

**Voyage in Christy Lefteri's *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* and Leila Abouleila's *Bird Summons***

الترحال في رواية مربي النحل في حلب لكريستي ليفتيري ورواية  
استدعاء الطيور لليلى أبو العلا

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**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Master's Degree in English Language and Literature**

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May, 2023**

## Authorization

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## **Acknowledgment**

In the Name of Allah the Merciful, the Compassionate, Allah hears the one who praises Him, all thanks to the almighty Lord. This academic voyage would have never been the same without many, who helped me path my way. Dr. Nasaybah Walid Awajan, my supervisor, who guided me to her important publications, and for the stimulating questions, a dedicated role model in academia, and a minaret of light. Also, my parents and siblings, who never hesitated to offer me the world. The stranger, who made me admire what I produced, romanticizing the beautiful full moon. To Mrs. Sara Hamzeh, my English teacher in 9<sup>th</sup> grade. I owe you my compassion towards all humanity subjects, not only English Literature.

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this thesis to all the voiceless people in the world, who were never lucky or privileged to narrate their own story. To Wisam, Rotana, and Shaden, who supported me through thick and thin.

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**Abstract**

The current study explores the spiritual and physical voyages represented in *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*, by Christy Lefteri and *Bird Summons* by Leila Abouleila, and examines the effect of the spiritual and physical voyages on the characters in the mentioned novels. The study also aims to compare and contrast between the spiritual and physical voyages represented in both novels. The novels, *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* and *Bird Summons* are analyzed through the lens of postcolonialism, and especially by applying the views of Edward Said. The contribution of the current study lies in the fact that limited studies have been conducted on both novels, especially *Bird Summons* since it is considered a new literary work. Moreover, previous studies tackle each literary work independently, whereas the current research tackles both novels together.

**Keywords:** Postcolonialism, Bird Summons, Abouleila, The Beekeeper of Aleppo, Lefteri.



## الترحال في رواية كريستي ليفتيري مربي النحل في حلب ورواية استدعاء الطيور لليلى أبو العلا

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### الملخص

تبحث الدراسة الترحال الروحي والجسدي في كل من الروايتين مربي النحل في حلب، للكاتبة كريستي ليفتيري واستدعاء الطيور، للكاتبة ليلى أبو العلا، وتدرس تأثير الترحال الروحي والجسدي على الشخصيات في الروايات المذكورة. كما تهدف الدراسة إلى المقارنة والتباين بين الرحلات الروحية والجسدية المتمثلة في كلتا الروايتين. حيث يتم تحليل الروايتين من خلال عدسة ما بعد الاستعمار، وخاصة من خلال تطبيق آراء إدوارد سعيد. تكمن مساهمة وأهمية الدراسة الحالية لكون الروايتان تم إجراء دراسات محدودة على كلتاها، خاصة أعمالاً أدبيةً جديدة. علاوة على ذلك، وفي السابق، كانت الدراسات تتناول كل عمل أدبي بشكل مستقل، بينما تناول البحث الحالي الروايتين معاً.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ما بعد الاستعمار، استدعاء الطيور، أبو العلا، مربي النحل في حلب، ليفتيري

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Immigrants from Middle Eastern backgrounds in England find it hard to blend in the community because of many reasons; it might be because of cultural differences, language barriers, discrimination and prejudice, or homesickness (Shankley et al., 2020). Tyson (2006) adds that “[t]he fundamental cause for forced individuals’ migration along periods is the military invasions. These invasions which break citizens and their ultimate assets, derive them into scattering objects. They are psychologically refugees not only physically displaced” (p. 421).

It is also worth mentioning that not everyone from the Middle East is an Arab nor is a Muslim, but that is the typical stereotype for immigrants from this region. The 9/11 attacks had a significant impact on the way Arabs and Muslims were perceived and stereotyped in the United States and many other parts of the world. Arabs and Muslims were often portrayed as terrorists or potential terrorists, and were subjected to increased surveillance and discrimination (Salaita 2005).

One of the most prominent stereotypes that emerged after 9/11 was the idea that all Arabs and Muslims were terrorists or supporters of terrorism. This stereotype was perpetuated by media coverage that

focused on the Arab and Muslim communities in a negative way, as well as by government policies such as the Patriot Act, which allowed for increased surveillance and detention of Arab and Muslim individuals (Smock et al., 2009). Another stereotype that emerged after 9/11 was the idea that Arabs and Muslims were fundamentally different from other Americans and Westerners, and that they could not be trusted or assimilated into West societies. This stereotype was often perpetuated by politicians (Salaita 2005).

This incident only helped the spread of misrepresentations among the West. This inaccurate portrayal of Arabs, especially in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, inspired many Arab writers, especially in the West, to respond and refute those terrible conventional stereotypical images by writing back against these stereotypes.

According to Homi Bhabha (1984), stereotypes are not fixed, static representations of a group of people, but rather they are dynamic and constantly changing. He argues that stereotypes are produced through a process of cultural hybridity, where different cultural influences and meanings come into contact and clash with each other. Bhabha also suggests that stereotypes are not simply false or inaccurate representations of a group of people, but they are actually more insidious than that. Stereotypes are created through a process of

“Othering,” where one group of people is seen as fundamentally different from another. This process of “othering” can create a sense of distance and separation between different groups of people, and can reinforce power imbalances and inequalities.

Said (1978) defines stereotyping as the act of imposing and projecting a false perception of a group of individuals. He adds that the “Orient” which is a term used to refer to the East, is a term historically used by explorers and expanders who travel back and forth from the Middle East to the West, to describe and nourish the stereotypical image of what the West is eager to hear. This stereotypical, historical narrative is filled with imaginative and exotic elements.

Said (1978) argues that the binary that the West created of the “Self”, and the “Other” as the orient or the East demonstrates how, and why the West has been treating the East with hegemony and agency. Antonio Gramsci (1971) believes that power in society is not only derived from economic or military means, but also from cultural and ideological factors. In other words, those who control the ideas and values of a society are also able to control the actions and behaviors of the people within it.

Gramsci (1971) argues that ruling classes maintain their power through cultural hegemony, which involves the dissemination of

dominant cultural values and ideas through education, media, religion, and other cultural institutions. These dominant ideas create a shared sense of reality among the population, which in turn makes it easier for the ruling class to maintain their power and control over society.

However, Gramsci (1971) believes that cultural hegemony is not an unbreakable form of domination. He argues that counter-hegemonic forces, such as social movements and alternative cultural institutions, could challenge and eventually overthrow the dominant culture, leading to a revolution in which a new ruling class takes over.

According to Said, the orient and the oriental have been constructed by the West because of the power of knowledge the West holds of the East; Michel Foucault (1972) explores the relationship between knowledge, power, and social control, and he argues that knowledge is not neutral or objective, but rather is shaped by the social and historical context in which it is produced and used. Foucault (1972) argues that power is not just exercised by those in positions of authority, but is also present in the everyday practices and discourses of society. Power operates through the creation and dissemination of knowledge, and certain forms of knowledge are used to control and regulate individuals and groups. For example, medical knowledge is used to define and

regulate normal and abnormal behavior, while criminal justice knowledge is used to identify and punish deviant behavior.

Foucault (1972) also highlights the ways in which knowledge can be used to resist power and challenge dominant social structures. By exposing the ways in which knowledge is produced and used to maintain power, individuals and groups can challenge these dominant forms of knowledge and create new forms of knowledge that are more liberating and empowering. Overall, Foucault's work on the relationship between knowledge and power emphasizes the importance of critical thinking and questioning dominant forms of knowledge in order to challenge power and promote social change (1972).

Arab immigrants in the West face a crisis choosing which side when representing their culture. Bhabha (1998) refers to breeding of two people from two different cultures, which are called "hybrid" (p. 145). According to Bhabha (1994), hybridity refers to the cultural mixing that occurs when two or more cultures come into contact with each other. This process of cultural mixing results in the creation of something new that cannot be defined by either of the original cultures. Hybridity challenges the idea of fixed, essentialist cultural identities and suggests that identities are constantly evolving and changing.

Bhabha (1994) also argues that hybridity can be seen as a subversive force that disrupts existing power structures. By creating new cultural forms and identities, hybridity challenges dominant cultural norms and values, and opens up new possibilities for resistance and change. At the same time, however, Bhabha (1994) recognizes that hybridity can also be used as a tool of oppression, as dominant cultures may appropriate and commodify cultural elements from other cultures in order to maintain their power and control.

Arab immigrants are considered a hybrid. They stand on the fictional borders of cultures before reaching the real borders of countries. Usually, these Arab immigrants stand on the verge of choosing of either to assimilate to the new culture (Western culture), and blend in or to stand boldly and create and establish their own closed society where they carry their traditions and norms. They try to make a balance between these two cultures, which is called by Bhabha as “the third space” (Bhabha 1994, p. 211). This area is complex because it is marked by ambivalence and a constant struggle to balance notion of inclusion and exclusion (Fernandez 2009)

The concept of ‘hybridity’ has been widely associated with his pioneering work the *Location of Culture* (1994), which has indeed had a profound impact on the evolution of hybridity theory, but has also

become as a reference of its wide usage in a multitude of disciplines. Bhabha's argument, in fact, has a key role in the discussion of hybridity, and he is the first scholar who has developed this concept in the field of cultural studies. In this regard, Said (1978) affirms that, Bhabha (1994) is that rare thing, a reader of enormous subtlety and wit, a theorist of uncommon power [and] his work *The Location of Culture* is a landmark in the exchange between ages, genres and cultures; the colonial, postcolonial, modernist and postmodern.

For Bhabha (1994), 'the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges; rather hybridity to him is the, "'Third Space', which enables other positions to emerge" (Rutherford 1999, p. 172). Thus, Bhabha (1994) transfers the notion of hybridity from the biological and racist spheres to the spatial. Bhabha's hybridity is one that proposes to shift the location of culture and identity to the liminal space which is outside the dualities of center and margin; of Europe and the Third World. It represents the will to move from the fixed to the fluid, to the space of the 'in-between', for, 'an important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of fixity in the ideological construction of otherness. "It connotes rigidity and an unchanging order," maintains Bhabha (1994).



However, since it is born of the attempt to undermine predetermined colonial identities and categorizations, Bhabha (1994) insists that the productive capacities of this 'third space' have a colonial or post-colonial provenance. It is now obvious that being as one of the most influential figures in the field of cultural studies and post-colonialism along with others, such as Said (1978), and Fanon (1986), Bhabha (1994) mainly refutes the fixity and unchanging nature of the concept of identity held by essentialists and Eurocentric ideology and, therefore, he suggests hybridity as a strategic tool and an alternative position that allows multiculturalism and trans-nationalism in cultural dialogues.

Commonly, Arab immigrants seek peace, dignity, and a future because this is usually the reason behind leaving the comfort of their homelands. Bhabha (1990) comments in his book, *Nation and Narration*, that "nations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind's eye" (p. 45).

Immigration constructed a new reality and new identity for the characters. And immigration is argued to cause trauma (Perreira *et al.* 2013, p 977). Trauma plays a huge role narrating their stories. This means that people who face the hardships of immigration that led them to take the dangerous road must have suffered enough in their countries

and then suffered even more on the journey, which basically means that trauma plays a big role in the narration of their stories.

Leaving 'home', for these Arab immigrants, in which all home holds in meaning may cause abrupt psychological influence, and is directly linked to trauma. Housing and mental health are often linked by researchers. This can be traced and seen in the novels *Bird Summons*, and *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*, with the development of the characters. Poor mental health can make it harder to cope with daily live problems. And being homeless or having problems, where you live can make your mental health worse. Leila Aboulela, who is a Sudanese- British writer, has immigrated to Britain as a child. In her novel, *Bird Summons*, the three main characters leave their own homes, in the Middle East and settle in the UK, for various reasons. This took a toll on the way the characters perceived and faced their problems. Most of the characters are flawed and they do not perceive their flaws until pointed out by others. Also, each one of them has a different coping mechanism to the new culture. The displacement from home led to the characters adopting their own coping mechanism. Iman, who was a child bride just to immigrate and flee the war in Syria. She has not matured and relies on everyone to fend for her. Moni, who devoted her life for her disabled

son, puts her marriage on the shelf and decides to move to stay in the UK to flee the taboo Arabs have for disabled children. Salma, an Egyptian married to a Scottish, tries so hard to find common space and ground between the two cultures so she can give herself value.

In *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* by Christy Lefteri, the protagonist, Nuri, and his wife suffer mental and physical disability caused by displacement in the first degree. Although as a reader one can argue that these hardships that the characters face are not just the result of being homeless, traded by smugglers as commodity, feeling diminished at the borders, but rather an accumulation of witnessing and living the war in Syria while trying to cope with the new European culture after moving overseas.

Nearly all the philosophers and theorists like Said, Albert Memmi, Bhabha, and others agree that acquiring a new culture is a dynamic process but at the same time it derives the migrant into a confused and distressed person. Leaving and establishing a life from scratch is never an easy step, and holding onto past memories of distress and war does not make settling easier.

*The Beekeeper of Aleppo* (2019) by Christy Lefteri investigates the theme of identity, contradiction, nationality, migration, racism, diaspora, and their consequences on human, socially and physically.

The novel deals with people, who are wavering between national and international identity due to 21<sup>st</sup> century abrupted wars. Such category of literary work is known as “diasporic literature” or “migration literature” (Cuddon, 2013, p. 201). The writer presents a split and a hybrid character where they are standing between their identity, before immigration, and the new one after immigration and settling, while also tackling the physical and psychological effects of migration.

Throughout the novel, almost each and every character that is introduced has lived a firsthand migration experience. Starting from the beekeeper, Nuri and his wife, Afra, and the minor characters that they meet throughout the journey. Even the social workers that are in the story have collected more than enough stories of the suffering of the long and dangerous journey.

Displacement or immigration is a vital concept in the field of post-colonial and post-modern literature. It denotes to the conditions of exclusion from authentic region. It can be “voluntary or involuntary”. Almost, it is a reflection of colonialism, subsequent, its forms come to be as following: “migration, desertion, exile, diaspora, exodus, eviction, banishment, travel..., imprisonment, and escape” (Blistein 2016, p. 1). Although displacement mostly connects with the last few centuries, “it has deep-rooted history with various layers of complex

relation among power, position and human psyche” (Tyson 2006, p. 398).

Territorial or physical displacement obliges people to depart their home toward a foreign one, when the motherland turns to be a mere place for death, horror, and oppression, then, displacement is turned to be the turning point to save life, dignity, and honor. Moreover, Social displacement is defined as social isolation, the less communication and interaction with social groups, “marginalized by the dominant... culture” and a “victim of ‘placelessness’ in one guise or another” (Waugh 1989, p. 1; Casey 1993, p. XIV). Social isolation will float on the surface of one’s identity and then on one’s psyche which leads to more imbedded psychological problems, if not addressed correctly (Hall 2021).

War brings severe wounds to the inhabitants of the zone where it takes place, physically and psychologically. Fanon (1986) impels the postcolonial critics to inspect the psychological effects of colonialism on both the colonizer and the colonized. Hence, trauma is one of wars’ lacerations.

The trauma as a consequence of wars is initially debated in the influential work of Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) (Ashcroft *et al.* 2013, p. 98). Fanon (1986) offers the “massive psych existential

complex” as a result of colonialism. Since that time, trauma enters the postcolonial discourse and becomes one of the major themes in postcolonial literature.

As a psychological term, trauma is a “psychic” illness, distress, or rupture. It comes to be as a result of “emotional shock” like the loss of son, wife, husband, brother, friend, ... etc (at el. 2013, p. 78). It is “a wound to the person’s self-concept and stability, a sudden loss of control over external and internal reality, with consequences that affect the whole organism. Trauma may be acute or cumulative” (Fromm 2012, p. 55-56).

Lefteri (1980), the daughter of Greek Cypriot refugees who left their nation in 1974, after the Turkish invasion to initiate a new reconstruction for their lives (Lefteri 4). They have been traumatized by the virtue of war, “I lived in the shadow of that war and the shadow of that trauma”, Lefteri says (Evangelista & Piccolo 2020, p. page number?). Moreover, these conditions were enthused her to be a writer of diasporic issues. Lefteri and her parents acted as a testimony of trauma for the history of displaced people (Nunziata 2020, p. 10).

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The current study explores the spiritual and physical voyages represented in *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* and *Bird Summons*, and examines the effect of the spiritual and physical voyages on the characters in the mentioned novels. The study also aims to Compare and Contrast between the spiritual and physical voyages represented in both novels. Both novels can serve as an extension to demonstrate the hardships of immigrating and blending in the Western societies.

## **1.3 The Significance of the Study**

Up to the researcher's knowledge, there are a few number of studies and reviews conducted on Aboulela's novel *Bird Summons* since it is a very recent novel, such as the study of Arkhagha & Amrieh (2021), and the reviews of Viswanathan (2020) and DeZelar-Tiedman (2020). The current study is tackling the novel with another work, Lefteri's *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*. There have been lots of studies conducted on Lefteri's *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*, but not on how she represents the immigrants crisis of rebuilding their home in the West while governing their identity.

### 1.3 Questions of the Study

The current study aims to answer the following questions:

1- How are the spiritual and physical voyages represented in *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*, by Christy Lefteri and *Bird Summons*, by Leila Abouleila?

2- How are the characters in both novels affected by the spiritual and physical voyages?

3- What are the differences and similarities between the spiritual and physical voyages represented in *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* and *Bird Summons*?

### 1.4 Objectives of the Study

This study aims to:

1. Explore the spiritual and physical voyages represented in *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*, by Christy Lefteri and *Bird Summons*, by Leila Abouleila.

2. Study the effect of the spiritual and physical voyages on the characters in *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*, by Christy Lefteri and *Bird Summons*, by Leila Abouleila.



3- Compare and Contrast between the spiritual and physical voyages represented in *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*, by Christy Lefteri and *Bird Summons*, by Leila Abouleila.

### **1.6. Limitations of the Study**

The conclusions of the current study are limited to the time it has been written. The study and what it concludes with are also limited to both authors and their current works, Leila Abouleila, and her novel, *Bird Summons* and Lefteri, and her novel, *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*. The study and what it concludes with cannot be generalized to other author's literary works.

## **CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW of RELATED LITERATURE**

This chapter provides an overview of the previous related literature and studies on the two novels in relation to the questions of the study, after a thorough and in-depth search done by the researcher. It focuses on the literature review that tackles the Arab struggle in the West in Leila Aboulela's *Bird Summons*, and Lefteri's *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*. In addition to that, it also aims to present previous studies that are related to the study.

### **2.2 Leila Aboulela's Representation of The Struggle of Arab immigrants in the West**

This part focuses on representing to the studies that tackle Aboulela's writings and how she represents Arab immigrants struggle in the West. As a start, García (2019) conducted a study tackling the stereotypes and the idea of seeking fulfillment in the host land in Aboulela's *Elsewhere, Home*. She states that some readers, including many Muslim immigrant women can relate to Aboulela's writings and learn from these immigrants' experiences. She continues by stating that Aboulela adds numerous teachings and experiences in her works that make some women feel connected and understood because they share the same experiences with the characters in her novels. In addition to

that, Aboulela gathers stories and experiences of different Arab women with different issues and backgrounds.

According to García (2019), some of Aboulela's characters tend to set comparisons between their homelands and the host country. They show a sense of solitude and nostalgia towards their homeland and all that they have left behind. On the other hand, other characters show attachment to the Western community and lifestyle. García (2019) believes that in her work, Aboulela gives her women characters a room for development, and a chance to prove their validity in society. Furthermore, she also introduces a lot of teachings and guidance to share with the audience.

Al-Asmakh (2009) states, in an analysis of Leila Aboulela's novels, *The Translator* and *Minaret*, that the main character in both novels is a Sudanese woman trying to survive in a foreign country. She argues that by choosing a female Sudanese character, Aboulela is drawing upon her own experience, while living in London at the age of 17. Al-Asmakh (2009) also states that most of Aboulela's work revolve around some characters, aiming to discuss feminism and issues that females face in the West. Furthermore, she asserts that in most of her works, the female character starts by being unable to find her real identity and ends up

with her empowerment. According to Al-Asmakh (2009), Aboulela portrays a positive image of multiculturalism in her works by mentioning the existence of mosques and Halal stores in Britain.

### **2.3 Christy Lefteri's *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* and the Representation of The Struggle of immigrants in the West from the perspective of a British Writer**

This section presents the studies that discuss how the British writer, Christy Lefteri, generally represents Arabs and Arab immigrants in her literary work. Christy Lefteri's writing as a British writer, who represents and gives voice to the immigrants pique the interest of critics. The interest is in how she represents the Arab culture and their struggle in the West, either by enhancing or negating the stereotypical images known about Arabs.

Obadasi (2021) explores the traumatic memories of the characters, who are trapped between the present and the past, because of their immigration, who begin to lose sense of time and space. Since the traumatic memories of the characters haunt their life, they sometimes silence their memory by suppressing the events, sometimes involuntarily recall the memories which they want to forget as dreams, flashbacks or hallucinations. The traumatic memories of the characters

are sometimes triggered by a stimulus, which can remind them of the overwhelming events they have been through.

Tegla (2021) discusses the implications and contribution of Lefteri's novel to shed light on the ongoing struggle of displacement. states that anyone looking for information regarding the ongoing conflict in Syria will not find it in this book. Instead, Lefteri wants to give the reader a peek of the current situation in the region and the horrible hardships that those who are conflict victims must endure. This is to give a name and a voice to those who are lost in the news lines and only referred to as numbers. For governments and news outlets, individuals are either a number of refugees coming from the Middle East or number of casualties lost in the war or on route. But Lefteri wants the British reader to see and feel what these people go through. How they are as human as the European reader.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

### 3.1. Method

The researcher approaches the two novels Christy Lefteri's *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* and Leila Abouleila's *Bird Summons* from the lense of postcolonialism. The researcher relies on Edward Said's views on Orientalism and, in particular, how he explains stereotypical portrayals of the Orient/East and its implications on today's Arab refugees in Europe.

Postcolonial theory is a literary theory or critical approach that discusses literature created in nations that were formerly or are currently colonies of other countries or empires. It may also cover literature that was created in or by nationals of colonizing countries, such as explorers, traveler, or adventurers, that uses those nations' colonies or their citizens as their subject in their literature. Concepts of 'Otherness' and resistance serve as the theoretical foundations of their literature (Burney 2012).

Postcolonial idea emerged amidst the US and UK academies after World War II, as a part of a bigger wave of recent and politicized fields of humanistic inquiry, both of feminism and race theory supplemented each other. And many credited Edward Said's book *Orientalism* (1970)

for having the foundation for this field (Scott 2008, p. 1). It describes the various disciplines, societies, methods of analysis and techniques of thought by which Europeans were introduced to the 'Orient'.

The mystifying of misrepresentation of the East happens when the West is unwilling to see the Oriental as an individual. Thus the writer tries to please the Westerner reader by feeding the stereotypical image of the East. Enhancing the mystical and exotic elements of this part of the world. The parallels between Orientals, blacks and women are remarkably evident. Said observes. The parallel is in the languages used to describe them. The over sexualization of the Orient only feeds the stereotypical image the West has portrayed already in their minds.

Oueijan (2006) describes the hypersexuality of the Orient "[I]mages of Eastern females as fairies of sensuality and seduction spiced the literary and artistic works of those nineteenth-century literary figures and artists who visited the East and who contributed to the sexualization of the Orient. While to some Western travelers the Orient was the land of light and ancient civilizations and cultures, to others it was an exotic Other and the terrain of sexual fantasies and desires" (p. 1).

The East appears in Western literature and imagination as the forbidden and lustful Other, which is instantaneously revolting,

seductive and appealing. Like the veil, the East is both segregated yet inviting for the curious minds. Since the eighteenth century, the Orient has existed within the literary genre of travel narrative as both romantic and fantastic.

Romantics interest of the bodies, specifically female Oriental bodies, is evident in artworks of that era such as Wordsworth's painting "The Egyptian Maid" and more present in Byron's Don Juan and the Oriental tales. (p. 17) In this sense Oueijan argues that the West can depicted as a masculine power that dominates the powerless and voiceless East. Thus the East is being feminized and dominated by the West using hegemony and constructing imaginative reality through narrative.

The passivity and submission of the Orient dehumanizes the Orient as an individual and as a nation all together; to satisfy the West's fetish for such stereotype. From here Edward Said urges the East to write back and narrate the truth and reality "literature is what has mattered most to Arab culture" (p. 45). The basis of Said's argument dwells between the linking of knowledge and power. The correct representation of Arabs, means giving a voice to Arab writers whether they reside in the Middle East or the West.



### 3.2 Summary of Leila Aboulela's *Bird Summons*

Leila Aboulela's fifth novel *Bird Summons* (2019) tackles the voyage of three women are gathered for a trip that the rest of their group bailed on. For the Arabic Speaking Muslim Women group, they decided to take a trip to honor lady Evelyn, the first British to perform Hajj. Iman, the prettiest of them all. She is in her thirties but through her third marriage so far. She is Kurdish-Syrian. Left Syria after marrying her second husband who immigrated to flee the Syrian civil war. We don't know much about him other than he divorced her out of courtesy because he ended up in prison after fighting with another Syrian fellow. And her first husband was killed after only one year of marriage in the Syrian war, she was widowed by the age of 16. Her third husband, Ibrahim, is described in the beginning as a kindred spirit person. He is young, a student, and was prescribed marriage by the Imam because he kept feeling homesick. Ibrahim is not as described as Iman, although she narrates her days with him as if he was a very loving, caring husband because he provided her with all of the essentials, but in reality, she grew up in a poverty. Her friends envied her because of her youth and beauty. Although she never had proper education, and she can't carry a conversation but her educated friends enjoy her company because of her silly talk. She is not the kind of person that can be trusted with secrets,

not because she has devilish intentions, but simply because she is not mature nor understand the sequences of her actions and words. In more than one occasion Iman acted childish and her friends keep taking her as a child, she knew that she did not know and that is her biggest trait after being beautiful. She is financially dependent on her husbands and does not give it a single thought to reach out to her friends' pockets without their permission. She simply can't go back home.

Moni, her real name is Manahel, is married to Murtada. Her relationship with Murtada took a curve after she gave birth to a disabled child. After giving birth to Adam, she devoted herself to motherhood, not giving it a single thought, she ditched her other roles. Including being a wife. Although she recites Quraan regularly, she does not obey her husband when he requested her to join him in KSA where he resides. She is financially secure because of her wealthy family. She is out of shape physically. She judges her friends harshly for their mistakes and sins; not giving her disobedience to her husband an eye. She doesn't like that Iman is treated as a child and feels envious to how she gets through life.

Salma, Egyptian married to David. David a Scottish man who converted to Islam when he was living in Egypt. Although Salma got it

all, she has 4 children, a loving and devoted husband but she finds herself caught up in a love triangle with her Ex, Amir. Amir and Salma went to medical school together, but Amir is a practicing doctor, but Salma is a massage therapist. Salma couldn't pass her placement exams when she relocated to Britain. She took them two times and failed both times. David never judged her for that but on the contrary, he was supportive. Salma is a sports freak. She is a bit self-conscious for being an outsider and that she is not British enough to fit in. She justifies in one of her conversations with the girls that she is feeling that her children are ashamed of her and that them being from two different backgrounds, are embracing only one culture. Salma is judged harshly when Iman slips her lips and tells Moni about Amir and her phone calls.

Aboulela's *Bird Summons* revolves around three Muslim immigrant women in Britain, each coming from a different Arab home country. Salma, Moni and Iman embark on a road trip to the Scottish Highlands to visit Lady Evelyn Cobbold's grave (Aboulela 1).

### **3.3 Summary of Christy Lefteri's *The Beekeeper of Aleppo***

Christy Lefteri's *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* is a novel that follows the story of a Syrian couple, Nuri and Afra, as they flee from war-torn Aleppo to the relative safety of the United Kingdom. The novel is a

powerful exploration of the themes of loss, trauma, and hope, and it sheds light on the experiences of refugees and their struggles to find a new home in a foreign land.

The novel opens with Nuri, a beekeeper, and Afra, an artist, living in Aleppo amidst the chaos and destruction of the ongoing civil war. Nuri is haunted by memories of his son, Sami, who died in a bomb attack, and Afra is struggling with her own trauma after losing her sight in the same attack. When Nuri's beekeeping partner flees to the UK after revenging the death of his son, and his hives destroyed, he realizes that he and Afra must leave Aleppo if they are to have any chance of survival.

Nuri and Afra embark on a dangerous journey, crossing borders and facing threats at every turn. Along the way, they encounter a cast of different types of people, including other refugees, aid workers, and smugglers, each with their own stories of loss and survival. As they make their way towards the UK, Nuri and Afra must confront their own pain, trauma, and discover their new identity that is constructed by the voyage they took from Syria to the UK. They also learn to support each other through the difficult journey.

Throughout the novel, Lefteri explores the psychological toll and trauma of war and displacement on refugees, and the challenges they face in adapting to a new culture and way of life. Nuri and Afra struggle to reconcile their memories of Aleppo with their new surroundings in the UK, and they are haunted by the fear that they will never truly belong in this foreign land. Meanwhile, the trauma of their experiences continues to impact their daily lives, and they must learn to cope with their pain and find a way forward.

*The Beekeeper of Aleppo* sheds light on the experiences of refugees and the challenges they face in rebuilding their lives. Through Nuri and Afra's journey, Lefteri explores the themes of loss, trauma, and hope, and highlights the resilience and strength of the human spirit in the face of adversity. Christy Lefteri's experience working in refugee camps as a volunteer aid worker has greatly influenced her writing, particularly in her novel *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*. She illustrates on her firsthand experiences to portray the struggles, trauma, and resilience of refugees.

Lefteri's experience in refugee camps has given her a unique perspective on the experiences of refugees. She has witnessed firsthand the physical and emotional toll that displacement can take on individuals and families. In the novel, she portrays the trauma of Nuri

and Afra through vivid descriptions of their memories, nightmares, and flashbacks. She also highlights the challenges that refugees face in navigating a new country and culture, as they struggle to learn a new language, find work, and build a sense of community.

Lefteri is interested in the way that culture shapes our perceptions of the world, and how these perceptions can influence our interactions with others. In *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*, she explores the cultural differences between Nuri and Afra's homeland and the countries they travel through. She shows how these differences can be both a source of richness and connection, but also a barrier to understanding and communication.

## Chapter Four: ANALYSIS

### 4.1 - The Representation of the Spiritual and Physical Voyages in *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*, by Christy Lefteri and *Bird Summons*, by Leila Abouleila.

#### 4.1.1 –*The Beekeeper of Aleppo*, by Christy Lefteri

Each protagonist, Nuri and Afra, go through a journey that can be described as the metamorphosis, and the writer made it clear that the journeys changed their appearance (physically), through the journey they were focusing on surviving, so their physical image is not their biggest concern, “I sniffed at my armpits, surprised at how I’d become accustomed to the smell. ‘I smell like the streets,’ I said. ‘You smell like sewage,’ she said” (Lefteri 2019, p. 190). This quote is an example how when they are traveling, they are trying to cope and to survive. And this has a direct impact on their physical appearance. “When Afra came out of the bathroom she looked like a different woman” (Lefteri 2019, 2013). This quote is when they arrived finally at the UK, Nuri could not recognize Afra, and that’s because of the changes that has occurred to her appearance throughout the journey from Syria to the UK. Also, traits, character and personality (spiritually) have evolved with the voyage. To start with Nuri, He has become wiser, and more mature. In the beginning of the novel, when Lefteri started illustrating his character, we can depict that he was born privileged. He went to university even

though his father had a workshop for fabrics and curtains, and that in Aleppo is considered a fine trade, so growing up he was always told that he will take over his father's workmanship, but Nuri had other plans. When Nuri was introduced to beekeeping from his friend Mustafa, who is an agricultural professor at Damascus university, he knew that he did not want to stay in the gloomy shop of his father working all his youth, but rather wanted to work in the open fields, where he is a free person (Lefteri 2019).

But when the war hit Aleppo and things starts to heat up, Nuri, Sami and Afra start living off food scavenged from bins. It takes them a while until they decide to abandon their house and start to look for a 'home', where they will take a journey to the safety of Britain's shores. The long and hard journey takes a toll on both of them mentally. Afra has been quiet ever since she lost Sami and became blind, but her silence throughout the journeys from one place to another is probably not caused by sadness but rather worry. The lack of presence of her voice is problematic, however Afra found other ways to express her agitated state of mind in one of the refugee camps. When Nuri gifts her paper and colouring pencils, she draws a fragmented image. This is due to the fact that she was blind and did not know how to draw without eyesight. This may represent her state of mind. Some psychologists argue that



‘talking’ as a treatment may not always be effective in treating the traumatized, but rather healing can occur through a variety of non-linguistic behaviors, such as creating arts that can convey what they are feeling non-verbally (Balaev 2008). So when Afra starts to draw and create art, even when she is incapable of seeing her creation, this is considered a turning point to her character. Because during the days she spent in Aleppo as the Civil War was destroying her daily routine, she kept drawing, but this changed when her son dies. After the incident she could not comprehend or interact with others, and stopped drawing completely, so when they are in the camp and she starts drawing, it gives both of them a sense of reality and a glimpse of how their ordinary life used to be.

The journey changes the physical appearance of Afra and Nuri too. It took a toll on their hygiene because they live in open camps, streets, lifeboats and tents when they try to reach Britain. They smell like urine, sewage, and like the streets (Leftri 2019). In the beginning of the novel, Nuri describes himself as someone talkative or initiates, but through the journey, from Syria to the UK he talks to strangers. He tries to build connections with others, it may be because of common interests or because Afra does not communicate and barely mumbles words, so he needed to communicate and bond with others.

Also, Afra relies more on him outside of their house in Aleppo, she is incapable to take this journey on her own, so she depends on Nuri to feed, fend and dress her. This has led to more pressure on him and incentivizes his coping mechanism. Nuri can no longer differentiate between hallucinations and reality.

He kept imagining a child called Mohammed, that he describes as the same age as Sami. He describes him vividly that as a reader we did not reckon that he is the creation of his imagination. Mohammed's identity can be a reflection of how Nuri's brain needed comfort, or maybe that he not portrayed his son through his toys and clothes, but that he wished he was Mohammed, with no responsibility and that there are that take care of him. Thus it is his mind's coping mechanism when deal with trauma.

Traumatic experience may absurd individual's identity and is employed by writers as a metaphor to describe the degree of damage done to the individual's coherent sense of self and the change of consciousness caused by the experience (Balaev 2008). And that is probably the reason why after immigrating there are groups and bloc of communities trying to reconstruct the fragmented self caused by the trauma. It may be argued that traumatic experience is intergenerationally transmitted based on shared social characteristics,

and trauma can be a shared experience based on one's ethnic, racial or, gender background. When the couple arrives to Athena, they are taken to a camp special for children and women, this space was created to be a safe zone where a collective effort is encouraged to share their experience and that they have a sense of a community.

Since place acquires its significant relevance depending on individual perception and symbolic value, its centrality in trauma representations grounds the individual experience within a larger cultural context. Afra and Nuri when they were placed in the Breakfast and Bed when they arrived in England, as a temporary safe house, they found relief being among people who share the same purpose in the journey they all took to escape their homelands and get a fresh start in England. With each character they meet, they start to build an image of whether they are similar to them or not. This has resulted in the process of creating a self-discovery and self-representation which results from the gazing into the Other. Deducing the differences between the couple and other residents of the breakfast and Bed, they all shared the feeling of being instable, afraid, lost, and with no clear future.

#### **4.1.2 – The case of the protagonists in *Bird Summons*, by Leila Aboulela.**

In *Bird Summons* the whole journey holds a secular and spiritual meaning for all protagonists. To begin with, the whole novel is about the voyage to Lady Evelyn's grave to the Scottish Highlands. The three ladies decide to visit her grave as a way to show respect for a Muslim British woman and to build solidarity and a hybrid identity among Muslim immigrant women (Aboulela 2019)

The varying migrancy patterns, ages and social backgrounds of the three women imposes on each of them a burden to confront through this 'spiritual' journey. The idea of having a role model from an era before xenophobia and the hard journey they take to reach her grave is symbolic. It represents a sense of belonging for the three women, who are struggling with their own feelings of displacement and disconnection from their home country, culture or Family. Salma, feels out of place in Scotland, where she feels out casted with her Scottish husband and children. Moni, feels caught between her husband and her obligation to her disabled son, she also reconciles herself away from the role of the mother. Iman, a simple and childlike young woman, who never had the chance to explore her identity on the macro level, and on the micro level, she does not know what she likes and what to wear.

The grave becomes a physical and spiritual destination for the women, who see Lady Evelyn as a bridge between their different cultures and histories. Lady Evelyn's conversion to Islam and her embrace of Arabic culture, despite being from a privileged Scottish background, inspire the women to explore their own connections to Islam and to their own cultural identities.

Lady Evelyn's grave is also symbolic of the women's own mortality and their search for meaning and purpose in life. As they journey through the Scottish countryside, they confront their own fears and insecurities, and begin to question what it means to belong and to find a sense and purpose in life.

Aboulela might want to remind her readers that sometimes exploring one's own identity away from the norms of community pressure is crucial to developing one's self identity, and this can only be achieved via solitude and through voyage away from everyday life. The three protagonists are stuck in a forest away from civilizations. Although this puts more pressure on the communication between them, and this results in conflict and confrontation, that can be interpreted as judging to one another. "Moni said 'I'm not the one cheating on my

husband or taking off my hijab.’ ‘You’re an oppressor,’ said Iman” (Aboulela 2019, p.135)

Aboulela displays many scenes that illustrate how the three characters have experienced two voyages, the first one immigrating from the Middle East to England, and the second when they took this pilgrimage-like-trip Lady Evelyn’s grave. Although we do not know much about the first one, but there might be a direct impact of this journey on the character’s development. Iman fled the war and immigrated with her second husband for a better future, this made her feel alienated with her family back in Syria. Moni, traveled for a better health care for her son, although this means she and her husband would not be living in the same country, but she is willing to sacrifice her marriage for a better life for her son. And finally Salma, she left her physician license and country to start a family with her Scottish husband, this made her feel inferior to him, and thus she is always trying to find common ground between the Egyptian and Scottish cultures. “With the faces of the Scottish aristocracy gazing down at Salma” (Aboulela 2019, p. 170).

The second voyage, to Lady Evelyn’s grave, utilizes the personality and identity of the three protagonists and that is through understanding the Other. Aboulela uses the hoopoe bird that communicates with Iman

and narrates stories through her. Each character is flawed in a way and cannot see her defect because she would compare herself to the other's sinful acts.

Salma is described as strong, successful, and a goal-oriented person, but turning point in her life is when she takes the trip with her friends. Contacting her first love back 'home' through social media activates her nostalgia towards Egyptian culture in general, and her lost medical degree makes her more disturbed. Salma feels inferior in England around her Scottish husband and children. She feels alienated and distant from her family. "Salma had always been the strong one, the one whose life was sorted, the one who was envied, who knew what to do and what she wanted – but all that had been fragile" (Aboulela 2019, p. 189). In order to cope with this negative thought, she always looks for similarities between her Egyptian/Islamic culture and heritage, and her family's Scottish identity. She not only detaches from reality with jogging in the woods, she also starts to ponder her pleasures more than being religious, also, connecting to her ex in Egypt may give her the validation she never received.

Moni, on the surface, the reader would assume that she is a flat character, because the voyage does not have an evident clue that she has changed. Her Achilles' heel might be that she did not change, she is

judgmental, thinks her disabled child's needs should be a priority on top of her husband and even herself, but it is arguably her vulnerability comes from being solely selfless. She feels detached from her 'home' in Sudan, due to the fact that people there have shown cruelty to Adam and his disability, and also her family blamed her for his condition. Hence, she resists her husband's request to move back with him in Saudi Arabia, mainly because she knows that Murtada innately rejects Adam. Iman comes to think of marriage as 'sanctioned' prostitution (Aboulela 2019).

Thus, her first voyage to England was also to find herself away from the expectations implemented by the society. And her second voyage to Lady Evelyn's grave was in the beginning out of curtesy for her friend Salma. But turns out she needed the trip just as much as the other women.

As for Iman, a Syrian woman who escapes the civil war in her home country, and travels to Britain with her husband, her experience is a bit different because she is the only one of them who is depicted as naïve and simple. She is less likely to be able to fend for herself nor to be heard from others. Her voyage in the exposition of the story, she is described as someone who is reliant on others, first her family back in Syria, then her first husband, then the second and then the third, and



even when she wants to work and support herself, she was not determinate nor serious.

The first voyage from Syria to England probably had very minor impact on shaping her identity, although she escaped war. But the second voyage, to Evelyn's grave, had proved to change her mindset, and this reflected on her looks too. The three characters rent a hut in the middle of a forest away from society and the restrictions embedded by civilization with unwritten rules. Iman has experienced in her life a chain of traumatic events which leaves her mentally suffering. She was wedded off as a child, and experienced civil war in Syria.

At the age of fifteen, Iman gets married to a man who was shortly killed by the government. However, in order to escape the war and start a family, she marries another Syrian man and travels to Britain with him, only to end up divorced and homeless in England. She never had a family where she can return to.

Her Kurdish-Syrian family could not afford to feed another mouth. Whenever she called to rant about her harsh conditions her family would reply with a cold response to keep her in England and never go back. This experience would bring Iman more agitation and triggers the emotion of elimination and isolation.

## **4.2 – The Effect of the Spiritual and Physical Voyages on the Characters in Both Novels.**

### **4.2.1 – The Case in *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* by Christy Lefteri.**

There is no linear relation that describes the voyage in the passage alone and its effect on the protagonists separately. The voyage's importance comes from the desperate need for the couple to leave their ancestor's land and escape the ruthless civil war. The journey can be described as harsh and difficult because of its aftermath on the characters, Afra and Nuri. The couple already survived a civil war in Syria and are escaping it through a dangerous and deadly passage from the Middle East, to the European haven. Both of them survived a traumatic experience, the Civil War, while they live another traumatic experience, trying to survive the smuggling through the seas, parks, forests, and borders.

Different types of traumas produce different responses, such as dissociative amnesia or intrusive recall, which are a result of the social valuation of the traumatic experience created in a particular culture. According to Michelle Balaev (2008) Some traumatic experiences can produce dissociation from reality, while this is not the only response to devastating loss or violence in the trauma novel. Afra and Nuri both lived through war and had to develop survival skills, then they lose their son. This incident triggers them both and causes them

trauma. Then the journey of seeking asylum is as traumatizing, because of the sightseeing of death and terror in the journey.

Afra's witnessing the loss of her son made her lose her eyesight. This is the body's pathological response to trauma and the processes of memory in later stages it contributes in identity formation and deformation found in literary representations. The importance of the characterization of Afra and Nuri comes from the fact that it provides a model of the individual that suffers but paints it in such a way as to suggest that this protagonist is an 'every person' figure.

While Lefteri does not explicitly focus on the grief of the parents or explore their tragedy in great depth, readers may still sense that she downplays the potential impact of such a significant loss in her novel. Lefteri cleverly withholds certain details to build suspense and surprise readers with the revelation that Afra's blindness is actually caused by her intense grief, which is only unveiled towards the end of the story. Afra's blindness was a result of seeing her son die in her arms after their garden in Aleppo was bombed. She shares this untold account with a British doctor during an eye examination.

Indeed, a significant purpose of the protagonists is often to reference a historical period in which a group of people or a particular culture, race, or gender, have collectively experienced massive

trauma. In this regard, the fictional figure magnifies an event in which thousands or millions of people have suffered a similar violence, such as war.

Afra's coping mechanism was being silent. What is withheld from the reader and is perceived as silence or lack of vivid description of narrative or the exact experience is arguably the "speechless terror" the prelinguistic, contagious, or ontological void of the experience that produces narrative omission (p. 149).

Nuri's imaginary character is also a form of a coping mechanism. He wishes he was as free as a child or as liberated as a bee in a field in Aleppo. His psychological displacement derives him to submit to his daydream and fantasy. Whenever Afra draws anything, Nuri embodies Aleppo in her drawings, he can see "flowers", "buildings", "landscapes", and "streets" he used to see in his daily life in Syria. Referring to these details, depict that he is stuck in his previous life, where it was safe for him and holds the meaning of a 'home'. The colors, papers, and painting unify the couple's dream in finding a 'home' even if in their fantasy.

Furthermore, Nuri claims that after the voyage Afra had returned back to life, in fragments denoting The word "fragments" has an underlying meaning with regard to the experience of displacement and

subconscious. It reflects the state of mind of both of the protagonists in the age of post-modernism. Nuri and the other migrants living in the camps and the Breakfast and Bed through the process of finding alliances and communities to overcome the difficulties of dislocation and trying to find a home wherever they reach a new stop.

Aleppo, a city filled with fertility, culture, warm, and security, this may be a symbol of their previous life before the chain of traumatic events. After they escape, they do not have a sense of belonging to any other place; as his presence or the past of Aleppo.

#### **4.2.1 – The case in *Bird Summons* by Leila Aboulela**

When the three ladies start to clash about their dissimilarities. Each one of them hold back from seeing her own mistakes and spots the faults of the other, Moni turned down her husband's request to join him, Iman for taking off her hijab and finally, Salma for infidelity on her husband and contacting her ex. To sum up, it is important to note that although the women were judgmental in terms of giving advice, they had good intentions. Salma during the voyage keeps to herself, the others think she is snobbish because she had the education of a doctor. But the voyage helped her see herself and discover her desires away from the restrictions and stereotypes of the English society, on the Macro-level, and the Islamic immigrant society, on the Micro-level.

Although morally is not accepted to cheat on a spouse nor religiously, but this is one of the few things that changed during her journey. Also, the reason for taking this trip in the first place is because of her inferior feeling that she does not belong in England and among her Scottish family. she states that Salma feels that her husband and children might feel embarrassed by her because she is not British enough. She keeps making an effort to belong to this country in an attempt to strengthen her roots, despite her origins and language, she was introduced as a control freak who enjoys being a leader. But by the end of the novel she comes to her senses and attempts to embrace her flaws away from the gaze of the Other and comes to the realization that she cannot control anyone's life, not even her own children.

Iman has come to the realization during the journey that she never took a decision in her life, she was always told what to do and what to say. So when she came out to her friends as someone who will not continue to wear the hijab, she was harshly judged, and they did not expect her to convince them of the reason why she took this decision. They always perceived her as a shallow, simple-minded woman, who always needs guidance. But the voyage experience directly reflected on her transformation. Iman's own struggle with knowing who she

really is or constructing a unique identity that is respected by others and she finally had a voice.

Moni, went from being a devoted mother to her son, Adam, to a devoted mother figure to her friends. She scolded Iman the way a mother would scold her child, she cooks and cleans in the lodge. Moni's metamorphosis can be detected is when she acknowledged her flaws and admits that she is being harsh on herself and Murtada. she is able to go beyond limitations that she had in mind in terms of her ability and physique, this can be applied to body and mind. She manages to walk further than she has estimated, and this might be an indication that she is willing to change, adjust, and have a positive attitude to herself, and others.

By the end of the novel, the three women overcome most of their problems and nightmares. The journey towards Lady Evleyn's grave marks the end of the metamorphosis and that is achieved when each one of them embraces their own weaknesses, qualms and each one of them confronts those fears. Salma's solitary journey to Lady Evelyn's grave endows her with the final magical realist transformation, and therefore, enables her settlement in Britain. Although the journey triggers self-doubt in her, Salma insists on completing it so she would not "risk losing momentum" (Aboulela 2019, p. 279).

Upon her arrival to the Glenuaig Lodge, Salma finally sees the bronze plaque on Lady Evelyn's grave, whose photo has kept the Arab Speaking Muslim Women Group from taking the journey with Salma, Moni and Iman. The women in the group felt offended because "the plaque bearing the Qur'anic verse of light [was] crossed out" (Aboulela, 2). Obviously, this does not stop Salma from the journey or from identifying with Lady Evelyn. When Salma arrives at the grave, the bronze plaque becomes a magical screen through which she foresees her and her friends' futures, all signifying their settlement in Britain.

Salma pleads Lady Evelyn to grant her "rejuvenation" and settlement; to give her "a recipe for patience", "a cure of disenchantment," and "the will to keep going without wandering astray" (Aboulela, 282). This is when Salma receives a shot and dies, but her death is magical, for she soon returns to the car and tells her friends about it, while they confirm that they heard the gunshots. Whereas the women who failed to take the journey could not give up on their egos to establish a cross-ethnic dialogue in diaspora, Salma adopts this dialogue as she finally fulfills her connection with Lady Evelyn in this final event. This fulfillment increases the possibility of Salma's, and her two friends', settlement in Britain. Consequently, through her 'faith-based' connection with Lady Evelyn, which departs from



organized religion, Salma embraces a new form of cultural identity, one that is set on the thresholds between life and death, past and present, home and diaspora. Accordingly, Aboulela demonstrates her exceedance of a prominent theme in Arab British fiction which can describe the protagonists of these novels to perceive their existence in Britain as temporary. However, through the magical realist experiences of Salma, Moni and Iman, Aboulela resolves her characters' cultural baggage and facilitates their settlement in Britain. She does so through granting them a recognition of home as spiritual belonging, that is, through building a hybrid identity.

In an interview conducted by Claire Chambers in 2009, Aboulela declares that her transnational background detonates her writing in "cross-cultural interaction," stating that "the three things that make up my identity, Sudan, Egypt and Britain, were all coming together" (Chambers, 2009, p.88).

The climax is reached when Salma is driven through the hunting lodge into a university campus where Amir's clinic is located. Amir puts her into surgery and she wakes up with "surgical scars" and "stiches all along her arms and thighs", to discover that she has lost her muscles (Aboulela, 244). Her Scottish-Christian mother-in-law, Norma, rescues her by leading her out to the edge of the forest. This is when the

three friends reunite but in their post-metamorphoses' forms: Moni as a Swiss ball, Iman as an animal, and Salma flat as a doormat. At this moment the three women reached their mature stage of evolving, and that may be resorted to the travel and confessing experience.

#### **4.3 - The Differences and Similarities Between the Spiritual and Physical Voyages Represented in *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* and *Bird Summons*.**

The voyage in the *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* is more revolved around the traumatic experience of trying to find a home and trying to build a home with each destination they arrive to. While trying to reach destination, the protagonists are never feeling safe or settled, even if they label the place as a 'home' or even if they stay at the location for months. They are in constant fear of being abused, molested, deported, pocket-picking. The dangers they had to go through made them more cautious with dealing with the people around them. When they arrived in Greece and they were set in a camp, Nuri immediately could tell that something wrong was going on. Many people kept going missing, homeless children owning expensive clothes and so on. This experience made Nuri and Afra be more careful and closed to others. Although in the beginning of the narrative, Nuri used to subconsciously label other refugees based on their sufferings, so people were either seen as more similar to the Self or divergent like the Other. The trip took a toll on

their appearance and their hygiene. It's a dangerous trip and needs physical ability to perform it.

On the other hand, *Bird Summons* has two voyages, first their trip to the United Kingdom. In Which each character came from a different country, from the Middle East, for a diverse reason. And then the trip they took together to Lady Evelyn's Grave. The trip was a luxury and not a necessity, it was a trip away from society with community around the places they visited, so the characters focused on themselves and the other friends. Each character had a spiritual voyage that she needs to take on her own. This has helped the three of them to discover their weaknesses and strengths, away from the stereotypes of what the Islamic/Arabic society they live in Scotland. The trip they took helped them be more connected to their inner needs and to listen to what their subconscious was trying to voice. Salma and Moni learnt to listen to Iman, the one they thought was like a child and needs protection. Moni learnt to not judge and to try to speak more softly when she wants to criticize. Salma learnt how to give others more space for them to decide what they want, and to stop trying to control everything and everyone, especially her children.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This thesis has aimed to emphasize the change the protagonists go through due to the voyage they go through. Whether it was voluntary voyage or compulsory, there is a lesson to be learnt.

In *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*, the voyage was a compulsory life-or-death situation, with no marginal or subaltern option. The voyage was as dangerous as staying home in Aleppo under the siege of war, but the hope of finding the shores of safety meant that giving immigration a chance, would not be less dangerous. By insightfully presenting the contrast between life before the war, the hardships they face when forced to leave home, and the implications this life event entails, Lefteri challenges the contemporary prevalent assumptions, based mainly on superficial knowledge and narrow thinking, according to which immigrants in general, and war refugees, in particular, have a choice. By skilfully employing a simple narrative style and by inserting geographical and temporal shifts between the present (in England) and the past (in Aleppo, or during the journey to England), Lefteri questions complex realities and challenges the reader to revise his/her unexamined assumptions and, by appealing to the moral dimension of the situation, contributes to the development of the readers' empathetic

imagination. Rather, what Lefteri is trying to offer the reader is a glimpse into the crisis prevalent in the area nowadays and the horrifying hardships people who are victims of the conflict are forced to face. *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* is based on facts, first-hand experience, and the undeniable everyday realities of areas where the question of immigration has become a compelling problem, which puts ones' humanity to the test, whether a victim or a resident of a receiving country.

on the consequences of immigration and the journey that many Middle Easterners take when they immigrate to the West for various reasons in *Bird Summons* by Leila Abouleila. Immigrants from Middle Eastern backgrounds in Europe find it hard to blend in the community because of many reasons. It might be because of the different background, or sometimes because of the stereotypes and stigma that the West already has about Middle Easterners. It is also worth mentioning that not everyone from the Middle East is an Arab nor is a Muslim, but that's the typical stereotype for immigrants from this region.

The stereotypes of Middle Easterners as barbaric and backward people were, unfortunately, enhanced after the terrorist attacks of 11<sup>th</sup>

of September. Said (1978) defines stereotyping as the act of imposing and projecting a false perception of a group of individuals. He adds that the “Orient” which is a term used to refer to the East, is a term historically used by explorers and expanders who travel back and forth from the Middle East to the West, to describe and nourish the stereotypical image of what the West is eager to hear.

According to Said, the orient and the oriental has been constructed by the West because of the power of knowledge the West holds of the East; and knowledge is power. Cultural and social identity is not restricted. They hold the sense of being attached to a certain community by the virtue of collective norms, habits, traditions and also historical background of music, language, dancing, or sometimes cuisine.

Ordinarily, when people share all these cultural and social components, they will be identified as a unit and have the feeling of belonging. Bhabha (1998) refers to breeding of two people from two different cultures and result into a third called a ‘hybrid’. Usually people stand on the verge of choosing of either to assimilate to the new culture and blend in or to stand boldly and create and establish their own closed society where they carry their traditions and norms.

This means that people who face the hardships of immigration that led them to take the dangerous road must have suffered enough in their countries and then suffered even more on the journey, which basically means that trauma plays a big role in the narration of their stories.

Said argues that the binary that the West created of the “Self”, and the “Other” as the orient or the East, has been centuries in the making, and demonstrates how and why the West has been treating the East with hegemony and agency. According to Said, the orient and the oriental has been constructed by the West because of the power of knowledge the West holds of the East; and knowledge is power. For Balfour, having knowledge meant having the capacity to study a civilization from its inception. “To have such knowledge of such a thing (as Egypt) is to dominate it” (Said, 1978, p.32).

Each Protagonists, in both of the novels, are round character, which means he/she has changed, and this evolution has been inflected due to a various of imbedded reasons, but mainly it’s the experience of the travelling and voyage. Whether the voyage was a luxury, self-indulging experience or it was mandated for several reasons, travelling changes people, they learn to be more compassionate towards others, kindred hearted, and open minded to accepting other cultures.

Each chapter is divided into two parts, marked by a key-word placed in the middle of a blank page, which connects the first one focused on the present context, namely the protagonists and his wife`s struggles in the United Kingdom, while waiting for the decision from the authorities about their asylum application to the second, which describes their life in Aleppo, or part of their journey through Europe. This book is directed to the foreign/European reader who only believes news that is made available by media.

Also, temporal shifts of narrative with no linear of events, disrupt the frequently employed narrative of foreigners or refugees as people who simply seek to exploit the receiving country, offering, thus, a perspective on the reality of dislocation and alienation. On the one hand, there is the alienation one feels when one finds oneself in a foreign country, a country that is very different from one's homeland, in spiritual and cultural terms. Nuri and his wife, as well as most of the other refugees living in the pension in England (Breakfast and Bed), waiting, struggle to maintain a sort of continuity with their previous lives, rejecting what they regard abnormalities of the climate and doctor's visit for example, and trying to continue with their own habits and rituals.



Such enterprises may be perceived as rather futile, yet, what characterizes most refugees is the desire (conscious or not) to somehow recreate, in a sense, the familiar situation they lived in before, to create a sort of surrogate, a substitute for their homeland, which might provide a feeble, but, maybe, helpful, sense of clarity and security, to annul, as much as possible, the idea of temporariness that permeates their lives, and the feelings of 'unhousedness' and triviality that derive from it. From this point of view, certain attitudes some characters display such as Afra's refusal to engage in conversation with other residents of the pension, or the young Egyptians difficulties in expressing himself in English can be understood as hardships they face to blend in and assimilate, a manifestation of the characters struggle with the profound ambivalence of their situation. Such instances situate the novel in contemporary times, helping the reader identify social and moral aspects depicted in it, and adds to the realistic dimension of the narrative. One of them involves the garden of the pension in which Nuri and the other refugees live. On the other hand, the voyage has affected the couple, alienation also applies to the relationship between Nuri and his wife, they act as strangers with no intimacy.

In Britain, the mass immigration of people from various parts of the globe in the 1950`s and in the 1960s encouraged the heterogeneity of

literary texts produced by writers from different minorities. One of these notable writers is the British Muslim Arab novelist Leila Aboulela. Through her novel *Bird Summons*, this study draws attention to the debate between collective and individual aspects of minor literature.

The dissertation tried to tackle the most prominent concepts that are related to both the collective and individual aspects through the analysis of Aboulela's *Bird Summons*. In *Bird Summons*, Aboulela tackles the issue of displacement through one of the three protagonists, Iman. Moreover, Iman's displacement is due to her state of in-betweenness and to her constant search for a home between her home village in Syria and her current residence in Scotland to which she immigrated. Furthermore, Iman's displacement has been analyzed through the issue of language and her feeling of abandonment. Additionally, Iman feels abandoned by her family members back home because they consider her lucky to survive the civil war in her country. Consequently, she tries to find an alternative to her feeling of abandonment in her older friend Salma who knows how to take good care of her despite the obstacles she faces.

In order to cope with her state of displacement, Iman finds solace in her childhood memories which come at rescue to keep her sanity

intact. Another theme which entails the collective value of minor writing in *Bird Summons* is Islam as a source of power. Leila Aboulela is well known of her unique representation of Muslim characters as individuals who inspire their strength and empowerment in Britain from their Islamic faith. In *Bird Summons*, Aboulela introduces the Islamic religion through on the one hand, the hoopoe which is a significant bird in Islamic logic because it is mentioned in the holy Qur`an and on the other hand through opposing secularist vision by incorporating Islamic logic into the minor habits, attitudes, and everyday practices of the main characters.

In the novel, the hoopoe acts as a spiritual symbol for the three women Salma, Moni, and Iman which tells them moral stories inspired by the Islamic culture. The final collective concern which the study attempted to highlight is food as a means to build ethnic and cultural solidarity. As a British Arab Muslim author, Leila Aboulela represents many cultures. In *Bird Summons*, she accentuates the role of food in maintaining cultural and ethnic solidarity.

Furthermore, since the three protagonists are Muslims; they are restricted by the Islamic notions of Halal and Haram in their life styles. Besides exposing collective aspects of minor literature in *Bird Summons*; this dissertation also aimed at examining two major themes

related to the individual value of minor literature. The individual value in *Bird Summons* is represented through the characters Moni and Salma as an embodiment of motherhood sacrifice and the age anxiety respectively. In the novel, Moni is a mother of a disabled son named Adam. Therefore, Britain becomes home for Moni. Since the medical care is very developed in Britain, Moni refuses to leave it in order to follow her husband into Saudi Arabia. Despite her dark skin colour, Moni scarcely encounters any racialized treatment in Britain. Moreover, the racial issue does not make any significant appearance in the novel because it is intertwined with other everyday realities. Another everyday issue that has been discussed in the study is ageing anxiety. The protagonist Salma is in her forties and a mother of four children.

Salma's anxiety is the result of the growing distance between herself and her children besides her obsession with her physical appearance and health. Moreover, the tension between Salma and her children comes into surface when she tries to make life decisions for them and they refuse to obey. As a mother who sacrifices her life to provide a better life conditions for her children, Salma feels left over and disappointed due to their refusal of her interference. Hence, Salma turns to her younger friend Iman who often depends on her in order to fill the void her children left. Indeed, Leila Aboulela's *Bird Summons*

reflects her new attitude toward Britain through her writings. In her earlier novels, specifically *The Translator* and *Minaret*; Aboulela significantly accentuates transnational confusions and immigrants struggles in Britain. In *Bird Summons*, she tackles these confusions and hardships that immigrants and minority members still encounter until now. Thus, this ease shows that the notion of postmigration is not a destination that the minority members arrive to within their host county but a process they go through despite all the obstacles they encounter.

1- More studies should be done on the literal psychoanalysis effect on diaspora characters reflected in fiction.

2. More studies should be done tackling the role of islamophobia and religion among diasporic societies in the West reflected in fiction.

3. More studies should be done on the role of immigration and feminism and its significance on the character's identities in *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*.

4. More studies should be done to compare between diaspora Arab Western women and Diapora European Women Writers' in regards of strength and limitations.

5. More studies should be done on the role on the psychoanalysis of the characters in both novels.

6. More studies should be done tackling the theme of reality vs. imaginary character in both novels.

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