

“Hope” in Nada Jarrar’s an Unsafe Haven: Sisyphean and Cruel

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Received 24/4/2022
Revised: 1/10/2022
Accepted: 30/10/2022
Published: 30/10/2023

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Citation: Abdel Khaleq, A. N. ., & Salman, D. . (2023). “Hope” in Nada Jarrar’s an Unsafe Haven: Sisyphean and Cruel. *Dirasat: Human and Social Sciences*, 50(5), 279–288.
<https://doi.org/10.35516/hum.v50i5.1127>



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Abstract

Objectives: This study aims at examining the portrayal of hope through the lens of Affect theory. The objective of this study is to examine the way that hope motivates the characters of the novel to behave. The study also aims at examining how hope as an emotion does not bring about an optimistic outlook in the world of the novel, but rather creates disillusionment and pessimism.

Methods: This paper relies on affect theory particularly the works of Sara Ahmad’s “happy objects” and Lauren Berlant’s concept of “cruel optimism” in showing how hope in Jarrar’s novel is both an object of happiness and a source of misery for the characters of the novel.

Results: These results of this study show that studying the notion of hope that the characters seek in concepts and ideas such as marriage, love, and revolutions leads to what we would like to call a “Sisyphean” hope that further leads to disillusionment and discouragement. This hope we argue is not only “Sisyphean,” it is “cruel” because it is both futile and unattainable.

Conclusion: We conclude that the effect of hope is concurrently a source of optimism for a better future and Sisyphean in its cruelty as it leads to nothing but agony.

Keywords: Affect theory, hope, Sisyphean, Nada Jarrar, *An Unsafe Haven*.

"الامل" في رواية ملاذ غير آمن لندى جرار: "عبي" وقاس

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ملخص

الأهداف: تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى فحص تصوير الأمل من خلال نظرية التأثير، وإلى دراسة الطريقة التي يحفز بها الأمل شخصيات الرواية على التصرف. كما تهدف الدراسة إلى فحص كيف أن الأمل كعاطفة لا يجلب نظرة متفائلة في عالم الرواية، بل يخلق خيبة أمل وتشاؤم.

المنهجية: تعتمد هذه الدراسة نظرية التأثير خاصة "الأشياء السعيدة" لسارة أحمد ومفهوم "التفاؤل القاسي" لدى لورين بيرلانت في إظهار أن الأمل في رواية جرار هو مصدر السعادة ومصدر يؤس لشخصيات الرواية في الوقت ذاته.

النتائج: تظهر النتائج أن دراسة مفهوم الأمل -الذي تبحث عنه الشخصيات في مفاهيم وأفكار مثل الزواج والحب والثورات- تؤدي إلى ما نود أن نطلق عليه أمل "عبي" يؤدي إلى خيبة الأمل والإحباط؛ إذ إن هذا الأمل لا يقتصر على كونه "عبياً" فهو أيضاً "قاسي" لأنه غير مجدٍ وغير قابل للتحقيق.

التوصيات: خلصت الدراسة إلى أن الأمل مصدر تفاؤل بمستقبل أفضل ولكنه خطير في قسوته في نفس الوقت لأنه لا يؤدي إلا إلى العذاب

الكلمات الدالة: نظرية التأثير، الأمل، عبي، ندى جرار، "ملاذ غير آمن".

Introduction

Nada Awar Jarrar’s novel, *An Unsafe Haven*, portrays the aftermath of various political events taking place in the Middle East such as the Syrian war, the Israeli occupation, and the political situation in Lebanon. The novel also portrays the traumatic consequences of these conflicts on Middle Easterners in general and on Syrian and Lebanese people in particular. It tells stories of citizens, refugees, displaced people, and migrants who have suffered from political conflicts in their homelands, but who also have hope to live a better life. In the novel, the main characters have developed different attachments towards different concepts due to their strong belief that these objects or notions will bring them joy and hope for a better future. Thus, we argue in this paper that the affective attachments of the characters to specific objects and important concepts lead to a hopefulness that is a façade in different ways, but is also the motivation behind the characters’ behaviors. In *An Unsafe Haven*, we describe “hope” that is manifested in affective concepts as “Sisyphean” and, therefore, cruel in its futility. In *An Unsafe Haven*, some characters’ hope is attainable, but others’ is Sisyphean and, therefore, cruel. Thus, like Sisyphus, a king in Greek mythology who is forced to face eternal punishment by rolling an immense boulder up a hill only to have it roll down every time it neared the top because he has cheated death twice, some characters’ “hope” in the novel is also seen as a Sisyphean effort. It is not a real hope, the characters keep developing it again and again but all in vain. We call some characters’ hope as cruel echoing Lauren Berlant’s concept of “cruel optimism.” This paper will argue that the kind of attachment that forces the characters to make huge sacrifices because they are too optimistic about their relation towards an object/concept that puts their lives to the test can at times lead to a “cruel” type of hope. More specifically, we argue that Anas’ attachment to civil uprisings and Fatima’s attachment to the institution of marriage can be seen as affective attachments to concepts and that these “happy objects” promise the characters the impression that they will lead better lives. Peter’s attachment to the concept of romantic love is also an example of one’s attachment to concepts or belief systems for the affective value of hopefulness. Second, we argue that some characters’ optimistic attachments to concepts and beliefs such as the “Arab Spring”/civil uprisings or to living a “good” life involve disillusionment and are best explained with the concept of “cruel optimism”. These characters are attached to painful and failing concepts because they promise them with happiness and a fulfilling life. This paper argues that for some characters the positive affect of civil uprisings has developed into an “affective reality” that occupies part of their reality and thus shapes their behaviors. Finally, by applying affect theory onto the Jarrar’s novel, this study will show the significance of how affects can move groups of people to take action politically, socially and culturally.

Affect Theory

Studying “affects” and their impact has become crucial nowadays as they play a huge role in shaping our decisions, attitudes, reactions and feelings. Writers of literary works use affects in the content of literary works, such as in the way the events develop, in the lives of characters, and in the way they stimulate specific feelings, reactions, responses or interpretations from readers. In other words, they use affects to trigger the readers’ feeling and make them identify with the texts or with the characters in a certain way. The field of affect studies reached its peak in the 1990s mainly in the works of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Massumi, Deleuze and Guattari. Nancy Easterl (2017) argues that “the primary influences on affect theory are philosophers, not scientists, including Baruch Spinoza, Henri Bergson, Gilles Deleuze, and Gilbert Simondon” (p: 828). The great seventeenth-century Dutch philosopher Spinoza is considered to be the father of affect theory as his arguments on affects have inspired many affect theorists. Brook Miller (2017) argues that Spinoza “describes the affects (“affectus”) as a subset of “affections” (“affectio”) that reflect increases or diminishments of the body’s capacity.” (p: 126).

In his seminal essay, “The Autonomy of Affect”, Masumi (1995), proposes that affect comes as prior to ideology or ideological thought. Massumi also proposes that affect is pre-linguistic. Unlike poststructuralists’ argument about the dominant role of language, Massumi, Guattari and Deleuze propose that people are first affected by things (human or nonhuman), and then, language comes to describe the way we are moved by affects. In the introduction to *The Palgrave Handbook of Affect Studies and Textual Criticism*, Donald R. Wehrs (2017) argues that ““affect theory,” unlike other forms

of interdisciplinary theorizing and research, tends to accord “affect” a role akin to that played by language in 1970s poststructuralist theory and by decentered or resistant subjectivity in 1980s–1990s political criticism.” (p: 3). So, for affect theorists, people are usually moved by affects, and these affects have a great impact and role on shaping our language and discourse as well as our beliefs and actions.

In his work “Affect Studies and Literary Criticism,” Patrick Colm Hogan (2016) proposes that “[w]riters in affect theory draw on a range of psychological, social, linguistic, and other theories, most often in the service of political analysis” (p:1). Hogan has very usefully differentiated between two approaches/orientations in the study of affect that are “affect theory/ affective poststructuralism” and “affective science” (p: 1). Affective science’s roots appear in cognitive science and social psychology, while affect theory is connected to philosophy and humanities. He also says that “affect theory has developed out of or at least in dialogue with cultural studies. This means that it has typically been concerned with political issues much more centrally than has been the case with affective science” (p: 4). So, affect theory is interested in political, social and cultural issues and that is why affect theorists mainly propose concepts that help in the analysis of the way people employ affects in political, literary or cultural texts. Hogan argues that writers of literary works use different strategies in order to trigger certain affective responses on their readers and that affect theory has helped in recognizing the way emotions are shaped in affective realities. For Hogan, the study of literature and affect is “mutually beneficial” (p: 21).

In “Happy Objects,” Sara Ahmed (2010) proposes happiness “as a happening, as involving affect (to be happy is to be affected by something), intentionality (to be happy is to be happy about something), and evaluation or judgment (to be happy about something makes something good)” (p: 29). So, people are attached to “happy objects” (people, concepts, or things) that are judged to be good and that are known to have good value associated to them and make people happy. Ahmed explores the way “happiness functions as a promise that directs us toward certain objects, which then circulate as social goods” (p: 29). Ahmed builds on Deleuze, Massumi and Guattari’s arguments of considering affect as a force as she argues that for people to be affected by certain objects/concepts, there should be proximity and attachments to these objects/concepts. In other words, people proximate themselves to objects/concepts for their promise of happiness. Thus, she proposes that people proximate themselves to certain objects that they believe will affect them in a positive way and move away from certain objects that they feel will affect them in a negative way. Ahmed also proposes that an object might become happy due to its “location” (in this place I experience happiness) and its time of occurrence or “the conditions of its arrival” (p: 33). “Happy” objects direct people towards them not for the object itself, but for its promise of happiness. Ahmed proposes “affect as ‘sticky’”, an object is “sticky” because it has been assigned as a *good* thing that causes happiness or a *bad* thing that causes unhappiness. So, we evaluate objects based on how they affect us and affect others. For Ahmed, “[a]ffect is what sticks, or what sustains or preserves the connection between ideas, values, and objects” (p: 29).

Like Ahmed, Berlant has also built on Massumi, Guattari and Deleuze’s theory of “affect as a force” to formulate her theory of “Cruel Optimism”. While Ahmed’s “Happy Objects” describes the way people are directed to and attached to things that they believe are *good* and important for living a valuable and meaningful life and being *happy*. In her piece “Cruel Optimism,” Berlant (2010) argues that “all attachments are optimistic” (p: 93). Like Ahmed, Berlant argues that our proximity to an object of desire is a proximity to the “cluster of promises” it represents, and it is a proximity that results from the affects this object generates on us (p: 93). So, “cruel optimism” refers to a relation between a person and an object. This object can be “a person, a thing, an institution, a text, a norm, a bunch of cells, smells, a good idea—whatever”, where the object is considered to be as a hindrance in his/ her way to thrive; and it is “a relation of attachment to compromised conditions of possibility whose realization is discovered either to be impossible, sheer fantasy, or too possible, and toxic” (p: 93-94). Carmen Faye Mathes (2019) proposes that Berlant characterizes people’s attachments as “affective”, and that is why, “we may remain invested even when our attachment is “cruel”; for instance, even when it repeatedly disappoints us” (p: 87). A person does anything in the fear of losing such objects even though the existence of these objects is threatening the person’s well-being rendering them cruel attachments. Such objects increase people hope of living a *better* life, though their life has not changed for the better.

According to Berlant, “affect as a force” drives people to attach themselves towards certain objects; people also

affectively fear to lose the promises of these objects which give them hope and optimism. Berlant writes that “if the cruelty of an attachment *is* experienced by someone or some group, even in disavowed fashion, the fear is that the loss of the object or scene of promising itself will defeat the capacity to have any hope about anything” (p: 94). Berlant’s theory represents the dilemma of living in the present where living a good life is not sustainable. For Berlant, people should avoid optimistic fantasies of survival in “compromised conditions” (p: 94). One should develop different way of thinking in order to be able to create circumstances for living a life differently in the present; a person should see how affects impact the way he/she feels and behaves. For Berlant, we should recognize how destructive our attachments to the *good* life are, as the promises that we are attached to are “promises and not possessions”; these attachments are both and at the same time promises and threats to our existence. (p: 112).

Therefore, affective objects cannot, on their own, offer us the *better* life we seek. Berlant argues that objects like “a scouring love, [...] obsessive appetites, working for a living, [and] patriotism” are considered to be as kinds of cruel and deceptive optimism; they are merely promises of living or having a good life. (p: 94) Such objects attract people to follow them, but at the same time they stand as obstacles in realizing the people’s dreams. Berlant represents the idea of having a better life as a fantasy. For her, optimism is also a kind of a fantasy that people are personally and collectively moved towards, and that forces people to make concessions, but also helps them to live their lives. Berlant assures her readers that one’s attachments towards objects or people are optimistic because he/she *hopes* that the object promises to bring them satisfaction and make their life functional. He/she is moved by positive affects, but in reality, they are stuck in their places.

Finally, Massumi, defines affect studies as the study of the body’s ability to affect others and be affected by others. For Massumi, “[a]ffect is autonomous to the degree to which it escapes confinement in the particular body whose vitality, or potential for interaction, it is” (p: 35). It is also an “intensity” that is hard to be controlled by individuals. For Massumi, “affect entails neither subject nor object but bodily movement [people proximate themselves to certain objects while move away from others], interaction, and the dynamic process of becoming (Ott, 2017, p: 3). In his article “The Future Birth of the Affective Fact,” Massumi represents the power of affects as they create an “affective reality” that becomes part of people’s reality. (p: 54) To illustrate his theory, Massumi discusses the affective reality of events that have taken place in the twenty-first century and highlights that because of affects, for people, the nonexistence becomes more real than what is really happening. He proposes that affective facts of events like the United States’ invasion of Iraq and like September 11 Attacks have had such a strong impact on people around the world. Massumi proposes that there is always a threat of what is coming next, of an uncertain danger that keeps haunting as it overshadows our present and future. Massumi gives the example of the real happening of the Iraqi invasion by America only because they *fear* that Saddam Hussein had had weapons of mass destruction. So, the American government had in the past felt a threat that might happen in the future. Massumi proposes that affective reality of such events or “[t]he felt reality of threat legitimates preemptive action” (p: 54). Just like countries that use affects to legitimate their policies, politics or actions, literary writers use affect to justify the behaviors of their characters or to move their readers in a certain way.

Civil Uprisings and Patriotism as “Happy” but Cruel Objects

In *An Unsafe Haven*, the Syrian people’s attachment to civil uprisings can be seen as attachments to affective concepts such as “happy objects” that promise them the happiness and fulfilling life they seek. This paper argues that such optimistic attachments are telling examples of “cruel optimism.” The novel suggests that civil uprisings are highly affective. They are considered by people from different generations as a noble concept that leads to many positive consequences for civilians. Sara Ahmed proposes that “objects not only embody good feeling, but are perceived as necessary for a good life” (p: 34). We know that the general consensus on civil uprisings is that they are supposed to be good things that help civilians get rid of dictators, and help people attain more freedom, a better economic situation and better futures. Ahmed proposes that the “affective value” of certain objects is “sticky”; they are judged by people “as being good or bad, as being the cause of happiness or unhappiness” (p: 35). Ahmed also argues that affective values of certain objects are moved from a generation to another. In Jarrar’s novel, the affective value of civil uprisings as being “happy” objects is also “sticky.” So, once civilians choose to rebel in a country, the “affects” of uprisings and rebellions are circulated not only from one generation to another,

but also from civilians in one country to the civilians in another country. When civilians begin to “hope” that civil uprisings will bring in a better future, they tend to take action. We argue that this works well within the framework of Massumi’s concept of “affect as a force”. The positive value of civil uprisings drives civilians to be part of this kind of resistance. It also increases their “hope” of a happy future and optimism towards a fulfilling life. As Berlant suggests, attachment to such objects that promise us happiness means attachment to the hope and optimism that are associated to these objects. Berlant proposes that “all attachments are optimistic” (p: 94). Thus, civilians’ attachments to concepts such as uprisings are optimistic attachments that are believed to bring a better future.

In the novel, the attachment to uprisings is portrayed as both a “cruel” attachment and an “optimistic” one as it promises civilians happiness, justice, freedom, and equality. In the novel, we know that in many Arab countries, civil uprisings have developed into wars by external parties whose aim is to destroy the Arab World. Years after these uprisings spread in many Arab countries, Maysoun says: “whatever the initial intentions behind the uprisings, things have spiralled out of control. There just doesn’t seem to be any way out of all this” (p: 251). From the perspective of the Iraqi man, Jalal, uprisings are good, but they have been developed into something against Middle Easterners; he says:

I believe the map of the Middle East is being deliberately redrawn through all this conflict. We were getting too close to liberating ourselves from dictators and corrupt governments a couple of years ago and the powers that be had to put a stop to that (p: 251).

Syrian civilians in many countries in Syria align hope for a better future with civil uprisings as the only solution to get rid of dictatorships. Syria has suffered from the effects of war since 2011, a war that is believed to be part of the wider “Arab Spring.” Thus, Jarrar discusses how the parties who have started the conflict in Syria are not only from Syria, but from many other countries. Thus, the Lebanese journalist, Hannah, in the novel says: though “It may be true that no one wants the [Syrian] refugees- [...] but they’re happy to see the conflict in Syria continue. It’s a convenient place for them to fight their little wars” (p: 108-109). Thus, more than ten countries including the United States, Iran, Russia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia have been either parts of the war in Syria, or provided support to one of the parties or factions there. As Hannah discusses the situation in Syria with her American husband, she says:

There’s no denying that this war is accommodating internal as well as regional and international conflicts. Someone is training Islamic State fighters and providing them with weapons. As for the Syrian government, it’s very clear who its supporters are. There are lots of interests at stake here, including those of Israel and its allies in the West (p: 109).

Hanna’s husband agrees to what Hannah says and he adds: “We all know this isn’t merely about Syrians fighting among themselves, or even about a sectarian conflict between Sunni Islam and Shia Islam” (p: 109). These conflicts have led to the death of hundreds of thousands of Syrian civilians, and to the displacements of millions of others.

Though hundreds of people have been killed or displaced due to the suppression of civil revolts, many characters are still attached to uprisings since they believe they are the first step for improving the quality of life. As Berlant proposes, people are optimistic to such attachments as they do not want to lose the promises that lie behind them. For some characters, the positive affect of civil uprisings has developed into an “affective reality” that occupies part of their reality and that shapes their attitudes and reactions. Massumi proposes that an “affective reality” is a reality that is “felt” (Massumi, 2010, p: 54). So, like civilians in many Arab countries, the Syrian civilians judge the uprisings as a good thing based on how they *feel* towards these revolts. The positive and affective value of civil uprisings continuously develop with people increasing their attachments to them based on the good feeling towards this “felt” and “affective” reality.

Not all attachments in this novel, however, are strictly those of civil uprisings connected to the Arab Spring. Anas is another character who demonstrates the way that patriotism is another affective attachment. Anas is a Syrian artist who is married to a German woman, Brigitte, and they have been living in Syria since their marriage. Anas and Brigitte with their

two children live with Anas' extended family in Damascus. Though war in Syria enters its fifth year, Anas refuses to leave Syria as he believes that one should not leave his/her homeland. Thus, patriotism for Anas is a "happy object." The relation that Anas has developed towards civil uprisings involves a kind of "cruel optimism"; and these uprisings develop into an "affective reality" that shapes Anas' behaviors. After uprisings have started in many Arab countries, and two years after civil uprisings, civil war and war against Syria taken place, Anas is still attached to these revolts. As Anas, his wife and their friends discuss civil uprisings, they talk "with excitement about the uprisings in the region, of their implications, and with caution about the future, the potential obstacles that could arise in this seemingly unstoppable drive for justice and equality, for the end to dictatorship" (p: 237). We are told that, during this discussion, Anas "had been the most optimistic of the four, had believed the Arab people would make the transition from revolution to nation-building successfully" (p: 238). So, as Ahmed proposes, Anas is attached to the "promise of happiness" behind patriotism and civil uprisings. (p: 41)

Anas' relation towards these revolts is an example of "cruel optimism" because he is so optimistic about civil uprisings that are so cruel. The suppression of these uprisings and their consequential conflicts have led to the killing of hundreds of thousands and to the displacement of millions of Syrian people. For Anas, no matter how cruel civil war and uprisings might be, they are the best solution for Syrian people to seek democracy for their future. Though revolts in many Arab countries have been brutally suppressed; Anas appears to be turning a blind eye to the seriousness of these conflicts. He feels good about the enthusiasm that initiates these revolts and the positive impulses towards the "happy" life he hopes to live after civil uprisings reach their harvest time. The novel shows the negative "affects" of patriotism and the blindness that comes with it through the character of Anas. Anas jeopardizes not only his life, but the lives of his children and wife because he has developed an attachment towards his homeland. In her study "Cruel Optimism", Berlant argues that "cruel optimism" refers to a relation where one is attached to "a problematic object in advance of its loss" (p: 94). The negative affects of patriotism have also led to Anas' stubbornness especially when he discusses the situation of his homeland with his German wife. After the war is ignited in Syria, Brigitte has vainly tried to convince him that they should leave Syria and move to a safer country. She tells Anas "that he was willing to endanger the lives of his own children to maintain the illusion of Syria as home" (p: 22). Anas stubbornly refuses to move to another country. Later, after a car bomb has exploded in their neighborhood in Syria, Brigitte decides to flee to Germany with her children without telling her husband (who has been in Lebanon) about this decision. Later, Anas finds out that the car bomb was so close to his house, and that his children have been terrified and that his wife has been injured. Nevertheless, he is "unwilling to take responsibility for driving her [Brigitte] to it" (p: 156). In other words, Anas does not admit that his stubbornness towards the idea of not leaving Syria during the conflict is what leads Brigitte escaping Syria without telling him. The negative affects of Anas' attachment to patriotism appear clearly when Anas misjudges his German wife, accuses her of misunderstanding Arabs, and keeps telling her that she cannot understand what the homeland means for an Arab because she is a foreigner. Near the end of the novel, and before opening his exhibition in Lebanon, Anas becomes worried about his parents, and thus, he decides to go back to Syria in order to make sure that his parents are well. But, on this way back home, Anas is killed by extremists' bombing.

Moreover, Anas's friend, Hannah, realizes that Anas's "violent death is a symbol of the betrayal of the popular revolts that brought down merciless regimes all over the Arab World," (p: 272). The novel suggests that civil uprisings are "cruel" and that though they start for the sake of civilians, they quickly turn into something that cannot be controlled. We argue that in Jarrar's novel, civilians' "hope" to live a better future after getting rid of dictators through civil uprisings is portrayed as a kind of "Sisyphean hope". While in Beirut, Brigitte, Anas and their friends talk about the region and about the uprisings' aim of "justice and equality, for the end to dictatorship" (p: 237). Peter the American doctor tells them that "after all the protests, the deaths that occurred in Egypt, the promises made, another dictator is in power there today" (p: 109). So, the Egyptian people have been moved by the promises and the positive value of civil uprisings. This affective value works as a force that drives Egyptian people to start these uprisings. Nevertheless, clashes between civilians and the security forces have led to the death of hundreds of Egyptian people. Later, Egyptian people succeed in overthrowing their Egyptian president, but soon, another dictator takes his place. The Egyptian people's Sisyphean "hope" is depicted as unachievable. A dictator abuses his power, civilians rebel against this; clashes between security forces and civilians lead to the killings of

hundreds or thousands of civilians; a dictator is overthrown, but another dictator is in power and also abuses his power. Thus, “hope” in the novel is viewed as futile and worthless. It is also seen as a never ending circle of “cruel optimism” that leads to false promises and disillusionment. The affect of hope in this context shows how powerful affect can be in initiating change, but also creating disillusionment and futility.

Marriage as a “Happy” Object

Marriage in the context of *An Unsafe Haven* reflects the general cultural perspective that marriage will bring about happiness and satisfaction, yet the negative aspects of this social institution are usually overlooked. In *An Unsafe Haven*, the Syrian refugee Fatima suffers from the consequences of uprisings and war in and against Syria. After civil uprisings in Syria escalate into a full-scale war between Syria and many other countries, Fatima’s husband “was conscripted into the army and was killed very early on” (p: 73). Later, as life in Syria becomes unbearable, Fatima leaves Syria and goes to Lebanon with her son and her in-laws as they hope that Lebanon will be their safe haven. Now, as war in Syria enters its fifth year, Fatima still lives in the refugee camps in Lebanon with her son and an out-of-wedlock infant girl. Dealing with the hardship of life as refugees; Fatima with her son start begging for a living in the streets of Beirut. As her in-laws do not know about the infant, Fatima asks a woman to take care of the infant until she can find an adoptive family for her.

Fatima suffers from the miserable living conditions in the refugee camps in Lebanon. Moreover, though Fatima says nothing about the infant, whether she has had an illegitimate affair or was sexually assaulted in the refugee camp, she is now homeless with no money and a fatherless child. For Fatima, leaving Syria and coming to Lebanon in search for a safe haven is a very difficult experience. It is “like stepping out of one black hole and falling straight into another that is deeper and darker because it is unknowable, something like losing your past and not having a vision of the future to sustain you through the present” (p:77-78). As she is unable to endure the misery of the refugee camps, Fatima now hopes to travel to Turkey where she can be reunited with her parents who have left Syria due to war and stayed in a refugee camp. Fatima also wants to find an adoptive family for her infant in Lebanon as she “hopes” that she and her son will find a better, more hopeful, future.

Fatima meets Anas before his death as he has been preparing for the opening of his exhibition in Beirut. She tells him that, when she was younger, she did not want to get married as she had hoped to finish her studying at school. Nevertheless, Fatima says that her father “was adamant, said it was a good match and that he would be happy to get me off his hands” (p: 73). It is worth observing that, for Fatima’s father, marriage is a “happy object”. For him, Fatima’s marriage is a kind of a good bargain in which he gets rid of the economic responsibilities of Fatima. Regardless all the sufferings Fatima goes through, when Hannah promises that they will help in finding her parents, Hannah notices that in “the look on Fatima’s face [...] There was too much hope in it ” (p: 90). So, this is what Fatima does as soon as her life becomes unbearable in the refugee camps. She develops this newfound hope that Turkey will be their safe haven and that she will plan for a good future for her son. We argue that Fatima’s hope to find a safe haven is an example of Sisyphean “hope”. First, Fatima leaves Syria hoping that Lebanon is a safe haven. Now, Fatima wants to leave Lebanon in the hope that the refugee camps in Turkey will be their safe haven. As the crisis of refugees and displaced people is growing; Fatima and her son’s uprooting appears to be continual and ineffective. These people become addicted to “hope,” the only thing that make them feel a kind of relief.

Fatima’s hope to plan for her son’s future in Turkey after leaving her out-of-wedlock infant girl in Lebanon with an adoptive family is an example of “cruel optimism.” With the miserable life Fatima finds in the refugee camps in Lebanon, she does not realize that the happiness of her son will be built on the misery of his sister. This cruel hope is rearticulated continuously to fit one’s cruel reality. Moreover, Fatima’s behaviors, attitudes and feelings towards her infant girl lead us to argue that, for Fatima, the institution of marriage is a “happy object”. Marriage has been considered as a sacred institution that should be protected in many ways. It is a “happy” object because people consider it as a prosperous and beneficial institution. In her theory of “happy object,” Ahmed proposes we “share an orientation toward the family as being good, as being what promises happiness in return for loyalty” (p: 38). Similarly in Jarrar’s novel, for Fatima, the institution of marriage is something that offers you “happiness” unless you are disloyal. So, the affective value of marriage works as a

force that leads to Fatima’s callousness when she decides to leave her out-of-wedlock baby behind in Lebanon so that she may plan for her son’s future in Turkey. The affective value of marriage here functions in a negative way; it shapes Fatima’s decisions towards her infant girl. As Fatima’s husband is killed years ago, she does not want to appear as a disloyal widow. Fatima finds herself as unable to break the ties of the institution of marriage especially in a patriarchal society. The affective value of marriage leads Fatima to withhold the identity of the infant girl; she does not even give her a name. As Fatima asks Hannah’s friend to find an adoptive family for her infant, she says: “You think I’m heartless, [...] But I have to think of my son. I have to think about his future. There’s no place for a sister with no name in it” (p: 262-263). Like thousands of infants who have been born in the refugee camps or died in these camps, Fatima’s infant, who is “made superfluous just by virtue of being born”, and whose mother “seems so willing to abandon” becomes one of the victims of wars and conflicts. (p: 159) As soon as this infant is born, she has been moved from one unsafe haven to another. The only hope this infant now has is with her new family since she is adopted by Brigitte.

In “Happy Objects”, Ahmed proposes that people should stop being afraid of breaking bonds of social goods and of being stigmatized as being odd. If we think of the ways we experience things in our world, we will see things other than what appears on the surfaces of these objects (34-5). Reading Ahmed’s theory of “Happy Objects” makes us see that Fatima not only is a heartless mother, but also a victim. It is implied in the novel that Fatima has lost her trust in men; she also insists on leaving Lebanon as soon as possible, the thing that makes readers certain that Fatima may have suffered from sexual violence in the refugee camps in Lebanon. Fatima can also be seen as a victim to her patriarchal society, where people use “happiness” to justify the norms of their society, where a woman fears to expose the power of her society or cause unhappiness to others or “kill other people’s joy” by breaking the rules of marriage as a “happy” concept (Ahmed, 2010 b, p: 38). Returning once again to Ahmed’s theory of “Happy Objects,” she proposes that the family is an institution that is judged by people as being a “happy object,” and that this happiness is a reward to a spouse’s loyalties. Fatima believes that she will find this if she marries again. Marriage works as an affective force that drives Fatima to be with the norms of this institution.

Finally, one might say that there *is* hope in Fatima’s story as she has been one of the Syrian war survivors. Readers might also say that there will be hope for a good life for Fatima’s baby girl after she is adopted by Brigitte as she will be saved “from a certain fate” (p: 160). At least and hopefully, the baby is still alive, at least, Fatima “didn’t try to get rid of it (the infant) and dump it somewhere” (p: 241). We can say that there is a kind of feasible hope towards humanity in Fatima’s story. This is suggested in the compassionate way many characters help Fatima to be reunited with her parents who stay in the refugee camps in Turkey, and where Fatima will be far from the man who might be abusing her in the refugee camps in Lebanon.

Love as a “Happy” Object.

Just as civil uprisings, patriotism, and marriage create certain affective realities in the novel, the concept of love portrays the same kind of effect. In the novel, the depiction of love centers on the love story between Peter and Hannah. While studying medicine in America, Peter, goes on a visit to Beirut where he meets Hannah, a Lebanese journalist and falls in love with her. Even though there is a job waiting for him “at a prestigious teaching hospital on the East Coast where he would specialize in pediatrics,” Peter realizes that he has fallen in love with Hannah and decides to stay with her in Lebanon (p: 43). Consequently, he leaves America and goes to Beirut and with Hannah they travel to Cyprus in order to get a civil marriage as civil marriages are illegal in Lebanon. Before getting married, Hannah tells Peter that “in Lebanon women do not have the right to pass on citizenship to their spouses,” which means that Peter would not be able to practice medicine in Lebanon (p: 68). Nevertheless, because Peter loves Hannah so much, he decides to be with her in Lebanon and “to find a job as a consultant in an international organization that focused on matters of health” (p: 68). So, for Peter, love is a “happy object”; it is the value of love that drives Peter as to stay in Lebanon. The affect of love works as a force that drives Peter to sacrifice everything in his life; to leave his family; his homeland and a very prestigious job behind in order to be with Hannah, the woman he loves the most.

Years later, and as Lebanon is suffering from the destructive consequences of conflicts in the Middle East, of its

civil war and of war in Syria, life becomes so difficult for people who live there. In Beirut, Syrian, Palestinian and Iraqi refugees, displaced people, migrants and Lebanese civilians are suffering due to bad circumstances. They suffer from repercussions of the Israeli occupation of Palestine, of civil wars in Iraq and Lebanon, of war against Syria, of the Gulf War and of civil uprisings. As a Lebanese novelist whose life is also shaped by these conflicts, Jarrar represents an accurate and realistic portrayal of the conflicts and their impact on the Lebanese people. As a migrant who is living in Lebanon, Peter has also suffered from these conflicts; he says: “It’s forty years since Lebanon’s civil war began, over twenty since it ended, and this country is worse off now than it ever was” (p: 109). Due to these conflicts, Peter starts feeling frustrated with the bad situation in Lebanon and with his inability to practice medicine. There are days when Peter feels lost, he says sometimes that “my true self appears to me only in bits and pieces, like flashbacks in a film, incoherent but sharp-edged, revealing as much as they manage to hide from me” (p: 9). Nevertheless, Peter insists on staying in Lebanon with his wife, he believes that happiness is with the woman he loves. When Brigitte takes her children and leaves Syria after the car bombing that happens near their home, Peter sympathizes with her so much, he has been able to understand her decision easily. First, he knows well what it means to live in an unsafe haven. More importantly, for Peter “People are what’s important... not places” (p: 129). So, Unlike Anas’ attachment to Syria and his belief that what matters the most is one’s homeland, Peter’s attachment is towards love and the woman he loves. Though Peter is “stuck in an administrative job he doesn’t enjoy”, the affective value of love is so strong, thus, he prefers to be in Lebanon for the sake of love. (p: 25)

After his marriage to Hannah, Peter realizes that “while his love for his wife grew steadily, he was less able to articulate it, as though its increasing depth made it more mysterious and inaccessible to him,” (p: 43). On the other hand, Hannah reminds Peter that she has told him about the difficulties he is going to face in Lebanon and that he has insisted on staying with her. She knows that “[l]iving in Beirut can be deceptive; it offers a false impression of safety and permanence in the midst of all the upheaval” (p: 5). Nevertheless, Hannah believes that the situation in Lebanon is going to be better and that she will not leave her roots again and move to another city even with the man she loves the most. The affective values of patriotism that one should show pride and loyalty towards his/her homeland and that they should sacrifice many things for it shape many characters’ decisions in the novel. These affects are circulated from one generation to another; they direct Hannah’s decision as she admits to herself that she is unable to leave Beirut and to go with her husband to America. Unlike Peter, Hannah knows that she is unwilling to make sacrifices for love. It is the negative affect of one’s patriotism that leads to Hannah’s selfishness. As she feels that her husband is not happy in his work, Hannah “begins to ask herself if she would have been prepared to do the same for Peter, leave family and home behind just to be with him, then recalls the many times he has insisted that his wish was only that they be together, wherever that might be” (p: 280).

Despite all the obstacles her husband is facing in Lebanon as an immigrant, despite civilians and refugees’ suffering and despite all the repercussions of conflicts on the people’s life, Hannah “looks at her Beirut once again, at night and oblivion advancing and feels, inexplicably, a quiet gratitude” (p: 280). Hannah feels some guilt that she cannot do to Peter what he has done for her. Nevertheless, she always thinks about Beirut and seeks to find details in the stories her father narrates about Lebanon. The difficult experiences all the characters are going through and the conflicts they find in their homelands and host countries are so complicated. So, they attach themselves towards many concepts that increase their “hope” for living a happy and good life in the future.

Conclusion.

In conclusion, in Jarrar’s novel readers can find subtle examples of real hope; real hope is an affect that is active and fruitful. Real hope is also the kind of hope that ensures that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. This hope is contagious; it has a strong impact on the characters and the readers and encourages them to empathize with people in plight. For instance, real hope appears clearly when Lebanese, American, Iraqi, Syrian and German characters take initiative to help the Syrian refugee Fatima and her children. Their deeds symbolize real hope for others and is a reminder of the moral responsibility we all have towards refugees, migrants, displaced people, and towards humanity. Unfortunately, this hope is not all encompassing in the novel. However, the novel also depicts an unfortunate subtlety of hope which is that it can fail the hopeful miserably. This paper argues that the motif of hope in the novel is not always promising or fruitful, rather it is

cruel and brutal in its Sisyphean optimism. This paper, therefore, argues that hope emblemized in ideals like patriotism, marriage, and love are seen as true disappointments to the characters. Ideals such as love and marriage turn out to be what Ahmad refers to “happy objects” and what Berlant coins as “cruel optimism.” Affects such as hope parade under the image of a better future only to spiral into a cruel never ending Sisyphean expectation. Finally, *An Unsafe Haven* demonstrates the different ways that affect and affective feeling can alter and motivate the characters to take action, yet that initiate is not always successful.

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