suspicion, and survival instincts rather than genuine belonging. For example, The migrants' silence and invisibility become a form of survival, but also a source of emotional isolation.

Urrea reinforces the illusion and cruelty of the border landscape when he writes: “*Cutting through this region, and lending its name to the terrible landscape, was the Devil’s Highway more death. Another desert. They were in a vast trickery of sand*”. (Urrea ,2004 ,p.17).

Here, the desert is portrayed as a deceptive and deadly force, one that lures migrants in with the promise of passage but punishes them with heat, disorientation, and death. The border is not a threshold to hope but a terrain of annihilation.

In both works, migration is depicted as a profound rupture physically, socially, and emotionally. While *Leaving Tangier* focuses on the internal struggles of identity and belonging within the context of Moroccan expatriates in Europe, *The Devil’s Highway* portrays the external and systemic forces that shatter migrants’ lives in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. Together, these works reveal that migration is not merely a journey across space but a complex battle for survival, identity, and connection in hostile environments.

In the end, both books show that the aspirations that drive migration whether they are the result of a societal crisis or the desire for security frequently give way to harsh reality characterised by violence, exploitation, and deep despair. This chapter emphasises that migration is a battle for survival on an emotional and psychological level in addition to being a physical trip.

IV. General Conclusion

Initially, our research contextualized the creation of the two works within their distinct socio-political and cultural settings. *Luis Alberto Urrea's* work poignantly highlights themes of loss, hope, and risk, providing a profound exploration of the harsh realities faced by migrants crossing the US-Mexico border. His narrative captures not only the physical dangers but also the emotional and spiritual toll of migration, emphasizing resilience amidst adversity.

In contrast, *Tahar Ben Jelloun's* novel centers on characters striving to escape their troubled pasts and forge brighter futures, while intricately reflecting the complex social and political dynamics within Morocco. His portrayal explores the moral and psychological struggles of migrants, revealing the nuanced challenges of identity and belonging in the context of exile. Understanding these distinct historical and cultural backdrops enriches our comprehension of both the characters' motivations and the authors' intentions.

This comparative study aimed to illuminate how each book articulates the arduous emotional and physical journeys experienced by migrants. We examined how the protagonists confront their fears, make difficult decisions, and cope with the consequences of those choices. Both narratives vividly depict exile's profound impact on the human spirit, the pain of separation from homeland and loved ones, and the ongoing quest for identity and dignity in foreign lands.

Moreover, our analysis revealed a key divergence in thematic focus: *Leaving Tangier* emphasizes the internal moral dilemmas and psychological conflicts of those who leave their homes, portraying migration as a deeply personal and existential struggle. Conversely, *The Devil's Highway* foregrounds the brutal realities and life-threatening dangers inherent in the physical journey of migration, underscoring the external obstacles and systemic challenges

migrants face. Together, these works provide a more holistic and multifaceted understanding of migration, capturing both its internal and external dimensions.

In conclusion, reading *Leaving Tangier* alongside *The Devil's Highway* significantly deepens our insight into migration literature. Through their distinct yet complementary perspectives, both books underscore universal themes of survival, autonomy, and the pursuit of dignity despite overwhelming adversity. They challenge readers to recognize the complexity and humanity of migration beyond simplistic or monolithic narratives, fostering empathy and a broader awareness of the socio-political forces shaping migrant experiences today.

While this research has examined the disillusionment of migration through the comparative lens of *Leaving Tangier* and *The Devil's Highway*, it remains limited in scope. The analysis focused primarily on the emotional, legal, and structural dimensions of the migrant experience as portrayed in these two literary texts. Other important aspects such as generational differences, gender dynamics, or the role of return migration, were not fully explored. Future research could expand on this foundation by including other literary traditions, non-fiction narratives, or interdisciplinary perspectives, especially those that address migration in relation to climate change for instance. Such studies would continue to deepen our understanding of migration's complexities and further highlight the evolving human realities behind global mobility.

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