

Research Article

The Law of the Journey: Transit, Statelessness and Extraterritoriality in Helon Habila's *Travellers*

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Abstract

This paper explores Helon Habila's *Travellers* (2019) as a juridical allegory of migration through the concept of "the law of the journey." Departing from the conventional linear migration narrative, *Travellers* constructs a mosaic of interconnected portraits that illuminate the lived realities of displacement, statelessness, and legal precarity in contemporary Europe. Drawing on Hannah Arendt's notion of "the right to have rights" and Giorgio Agamben's theorisation of "bare life," the paper argues that Habila's fiction demonstrates how migrants are simultaneously governed and excluded by law. Through its fragmented form, the novel mirrors the suspended temporality of transit and the invisibility produced by extraterritorial asylum regimes. Characters such as Manu, Mark, and Portia embody varying conditions of rightlessness, exposing the ethical and political contradictions of global mobility. By situating *Travellers* within both legal theory and contemporary Nigerian migrant fiction, the study reveals how literature interrogates the limits of human rights and national sovereignty. Ultimately, Habila's work transforms fiction into a site of ethical encounter and resistance, insisting that recognition and belonging must travel with persons beyond borders. The paper concludes that *Travellers* reimagines the migrant journey as a legal and moral frontier, compelling individuals to confront the politics of exclusion and responsibility.

Keywords

Law, Migration, Fiction, Statelessness, Extraterritoriality, Rights

1. Introduction

Helon Habila's *Travellers*, published in 2019, stands as one of the most incisive literary responses to Europe's "refugee crisis" of the mid-2010s. Structured as a sequence of linked stories orbiting around an unnamed Nigerian narrator, the novel refuses the linear journey trope that has long dominated migration narratives. Instead of tracing a single protagonist from origin to destination, Habila presents a constellation of portraits: Manu, a nightclub bouncer searching for his missing

family; Mark, a transgender Malawian activist living in Berlin; Portia, the daughter of a Zambian exile; Manu, a Libyan surgeon stranded between war and precarious residency; and others who cross the narrator's path. Each story showcases the experience of transit, displacement, or exile, and together they form a composite map of African migrant life in Europe.

The novel emerges from Habila's own encounter with the refugee crisis during his fellowship year in Berlin. Interviews

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with migrants, attendance at demonstrations, and visits to camps informed his fictional rendering of migrant lives [9]. Yet *Travellers* is not documentary fiction. It resists the temptation to collapse into ethnography or testimony. Instead, it uses fiction's affordances to stage encounters that expose the moral, juridical, and political structures that define who is recognised as a subject of rights and who is reduced to what Agamben [1] calls *bare life*.

To describe the novel's engagement, we propose the phrase "the law of the journey." This concept encapsulates the paradox whereby law regulates and produces conditions of movement, while simultaneously suspending its own protections for those in transit. Migrants, refugees, and stateless persons are not outside law; rather, they are governed by exceptional legal regimes that delimit their access to rights. Contemporary Europe exemplifies this dynamic: asylum seekers may be interdicted at sea, detained in "hotspot" camps, or outsourced to third countries where European obligations ostensibly do not apply [14]. In this way, mobility becomes a legal condition of exclusion.

Habila's *Travellers* demonstrates this condition at multiple scales: the bureaucratic limbo of asylum processes, the affective suspension of waiting for recognition, the invisibilisation of lives lost at sea, and the tenuous social belonging of those marked as outsiders. The novel thus joins a broader corpus of contemporary Nigerian migrant fiction – including Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* and *Dream Count*, Sefi Atta's *A Bit of Difference*, Olumide Popoola's *When We Speak of Nothing*, and Michael Afenfia's *Leave My Bones in Saskatoon* – that interrogates the politics of movement, belonging, and return. Yet Habila's distinctive contribution lies in foregrounding the legal architectures that shape migrant experience, and in experimenting with form to mirror the fragmentary nature of migrant life.

This paper situates *Travellers* at the intersection of literary studies and legal-political theory. Drawing on Arendt's [2] discussion of statelessness, Agamben's [1] theorisation of sovereignty and exception, and legal scholarship on extraterritorial asylum [8, 11], we argue that the novel illuminates the "law of the journey" as a juridical condition of our time. The paper unfolds in seven sections. Section I examines the novel's formal choice of portraiture and fragmentation. Section II analyses transit as a prolonged condition rather than a temporary stage. Section III explores statelessness through Arendt and Agamben. Section IV turns to extraterritoriality and Europe's externalisation practices. Section V considers recognition and testimony as ethical dilemmas. Section VI offers critical analysis of key excerpts from the novel. Section VII discusses the politics and possibilities of fiction, before a concluding synthesis.

2. Literature, Form, and the Politics of Portraiture

Travellers departs from the conventional arc of migration

narratives. Rather than tracking a protagonist's linear trajectory, it composes a series of portraits loosely threaded together by the narrator's encounters. This mosaic form reflects both the dispersal of migrant experience and the impossibility of a singular representative story. Each chapter functions almost autonomously, yet the interconnections – chance meetings, overlapping geographies, thematic echoes – suggest a shared horizon of precarity.

The opening frame of Gina's portrait project foregrounds questions of representation. Gina, the narrator's American wife and an artist, decides to paint African migrants in Berlin, paying them to sit for portraits. This act literalises the stakes of representation: whose faces are visible, under what conditions, and to what end? On one level, Gina's project is an attempt to humanise migrants, to render them legible as individuals rather than as statistics. Yet the narrator is uneasy. He perceives the commodification implicit in the exchange – migrants must perform their suffering for art, which will then circulate in galleries. The novel thus self-reflexively interrogates its own project of portraiture: can art represent migrant lives without instrumentalising them?

The form of the novel mirrors this ambivalence. Fragmentation resists totalizing narrative, but it also reproduces the partial, interrupted lives of migrants whose journeys are suspended or cut short. Critics have described the novel as "tapestry-like" [20], emphasising its refusal of closure. The very form becomes an allegory of precarity: just as migrants' legal recognition is provisional, so too is narrative connection provisional.

Portraiture also underscores the asymmetry of power between observer and subject. The narrator, who initially accompanies Gina as an observer, becomes implicated when his own mobility is curtailed. His shift from spectator to participant demonstrates the ethical risk of using others' lives as material. By embedding this reflexivity within its form, *Travellers* foregrounds the politics of representation that underlie both art and literature.

2.1. Transit as Prolonged Condition

In migration discourse, "transit" often signifies a temporary passage from origin to destination. Yet as scholars note, transit frequently becomes protracted, producing a state of permanent temporariness [4]. Borders, checkpoints, and bureaucratic delays transform journeys into indefinite waiting. Habila's novel vividly demonstrates this temporal distortion.

Manu exemplifies the condition of prolonged transit. Once a medical doctor, he now works as a nightclub bouncer in Berlin, haunted by the disappearance of his wife and son who attempted the Mediterranean crossing. Manu lives in a limbo: he cannot return home, he cannot move forward without news of his family, and his life in Europe remains tenuous. His existence is structured by waiting – for recognition, for reunion, for closure. In Arendtian terms, he embodies the "perpetual guest" who is present yet unanchored in any polity.

This fictional portrayal finds its direct analogue in the legal architecture of the European asylum system, particularly the *Dublin III Regulation* [5]. Far from being a neutral administrative framework, Dublin III functions as the principal juridical mechanism through which the condition of what may be described as *permanent temporariness* is produced and normalised; precisely the condition Habila illustrates through Manu's prolonged suspension. The Regulation establishes a hierarchical set of criteria for assigning responsibility for an asylum claim to a single Member State, with decisive weight accorded to the applicant's first point of irregular entry into the European Union. While framed as a system of orderly burden-sharing and efficiency, this logic produces a legal fiction of collective responsibility that conceals its material effects: the systematic immobilisation of asylum seekers and the disproportionate containment of migrants in peripheral border-states such as Italy and Greece.

Within this framework, waiting is not incidental but structurally mandated. Asylum seekers like the fictional Manu are not merely delayed by bureaucratic inefficiency; they are legally fixed in a state of suspension, unable to regularise their status elsewhere or move freely within the Union without risking transfer, detention, or deportation. Dublin III thus governs space and time simultaneously: it arrests mobility by tying legal identity to geography, and it prolongs temporality by suspending resolution indefinitely. The "prolonged condition" of transit that Habila narrativises is therefore not a malfunction of the asylum regime but a constitutive feature of its design; a system calibrated to manage jurisdictional responsibility rather than human vulnerability.

In *Travellers*, transit exceeds the domain of physical movement and becomes a condition that permeates social, legal, and existential identity. Characters continually oscillate between unstable categories (student, asylum seeker, undocumented worker) each conferring only provisional belonging and exposing them to differentiated forms of precarity. Manu, the Libyan surgeon, exemplifies this instability with particular clarity. Once a respected medical professional in Libya, he is reconstituted in Europe as a refugee subject to bureaucratic suspicion and, later, as an irregular labourer in Germany. His professional expertise, social capital, and ethical commitments fail to translate across borders; recognition is withheld not because of incapacity but because legality is reduced to documentary status.

This erosion of professional and personal identity mirrors the logic of Dublin III, which privileges administrative traceability over substantive human worth. Manu's skills cannot override the determining power of fingerprints, entry records, and residence permits. He is rendered legible only through the regulatory apparatus that confines him, reinforcing what Agamben would describe as a reduction to bare legal life. In this connection, Habila's narrative exposes how European asylum law produces subjects who are perpetually "in transit" even when physically stationary –

individuals whose lives are structured by deferral, whose futures are endlessly postponed, and whose humanity is subordinated to the procedural imperatives of the border regime.

This portrayal resonates with European asylum practices, particularly the Dublin Regulation, which mandates that asylum seekers must apply in the first EU country they enter. This regulation often traps migrants in countries ill-equipped to process claims, prolonging bureaucratic limbo. Habila's fiction captures this sense of being caught between categories, where movement itself becomes immobilisation.

Transit thus emerges as a juridical condition. It is produced not by migrants' choices but by state practices of deterrence, detention, and externalisation. By foregrounding the temporality of waiting, *Travellers* challenges the notion of migration as a linear journey and instead presents it as a chronic condition of modern governance.

2.2. Statelessness: Arendt, Agamben, and Fictionalised Rightlessness

Hannah Arendt's reflections on statelessness in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* remain crucial for understanding *Travellers*. For Arendt, the calamity of the twentieth-century refugee was not merely loss of home but loss of political membership: "the right to have rights." Rights exist only insofar as they are guaranteed by a political community. Once expelled from such membership, the refugee becomes rightless, subject only to humanitarian pity.

Arendt's philosophical "right to have rights" is given concrete form in the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons [17]. This convention legally defines a stateless person as one "not considered as a national by any state under the operation of its law." This is a critical legal distinction from being a refugee; statelessness is a condition of having no legal identity to claim. While Habila's characters are often refugees, they experience facets of this rightlessness. Without the legal identity conferred by nationality, the rights enumerated in human rights instruments – to work, to healthcare, to education – become practically unenforceable because there is no state party held accountable for their provision. The legal status of statelessness is thus the bureaucratic realisation of Arendt's calamity, transforming a political condition into a juridical void.

Habila's characters illustrate this predicament. Manu, despite being physically in Europe, lacks effective rights: he cannot secure his family's recognition, nor claim full membership. Mark, as a transgender migrant, confronts both legal and social exclusion, revealing how rightlessness intersects with gender and sexuality. Portia, though born in Europe, inherits her father's exile status, showing how statelessness can be transmitted across generations.

Agamben extends Arendt's insights by theorizing the sovereign's capacity to produce "bare life" – lives stripped of political recognition yet subject to control. Migrants, asylum

seekers, and detainees inhabit spaces of exception where normal legal protections are suspended. Habila's depictions of detention centers, bureaucratic delays, and sea crossings resonate with Agamben's account. The Mediterranean, in particular, functions as a "juridical vacuum" where lives can be lost without legal accountability.

By fictionalising these conditions, *Travellers* renders visible the mechanisms of rightlessness. The novel refuses to reduce characters to victims; instead, it portrays them as agents with desires and voices. Yet their agency is continually constrained by structures that deny recognition. This tension between subjectivity and rightlessness is central to the novel's political force.

2.3. Extraterritoriality, Externalisation, and the Geography of Obligation

Extraterritoriality constitutes a central organising principle of contemporary European migration governance. Particularly since 2019, European states have intensified strategies that relocate asylum obligations beyond their territorial borders through third-country cooperation, maritime interception, and delegated enforcement mechanisms. Arrangements such as sustained reliance on the EU–Turkey framework and extensive financial and operational support for the Libyan Coast Guard enable European actors to regulate mobility while formally distancing themselves from responsibility for protection outcomes [14, 15]. What emerges from these practices is not a legal vacuum but a reconfiguration of law across space, whereby control is retained and accountability displaced.

Analyses of the EU–Turkey arrangement indicate that it has crystallised into a durable architecture of containment rather than remaining an exceptional or temporary measure. The framework institutionalises prolonged waiting, camp confinement, and legal uncertainty for asylum seekers stranded in Greece and Turkey, while simultaneously redirecting migration routes toward increasingly hazardous crossings [3]. This model of cooperation for containment operates through financial inducements, political bargaining, and selective humanitarianism, effectively outsourcing asylum responsibilities while preserving sovereign control over access to European territory. Comparable dynamics are evident in the Central Mediterranean, where investigations have documented systematic "pullbacks" at sea resulting in the forcible return of migrants to Libyan detention facilities characterised by endemic abuse and violence [6, 7]. Although European states rarely conduct these interceptions directly, extensive evidence demonstrates material and operational complicity through surveillance coordination, intelligence sharing, and capacity-building initiatives.

These externalisation practices deliberately produce a legal grey zone. At the core of international refugee protection lies the principle of non-refoulement, which prohibits the return of individuals to territories where their life or freedom would be

threatened [16]. Externalisation depends on a restrictive and spatially fragmented interpretation of this obligation. European states routinely argue that human rights duties do not apply extraterritorially, or that preventing migrants from reaching territorial waters precludes the legal activation of asylum claims [8]. This position was decisively repudiated in *Hirsi Jamaa and Others v. Italy* [12], where the European Court of Human Rights held that Italy's interception and return of migrants to Libya on the high seas violated both the prohibition of collective expulsion and the absolute ban on inhuman or degrading treatment. The Court affirmed that jurisdiction under the European Convention on Human Rights arises wherever a state exercises "effective control," irrespective of formal territorial boundaries.

Despite the doctrinal clarity of *Hirsi Jamaa*, subsequent developments reveal not retreat but adaptation. European states have refined what Moreno-Lax and Giuffr  [15] describe as "contactless control": governance techniques that achieve interdiction and return without direct physical custody. Through third-country enforcement, delegated interception, and remote surveillance, states reproduce the effects of pushbacks while maintaining juridical distance from their consequences. Extraterritoriality thus becomes systemic rather than exceptional, operating as a normalised modality of asylum governance designed to manage mobility while fragmenting responsibility.

Habila's *Travellers* provides a literary articulation of this legal geography. While the novel does not explicitly reference EU policy instruments, it renders their lived effects with narrative precision. Manu's family's disappearance at sea functions as a condensation of the invisibilisation produced by contemporary interception regimes: lives erased before crossing the threshold of legal recognisability. Their absence mirrors the fate of those intercepted and returned to Libya through EU-enabled pullbacks, whose suffering remains formally external to Europe's legal order despite being structurally produced by it [6, 14]. Karim's displacement, from conflict-ravaged Libya to precarious survival in Europe, further illuminates the transnational circuits through which war, migration, and outsourced border enforcement intersect.

Importantly, the logic of extraterritoriality does not terminate at Europe's borders. Within the Union, *Travellers* depicts migrants inhabiting spaces of internal externalisation: informal labour markets, temporary shelters, and detention facilities that operate at the margins of legality. These spaces replicate offshore containment zones, extending conditions of suspension into the metropolitan core. This internalisation of extraterritoriality converges with the Dublin III Regulation, which fixes asylum seekers to particular Member States while denying them meaningful mobility or timely resolution [5]. Manu's prolonged stagnation under Dublin III thus appears not as bureaucratic dysfunction but as the inland continuation of the same logic that governs maritime interception and third-country containment.

At the level of everyday life, extraterritoriality manifests

through bureaucratic exclusion and documentary precarity. Migrants' labour is channelled into shadow economies, while access to healthcare, housing, and education is mediated by legal regimes that perpetually defer recognition. These micro-level experiences are structurally homologous to macro-level strategies of externalisation. Together, they produce a continuum of governance in which migrants are physically present yet legally absent –subject to regulation without the full protection of rights.

By foregrounding these conditions, *Travellers* destabilises the assumption that rights are territorially anchored. Habila's characters implicitly articulate a conception of obligation that travels with the human subject rather than stopping at the border. In this respect, the novel converges with legal scholarship advocating expansive interpretations of jurisdiction and non-refoulement grounded in control rather than geography [10, 11]. Literature here does not merely mirror the failures of migration law; it interrogates the ethical and conceptual limits of a legal order that governs movement by displacing responsibility; and that produces, as its enduring condition, lives lived in suspension.

2.4. Recognition, Narrative, and the Ethics of Testimony

If law fails migrants, literature seeks to provide recognition. *Travellers* functions as a testimonial text, offering readers intimate access to lives otherwise obscured. Each portrait insists on the individuality of migrants, countering the homogenising discourse of "the refugee crisis." Yet the novel is not naïvely celebratory of testimony. Gina's portrait project underscores the ethical risks of representation. Migrants must narrate their suffering to be seen, reproducing the asymmetry between subject and audience. The narrator's discomfort with Gina's project mirrors broader debates about the ethics of witnessing: can stories of suffering be told without commodifying them?

Habila negotiates this tension by foregrounding the act of storytelling itself. The novel acknowledges the risks of representation while insisting on its necessity. Without testimony, migrants remain invisible; with testimony, they risk exploitation. The novel does not resolve this dilemma but stages it as an ethical problem.

In doing so, *Travellers* aligns with broader traditions of testimonial literature, from Holocaust narratives to postcolonial migrant fiction. It highlights the double bind of representation: testimony is both indispensable and insufficient. Recognition must extend beyond narrative to juridical and political transformation.

The foregoing literary ethical dilemma mirrors a core tension in asylum law itself. The legal process of seeking refuge is fundamentally a testimonial encounter. An asylum seeker's narrative is not just a story; it is evidence. Their credibility is assessed against detailed, consistent, and corroborated testimony, as outlined in guidelines like the

UNHCR Handbook on Procedures and Criteria for Determining Refugee Status [19]. The legal requirement to perform a convincing narrative of persecution to a sceptical authority creates a power dynamic that echoes Gina's portrait studio. The migrant must instrumentally present their suffering to be granted legal recognition, navigating a system where the stakes are not artistic representation but life and death. The law, like the novel, demands testimony but struggles with the ethics of its extraction and use.

3. Juridical Allegories in *Travellers*

3.1. Mark's Story

Mark, born Mary in Malawi, embodies intersectional vulnerability. Expelled from home for his gender nonconformity, he becomes doubly marginalised in Europe: as African and as transgender. His precarious status illuminates the limits of asylum systems that often fail to recognise gender and sexuality as legitimate grounds for protection. Mark's resilience – his anarchist activism, his defiant self-fashioning – contrasts with the fragility of his legal situation. Through Mark, Habila exposes the ways law polices not only borders but also bodies.

3.2. Manu and the Sea

Manu's endless waiting for his family lost at sea allegorises the juridical void of the Mediterranean. The sea functions as a frontier where lives can disappear without accountability. International maritime law obliges states to rescue those in distress, yet in practice rescue is often subordinated to deterrence. Manu's suspended life illustrates the afterlives of such policies: personal grief becomes political indictment.

Meanwhile, the "juridical void" of the Mediterranean is not an absence of law, but a conflict of legal regimes. While the 1951 Refugee Convention establishes rights for those who reach territory, the law of the sea governs the waters. Under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea [18] and the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea [13], states have a clear legal duty to render assistance to persons in distress at sea. However, this humanitarian maritime law collides with political deterrence policies. The criminalisation of NGO rescue efforts and the support for the Libyan Coast Guard to perform interceptions constitute a strategy of creating "legal friction," where one set of obligations (to rescue) is functionally neutralized by another political objective (to deter). Manu's grief is a testament to this legal conflict; his family's disappearance is a direct consequence of policies that prioritize closing legal pathways over fulfilling unambiguous legal duties to preserve life at sea.

3.3. The Narrator's Guilt

The narrator's trajectory from observer to implicated

subject reveals the privilege of mobility. Initially shielded by his academic fellowship and marriage to Gina, he gradually confronts his own vulnerability. His guilt about Gina's portrait project signals an awareness of complicity: representation can be exploitative. By making the narrator a partial stand-in for the author, Habila stages the ethical dilemmas of writing migrant lives.

3.4. Portia and Her Father's Exile

Portia, the daughter of a Zambian exile, illustrates the intergenerational transmission of statelessness. Though raised in Europe, she inherits her father's displacement, caught between identities and denied full belonging. Her story complicates the temporal frame of migration, showing that exile is not a singular event but a condition that shapes descendants.

3.5. Politics and Possibility: What Fiction Can Do

What can fiction do in the face of rightlessness? *Travellers* suggests that literature cannot substitute for law, but it can pressure publics and institutions by reshaping perception. By portraying migrants in their complexity – as lovers, parents, activists, and workers – Habila destabilises reductive categories. Fiction creates empathy, but more than that, it insists on recognition of shared humanity.

Comparatively, *Travellers* resonates with works like Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By the Sea* and Chris Abani's *Becoming Abigail*, which similarly depict exile and statelessness. Yet Habila's emphasis on the legal structures of migration distinguishes his novel. He is less concerned with nostalgia for home than with the juridical architectures that govern migrant lives in Europe. Ultimately, *Travellers* calls for reimagining obligations beyond territorial sovereignty. It aligns with cosmopolitan arguments that rights should attach to persons irrespective of borders. Literature here becomes part of a broader ethical and political project: to demand that the "law of the journey" recognise rather than erase.

4. Conclusion

Helon Habila's *Travellers* stages the paradoxes of contemporary migration with rare sensitivity. By foregrounding transit, statelessness, and extraterritoriality, the novel exposes how law simultaneously governs and abandons migrants. Arendt's notion of the "right to have rights" and Agamben's concept of *bare life* find narrative articulation in figures such as Manu, Mark, and Portia, whose lives unfold in zones of legal suspension where recognition is deferred and protection contingent. Extraterritorial practices that displace responsibility surface in the novel's vanished bodies in the Mediterranean and in the shadow economies of Berlin, where migrants are rendered present as labour yet absent as rights-

bearing subjects.

At the same time, *Travellers* complicates a straightforward application of Agamben's theory. Critics of *bare life* have argued that Agamben's formulation risks flattening migrant experience by reducing subjects to passive victims of sovereign power, stripped of agency, sociality, and political voice. Scholars such as Jacques Rancière and Judith Butler have contended that even those positioned at the margins of legal recognition continue to enact forms of political subjectivity, resistance, and relationality that exceed the logic of sovereign abandonment. Similarly, postcolonial and migration theorists have cautioned that the paradigm of *bare life* may obscure historical specificity and lived heterogeneity by treating exclusion as total rather than uneven, contested, and negotiated.

Habila's novel implicitly aligns with these critiques. While his characters inhabit conditions that resonate with Agamben's zones of exception, they are never reduced to mere biological existence. Manu's ethical commitments as a doctor persist despite the erosion of his professional status; Portia's storytelling asserts narrative agency against erasure; Mark's mobility, however constrained, reflects improvisation rather than absolute immobilisation. These figures inhabit what might be described as *precarious political life* rather than *bare life* – a condition marked by vulnerability and dispossession, but also by affect, memory, creativity, and ethical relation. In this sense, *Travellers* supplements Agamben by restoring dimensionality to migrant subjectivity, foregrounding not only abandonment but also endurance and self-articulation.

The novel is therefore not merely diagnostic but interventionist. Its humanising portraits resist the abstractions of both legal discourse and media representation. Its formal fragmentation mirrors the instability of migrant life while insisting on singular voices that refuse absorption into statistical anonymity. By showcasing the ethics of representation, *Travellers* calls readers to confront their own positionality within systems that benefit from the externalisation of responsibility. Literature here becomes a site of counter-sovereignty, challenging the epistemic violence through which migrants are rendered knowable only as risk, burden, or excess.

In theorising what this paper has described as "the law of the journey," the analysis has shown how Habila's fiction illuminates the legal architectures of exclusion while simultaneously gesturing toward alternative imaginaries of obligation. Literature cannot substitute for policy, but it can unsettle indifference and provoke ethical reorientation. *Travellers* insists that migrants are not transient others moving through Europe's margins; they are fellow human beings whose journeys expose the fault lines of contemporary political order. To attend to their stories is to confront the unresolved question that animates both law and literature: how rights might travel with persons – beyond borders, beyond states, and beyond the limits of sovereignty itself.

Abbreviations

EU	European Union
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Author Contributions

Basit Olatunji: Conceptualization, Formal Analysis, Writing – original draft

Misbau Alamu Lateef: Formal Analysis, Funding acquisition, Writing – review & editing

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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