

**Sisterhood in Leila Aboulela's *Bird Summons*
and Toni Morrison's *Sula***

الأختية في رواية ليلى أبو العلا "استدعاء الطيور" ورواية توني
موريسون "سولا"

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the soul of my precious father, and to my husband for his unwavering support and understanding during the challenging phases of this research journey.

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Sisterhood in Leila Aboulela's *Bird Summons* and Toni Morrison's *Sula*

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Abstract

This study aims to explore how Toni Morrison and Leila Aboulela represent the importance of sisterhood in the lives of women in diaspora, in their novels, *Sula* (1973) and *Bird Summons* (2019). The study attempts to highlight the challenges that women in diaspora face, such as marginalization, patriarchy, and discrimination. Therefore, sisterhood has emerged as a powerful force for empowerment and resistance to colonial contexts. These two novels are analyzed through the lens of Postcolonialism and Feminism. Hence, the researcher relies on Edward Said, Franz Fanon, Gayatri Spivak, and Bell Hook's views in their works while applying Postcolonialism and Feminism. The study concludes that both Toni Morrison and Leila Aboulela in their novels explore the significant role of sisterhood in the lives of these women in offering solidarity and mutual and collective empowerment in colonial contexts, particularly to those who share common experiences and challenges. The contribution of my study lies in connecting the two novels and investigating how both writers share the same concept of sisterhood. Moreover, most studies of these works tackle each literary work independently, while the current study treats the two works together.

Keywords: Sisterhood, Sula, Morrison, Bird Summons, Aboulela, women in Diaspora.

الأختية في رواية ليلي أبو العلا "استدعاء الطيور" ورواية توني موريسون "سولا"

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الملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على كيفية تصوير توني موريسون، ويلي أبو العلا لأهمية الأختية في حياة النساء في الشتات، في روايتهما، "سولا" (1973) و"استدعاء الطيور" (2019). تحاول الدراسة تسليط الضوء على التحديات التي تواجهها النساء في الشتات، مثل سلطوية الرجال، والتمييز، والتهميش، وبالتالي، برزت الأختية كرمز للقوة والمقاومة في السياق الاستعماري. أجريت هذه الدراسة باستخدام نظرية ما بعد الاستعمار والنسوية. اعتمدت الباحثة على آراء إدوارد سعيد في الاستشراق، وفرانز فانون، وغاياتري سيفاك، وبييل هوكس في أعمالهم أثناء تطبيق ما بعد الاستعمار في تحليل الروايتين. وخلصت الدراسة إلى أن كلا من توني موريسون، وليلا أبو العلا تثبتان في روايتهما أهمية دور الأختية في حياة هؤلاء النساء في توفير التضامن والتمكين المتبادل والجماعي، لا سيما لهذه الفئة من النساء اللاتي يتشاركن نفس التجارب والتحديات. تكمن مساهمة دراستي في ربط الروايتين معاً من حيث مشاركة الكاتبتين نفس مفهوم الأختية. علاوة على ذلك، معظم الدراسات تتناول كلا العملين بشكل مستقل، بينما تتناول الدراسة الحالية العملين معاً.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأختية، سولا، موريسون، استدعاء الطيور، أبو العلا، النساء في الشتات.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Women around the world have faced numerous challenges and struggles, many of which are deeply rooted in patriarchal structures and societal norms. Patriarchy, a system where power is held by men and men hold primary authority, has contributed to the subjugation and marginalization of women in various aspects of life. Women's struggles within patriarchal societies can be seen in different spheres such as the workplace, politics, education, and within their communities and families. However, the struggles faced by African American women and Arab immigrant women in diaspora are significant and can be more intense than those faced by women from other groups or in other parts of the world.

African American women have a long history of facing systematic racism and discrimination in the United States. From slavery to segregation to ongoing racial disparities, they are marginalized not only based on their gender but also because of their race. On the other hand, Arab immigrant women in diaspora also encounter their own set of challenges. They often face cultural barriers when adapting to a new country, moreover, they may encounter discrimination and prejudice, particularly in the current political climate, where individuals from Arab or Muslim backgrounds are often unfairly targeted due to stereotypes and misconceptions. The concept of sisterhood refers to the strong, emotional bond and solidarity among women. It involves a sense of mutual support, empathy, and understanding between women, often based on shared experiences, values, and struggles. Sisterhood can be found in various contexts, including among biological sisters, friends, colleagues, and members of social or professional groups.

Sisterhood emphasizes the importance of female relationships and the idea that women can find strength and empowerment through their connections with one another. It often involves fostering a sense of community, advocating for each other's rights and well-being, and working together to address common challenges and issues.

The concept of sisterhood has been influential in feminist movements and women's rights advocacy, as it promotes the idea that women can achieve greater life quality and overcome systemic barriers by standing together in solidarity. Additionally, sisterhood can be a source of emotional support, encouragement, and mentorship for women in various aspects of their lives. Overall, sisterhood celebrates the unique bond between women and highlights the importance of building and maintaining positive, supportive relationships among women in personal, social, and professional spheres.

As it appears in the study of Bauder & Juffs (2020) many literary works highlight the importance of sisterhood, which state that sisterhood considers the continuous efforts of women to reach the level of equality they dream of, and their tendency to believe that they are equal in terms of obtaining their rights. The concept of sisterhood in Afro-American literature was built by highlighting it in all kinds of women's literature, and its repetition in literary works, as in the works of Toni Morrison and most of the stories of black women, where writers and critics call for women unity to gain strength and prove their ability to resist oppression.

The study of Parashar (2016) suggests that the Feminist movement did not develop, and become in its current form at once. Rather, its history is divided into three stages. The first stage, which started in the late nineteenth century, focused on the rights of women, such as the right to vote, but this movement did not include the rights and stories of women of color. The second stage began in the early sixties of the twentieth century and

at this stage, the scope of the dialogue expanded to include other issues such as the workplace and issues of sexuality and highlighting the struggles that African Americans face due to slavery, racial discrimination, and patriarchy.

During the emergence of literary works that implement the reality of women's suffering, many works in literature present the importance of sisterhood such as Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* 1982, Diane Balser's *Sisterhood and Solidarity: Feminism and Labor in Modern Times* 1999 and Susan Ostrov's *Weisser Feminist Nightmares: Women At Odds: Feminism and the Problems of Sisterhood* 1994. Moreover, there are many black feminist scholars, like Bell Hooks, Patricia Hills Collins, Boyce Davies, Elizabeth Abel, and Audre Lorde, who started to write about the importance of sisterhood among black women and call for women's empowerment.

Sachdev (2020) explains that in Afro-American literature, women's works carry the mission of building sisterhood within the feminist alliance, and their works are important to achieve social justice for black women. Among the African American writers, well-known icons such as Zora Neale Hurston, Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, and Gloria Neale Gloria Naylor has expressed, in different eras, the voice of the black woman and the importance of sisterhood in her life. Afro-American literature played an important and pivotal role in the history of women's literature and in highlighting the importance of sisterhood among women, where this literature sheds light on the corruption of the traditional image of the silence and subjugation of women, and presents a strong image of the educated and assertive woman. Afro-American literature calls for women to look for themselves and to unite.

As for Afro-American literature and the historical impact it left on American literature and literature in general, it is necessary to mention Toni Morrison (1931), the

Afro-American novelist, who lived in America and obtained a BA and MA in English literature, and worked at the University of Texas. Morrison started writing novels when she joined a group of writers and poets at Howard University, Morrison became very popular and won several awards, including the Nobel Prize in Literature. Her first novel is *The Bluest Eyes*. In her literary works, Morrison dealt with love, compassion, and black people's stories, influenced by what her father used to tell her of popular stories and tales related to the black community. She wrote about slavery and the social history of African Americans. Morrison's writings focused on women's experiences in black American communities and the importance of sisterhood in their lives (Wagner 2022).

This theme of sisterhood is also reflected in diasporic literature. Smith (2021) states that in diasporic literature, people experience adapting to new countries or new languages, cultures, and societies. The writers who work in this type of literature focus on highlighting the experiences of women in diaspora the gap they fall into between their traditions and what they need to do to integrate into modern society. In addition to themes of love, loss, identity, and family, diasporic literature includes stories of immigrant women, sisterhood, and racism that they encounter in their homes or the host land. In addition, it shows that the way to be independent and to survive is through women's unity and support. This genre has given birth to icons such as Leila Abuolela, Mohja Kahf, Anita Desai, and others.

In the context of talking about Arab women and how they are presented in diaspora, it is necessary to mention Leila Aboulela, a diasporic writer, who is an Arab Sudanese, who lives in England. She continued her life and education in Sudan and then obtained a master's degree in the United Kingdom. Leila Aboulela tackles many issues related to women, education, and Islam in her writings, which she started since entering school. In

her works, she focuses on the independence of Arab women, and that their roles are not confined to home only (Omet 2022).

Furthermore, sisterhood emerges as a form of resistance in the face of postcolonial implications that are imposed on women. Women in non-European countries and diaspora suffer from stereotypical images that were imposed on them according to the Western views of the East. Edward Said in his influential work *Orientalism* 1978, discusses the representation of the East through the orientalist discourse, how the West misrepresent the East by labeling them as being barbaric, uneducated, and backward, to justify the Western hegemony and the intervention in the Eastern societies. Therefore, as a result, oriental women are seen as passive, submissive, and sexual objects.

In their paper, Marandi & Shabanirad (2015), examine the unfortunate status of oriental women through the lens of orientalism where women are subjected to a double colonization, first from the patriarchy of the indigenous community, and second from the colonial regime which leads to a double oppression. However, the oriental discourse on women overlaps with all women who live in the third world. This discussion leads us to Gayatri Spivak's reviews on colonial women. In her famous essay "*Can the Subaltern Speak*" 1985, Spivak examines the unfortunate status of third-world women as being inferior, voiceless, and marginalized. Spivak describes third-world women as the Subaltren, which is the lowest rank in the army, likewise, third-world women are also the lowest rank in the society. Therefore, marginalized women need Frantz Fanon's reviews on the concept of resistance, in which Fanon in his book *The Wretched of the Earth* 1961 explores the psychological and social effect of colonization on the colonized people and discusses the process of decolonization by violence and resistance, which will lead to liberation. Therefore, for these women to stand up for their rights, they have to support

each other. However, the concept of sisterhood can be controversial. This suggests that the idea of universal sisterhood can overlook the diversity of women's experiences and the intersectionality of their identities.

In her book, Lorde (2015) argues that one of the main criticisms of the concept of sisterhood is that it tends to overlook the differences in privilege, power, and experience among women based on factors such as race, ethnicity, class, and gender identity. For example, women from marginalized or oppressed groups may face different and often more severe forms of discrimination and inequality compared to women from more privileged backgrounds (p. 112). Furthermore, the concept of sisterhood can also perpetuate a homogenizing view of womanhood who share the same sexual orientation or sexual preferences that do not reflect the complex and diverse realities of women's lives (İlmen 2017). Therefore, instead of universal sisterhood, one can seek to address the intersecting systems of oppression that impact women differently based on their various identities. Intersectional sisterhood aims to center the experiences of all women, especially those who have been historically marginalized, and to recognize the complexity of their experiences and needs.

In conclusion, while the idea of sisterhood may have positive intentions, it is important to critically examine its limitations and to strive for a more inclusive and intersectional approach to advocating for the rights and empowerment of all women.

1.2 Statement of the Study

This study explores the challenges that face Arab immigrant women in the West and African American women, such as slavery, racism, patriarchy, and – or their ethnic and cultural background. The study sheds light on the importance of sisterhood in their lives, which helps them to overcome these challenges, which are represented in the characters

of Salma, Moni, and Iman in *Bird Summons* by Leila Aboulela, and the characters of Nell and Sula in *Sula* by Toni Morrison.

1.3 Significance of the Study

Many literary studies were conducted on Toni Morrison's novel *Sula*, and very few studies on Leila Aboulela's *Bird Summons* since it was recently published. Therefore, the contribution of my study lies in connecting the two novels and investigating how both writers share the same concept of sisterhood. Moreover, most studies of these works tackle each literary work independently, while the current study treats the two works together.

1.4 Questions of the Study

The current study answers the following questions:

1. How is sisterhood represented in Toni Morrison's *Sula*?
2. How is sisterhood represented in Leila Aboulela's *Bird Summons*?
3. What are the differences and similarities between both writers in presenting sisterhood in their novels?

1.5 Objectives of the Study

This study aims to:

1. Explore how sisterhood is represented in *Sula*.
2. Explore how sisterhood is represented in *Bird Summons*.
3. Compare and contrast the representation of sisterhood by both novelists in their novels.

1.6 Definition of Terms

There are three definitions of terms in the study as follows:

Sisterhood: This is a relationship between women who view and treat each other as sisters. It is an acknowledgment and celebration of the deep connection, support, and understanding often shared among women. Sisterhood emphasizes solidarity, empathy, and mutual respect, with the belief that women can empower and uplift each other through their shared experiences, struggles, and aspirations (Thomas & English 2016).

Afro-American Literature: Herron (2019) states that it is a literary body produced by African writers of origin in the United States, which began in the late eighteenth century, and its pioneers were Phyllis Wheatley and Equiano Uludah.

Diaspora literature: The diaspora is a minority living in exile. Diaspora literature is defined by Harrison (2021) as a literary school whose works include ideas of displacement and harsh journeys. This literature deals with alienation, nostalgia, and the search for identity, and deals with issues related to integration or cultural disintegration.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

The study is limited to the time in which it was written, and the results of the study are limited to the two authors, Leila Abuolela and Toni Morrison, and their current literary works, *Birds Summons* and *Sula*. The research and its conclusions cannot be generalized to any other authors' literary works.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Related Literature

This chapter provides an overview of the previous literature and studies related to the subject, after a comprehensive search done by the researcher. This chapter focuses on reviewing the literature that includes the importance of sisterhood in the lives of Arab women in diaspora in Leila Aboulela's novel *Birds Summons* and in the lives of African American women in Toni Morrison's *Sula*. This concept provides women with the strength that they need to overcome life obstacles. This chapter aims to present studies related to the concept of sisterhood in both Afro-American literature and Diaspora literature, the representation of sisterhood in each of the two authors' literary works in general, and the representation of sisterhood in Aboulela's *Birds summons*, and Morrison's *Sula*.

The concept of sisterhood emerged as the need for women to bond be empowered, and encourage each other to face their struggles. Since then it has become an important tool in unifying women all over the world, where they can share their universal and common struggles, which allows them to speak up and their voices to reach beyond boundaries. Through sisterhood, women start to realize that to maintain a sisterly bond, they have to get rid of their differences and embrace each other regardless of their cultural, political, and ethical backgrounds. Through this act, they can only focus on their common challenges and try to overcome them. To begin with, the study of Dill (1983) shows that sisterhood is seen as a binding force for all women in exploring the importance of women's perception of themselves and their place in society as a way of understanding the differences and similarities between women.

In talking about the concept of sisterhood, the study of Asif et al. (2020) states that sisterhood is compatible with the bond of love, cooperation, and solidarity between women to combat their individual or collective oppression that is intensified by the patriarchal system. On the other hand, envy and lack of cooperation can be harmful to sisterhood, weakening the bond and making women easy targets for patriarchal forces.

Fortunati (2019) adds that the concept of sisterhood is fundamental in women's lives. Sisterhood is about spreading ethics and values among women; it is about peace, welcoming others, and talking to each other, also it enables them to accept diversity. The study highlights the values embedded in sisterhood and in women's ability to link bridges, to keep their differences aside, to feel empathy, and love, and to support each other.

Sen (2021) states in his study that sisterhood leads women to empowerment and their liberation from male domination. The study also shows the importance of forming an alliance and developing a strong relationship among women on the basis that such bonding helps them in their struggle against oppression to ensure healthy survival and achieve sustainable growth.

2.1 Sisterhood in Afro-American Literature

As for sisterhood in Afro-American literature, according to Anantharaj & Thirupathi (2019), sisterhood comes as an urgent need for black women to seek refuge from the racist and sexist American society, Western gender ideologies, and stereotypical images of black womanhood.

Thomas & English's (2016) study aims to present the effect of patriarchal domination and brutality on women, discussing how women facilitate their brutal survival. The study indicates that women, who support each other, show that they are kind

and have a caring nature, which through the act of sisterhood connects them and gives them a sense of security. The study focuses on shedding light on sisterhood in the novel, *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker and how the concept of sisterhood is manifested in the novel. The novel examines how Sophia's relationship with Shug Avery and Nettie led to her liberation. The study emphasizes the sisterly bond in the African women's community, and how they share their responsibilities among themselves regardless of blood relationship. The study also focuses on the liberation of the female characters that are highlighted in the novel through sisterhood and female bonding.

The study of Wani & Gupta (2019) includes that many authors have produced prolific literature, such as Toni Morrison, Maya Angelou, Alice Walker, and Walter Mosley, who are considered black women advocate writers of the Afro-American genre. Specializing in this genre of literature, they focus on black feminism shedding light on the miserable conditions that black women live in America. Through the novel *The Color Purple*, Alice Walker brought the suffering of black women into being. It represents coercion, oppression, violence, and sexual exploitation practices on African American women. The study aims to shed light on the complex life and suffering of a leading female character, Sealy, and other female characters in the novel, and through sisterhood, it helped them in liberating society.

2.2 Sisterhood in Diaspora

In diaspora literature, women are described as leaving their homes and the greater part of their lives and places, to places where they will have to start new lives with many obstacles that have internal and external challenges. Women in diaspora have to deal with racial discrimination, which leads them to be excluded from Western society accordingly. In this framework, the study of Tom (2021) examines the split identity encounters, which

affect people who live in diaspora, especially women, who encounter a split in the ethnic cultures of the native land and the dominant cultural practices of the host land influence. The study shows that women encounter in diaspora a duality of patriarchal cultures practices. Furthermore, the study also discusses that the emergence of diasporic sisterhood aids the mental and social disorientation of diasporic women.

Clifford's (1999) argument about women in diaspora reinforces the need to establish a healthy bond between them as a source of empowerment. "Life for women in Diasporic situations can be doubly painful-struggling with the material and spiritual insecurities of exile, with the demands of family Work, and with the claims of old new patriarchies. Despite these hardships, they may refuse the option of return when it presents itself, especially when the terms are dictated by men. At the same time, women in Diaspora remain attached to and empowered by, a 'home' culture and tradition- selectively" (p. 227).

Due to this, establishing a sisterly bond is crucial for women in diaspora, as the study of Aguiar (2012) suggests that the creation of sisterhood between women in diaspora is a great opportunity for women to unite and stand in solidarity against their common struggles, which is the right path that leads women to empowerment in the face of patriarchy. Moreover, sisterhood is a way to bridge the cultural gap through shared experiences and narratives.

Sebastian's study (2021) delves into the lives and roles of Saharan women in the diaspora in Spain. It analyzes how they perceive the importance of many recurring themes in their discourses such as intersectionality, sisterhood, colonialism, and identity, and how sisterhood and solidarity among women and the changes in their lives have a role and great importance in creating an equal society and building a common understanding and

achieving gender equality. The study focuses on the experience of the diaspora of women during the attempt to achieve the independence of Western Sahara for decades, which made women the face of many obstacles, but the interaction, sisterhood, solidarity, and participation of Saharawi women had a role in the liberation movement.

2.3 The Representation of sisterhood in Toni Morrison's Literary Works

Concerning the history of black women and their struggle, Toni Morrison chooses to tell their stories, and represent their suffering through her literary works, especially after she was influenced by the stories that her father told her regarding this subject (Pagolu 2022). Numerous studies have dealt with the works of Toni Morrison. Many scholars and critics have presented their opinions about her writings, literary tools, and what her works call for.

Anantharaj & Thiruppathi's (2019) study examines sisterhood in Toni Morrison's *Love* 2003, the researchers argue that Morrison as a writer considers herself an active participant in the black feminist movement and she values the theme of sisterhood and incorporates it into her writing. In her novel *Love*, the paper aims to elaborate on two complex female relationships in the context of sisterhood. Christine and Heed in *Love* are two African American women who form a strong relationship due to the absence of prenatal support, they form a sisterly bond, and they find that their friendship offers them a haven and protection from the hostile environment around them, which eventually, through their bonding enables them to shape their identities, consequently, to grow stronger and overcome their struggles.

Alagesan (2018) focuses on sisterhood between black and white women in Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved*. As we can see the relationship between Sethe and Amy

Denver, who the last helped Sethe to deliver her baby girl when she was a runaway slave, and in return, Sethe named her baby Denver as an act of gratitude. Hoping for her child to be tolerant, and to help others in need. The study shows that the theme of sisterhood is interracial, and is not fixed on certain ethnic groups or a specific race. The study also argues that we can accept interracial sisterhood if the relationship strips out ethnic and racial discrimination. The study highlights the issues that women have to deal with in their struggle to break free from patriarchal constraints, which create a barrier for women from living a life the way they choose. Moreover, how female friendship helps women reduce the effects of patriarchy and gives them a feeling of independence.

2.4 The Representation of Sisterhood by Toni Morrison in her Novel, *Sula*

In *Sula* (1973), the American-African writer, Toni Morrison explores how black women through Nel and Sula that female bonding and sisterhood are vital to African American women in America. Black women find solace and support from each other in slavery times. Moreover, the study adds that women during that time were suffering from slavery, racism, and the patriarchy of black men therefore, they needed to bond in order to combat the triple subjugation. The novel traces three generations of women in two families where they despite their differences have a special bond and through this bonding, they support and care for each other especially the bonding between Nell and Sula (Dhavaleswarapu 2016).

The study of Oliveira (2011) shows how female friendship in *Sula* has helped the main characters Nel and Sula in defining their personalities. The study highlights the importance of sisterhood between black women, where they should take care of each other and support each other to overcome challenges. Sisterhood is away for women to

realize their personal needs and to focus on themselves while taking care of each other. The study adds that the relationship between Nel and Sula is inspirable, and they act as a one soul they assert each other's strengths, and try to amend each other's mistakes. Nel and Sula's bond helps them find their place as black girls in a sexist and racist society.

In addition to this, Toni Morrison through *Sula* tries to implement the importance of female bonding, which acts as a healing tool for women especially black women, who suffer from racism, prejudice, and traditional constraints fueled by the patriarchal society. Female friendship among women is to provide support to each other and to nurture each other. Moreover, to share their stories, and experiences to learn from each other through this act, women feel selfless and strip away from negative emotions, like envy and jealousy that will ruin this bond (Sy 2008).

2.5 The Representation of Sisterhood in Leila Aboulela's literary works

Leila Aboulela is a prize-winning British-Sudanese author (KOÇ 2014). Aboulela's vision is to present Arab women's struggles in the West. Through her writings, Aboulela offers teachings and guidance for Arab women to follow and learn from the stories that she writes. The sense of detachment that is accompanied by anxiety makes women in diaspora feel the need to find companions in the new context (Garcia 2019). This can be analyzed in a way that women in diaspora feel the need to form sisterly bonds in order to support each other to overcome the obstacles that they face in the new environment. This is because women tend to understand each other and are capable of giving solutions and guidance to each other.

There are not yet studies that tackle the concept of sisterhood in Leila Aboulela's literary works, however, there are many studies that were conducted to illustrate how Aboulela presents the challenges that women face in Diaspora. Arab diaspora writers

differ fundamentally in how they represent the aspects of contemporary Arab cultures in their literary works. Moreover, Arab women diaspora writers have represented Islam differently in their work. The study of Awajan & Al-Shetawi (2021) examines how Islam is portrayed in Leila Aboulela's novel *Minaret* through Arab women in diaspora, who have a huge responsibility in changing the stereotypical images that surround them in the West. Most of Aboulela's published books revolve around women and Islam. Moreover, what Muslim women face in the West, the challenges they face in maintaining their cultural and religious identity.

The study of Parsinen (2020) mentions that Aboulela is a Sudanese writer, who lives in Scotland and wrote many novels in the English language which gained plausible reviews, especially in the United Kingdom, such as the novel *Bird Summons*. Aboulela implements the experiences of Arab women in the West and their common needs such as the sense of home and family. *Bird Summons* follows the story of three women embarking on a wild journey to the Scottish Highlands that later turns into a journey of self-discovery and how women struggle with the conflicting demands of family, duty, and faith as well as being Arab Muslim women in the West.

García (2019) conducted a study on Leila Aboulela's novel *Elsewhere, Home* (2018). How Aboulela highlights the idea of a lack of belonging and, the stereotypical images that Arab Muslims face in Diaspora. She says that some readers, including many immigrant Muslim women, can relate to and learn from Aboulela's writings. She adds that Aboulela brings to her works many teachings, and experiences that make some women feel connected and understood because they share the same experience with the characters in the novels. Additionally, Aboulela collects the stories and experiences of different women from different issues and backgrounds.

Aboulela has written stories about the lives of the female characters, who are also immigrant Muslim women, and their struggle to adapt to the new host countries. Like a contemporary novel by Aboulela, the historical novel *the Kindness of Enemies* (2015), revolves around the protagonist, Natasha, and her identity crisis and sense of not belonging in Britain. To gain a sense of belonging to themselves and their environment (Azman & Bahar 2020).

2.6 The Representation of Sisterhood by Leila Aboulela in *Birds Summons*.

Bird Summons was recently published in 2019. Therefore, there are not much of studies that were conducted on it, also the researcher could not find any studies that were conducted on the same subject, and here lies the contribution of the current paper. This section presents some studies and reviews that analyze *Bird Summons*, which mostly focus on the representation of Arab women's struggle in the West and the teachings that Aboulela is trying to provide in her novel *Bird Summons*.

Hamri's study (2021) argues that Abouela highlights in her writings the societal concerns and individual values and implements in her novel *Bird Summons* the identities of Arab women and issues of belonging, alienation, and displacement. Abouela represents many important aspects of the lives of Arab immigrant women such as the frustrations of displacement, the empowering aspects of Islam, as well as food as racial solidarity

In her novel, *Bird Summons*, Aboulela sheds light on the conflicts and issues faced by Arab women in the West. In addition, she suggests how to make decisions in the West using Islamic logic to overcome these issues. The reason behind the trip of the three main characters, Salma, Mooney, and Iman, was to educate themselves and increase their knowledge related to the history of Islam. This can be an education, which Leila Aboulela

wants to implant in the minds of Arab women by emphasizing the importance of learning more about Islam and following in the footsteps of previous Muslim women, who were able to make a difference. Amid these challenging events that the three women faced in diaspora, they started to acknowledge their problems and to open up and share them in front of each other, which allowed them to help each other all the way, where they came to terms with “supportive sisterhood” (Abu Amrieh & Arkhagha 2021).

Furthermore, Awajan (2023) in her paper explores in *Bird Summons* the use of metamorphosis in how the three main characters construct their Arab Western identities through this process. She also highlights how the characters transform into different shapes and creatures because of the problems they face as Arabs in the West. Awajan (2023) also adds that the three characters must go through this metamorphosis until they reach a stage where they can overcome their issues such as Islamophobia, and discrimination and adopt their new identities as Arab Westerners.

Moreover, Aladayla (2023) in his paper explains through bird summons that diaspora literature focuses on the experience of people who leave their homeland and are living in a different cultural context. He suggests that diaspora literature offers a unique perspective on identity, belonging, and the meaning of home, further, he highlights how the three main characters in bird summons navigate their spatial identities as they are torn between their home countries and their new homes.

All the mentioned studies focus on how Aboulela expresses her ideas about women in diaspora, especially Muslim Arab women, and the challenges that they face in the West, and how Aboulela suggests through her writings that women should empower themselves to overcome hardships. My study differs from the previous studies as it focuses partially on the importance of female bonding in the lives of women in diaspora, which provides

them with the strength they need to move on. Moreover, the study's contribution is by connecting the two novels and investigating how both writers share the same concept about sisterhood in both their works *Sula* and *Bird Summons*. It also explores how Toni Morrison and Leila Aboulela suggest that third-world women should unite to overcome their struggles through their chosen novels. This study discusses the theme of sisterhood through the lens of postcolonialism and feminism.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

3.1 Method

The researcher uses postcolonialism and feminism to approach the two novels, Toni Morrison's *Sula* and Laila Aboulela's *Bird Summons*. Both novels are approached in terms of the theme of sisterhood. The researcher relies on Edward Said, Franz Fanon, Gayatr Spivak's, and Bell Hooks's views in their works while applying Postcolonialism and feminism.

Postcolonialism is the period that comes after the end of colonialism, which cares about exposing the effect of colonialism on people who have undergone colonial experience. Postcolonialism highlights the predicaments that the colonized world went through during the Eurocentric colonial hegemony. Many postcolonial writers started to write back to change the stereotypical images that were created by the West during the European colonial aggression (Childs & William 1997).

Edward Said was a pioneering postcolonial writer who in his book *Orientalism* (1978). In his influential book "Orientalism," which was first published in 1978, Said examines how the Western world has historically portrayed and perceived the "Orient," a term he uses to refer to the Middle East, Asia, and North Africa. He argues that Western depictions of the East have often been shaped by colonialist attitudes, power dynamics, and cultural biases.

Edward Said in his book, *Orientalism* (1978), argues that the Western construction of the Oriental "other" has been a tool for the exercise of colonial power and domination. He contends that this portrayal of the East as exotic, irrational, and inferior has been intertwined with Western imperialism and has served to justify and perpetuate colonial

rule. Additionally, Said discusses how Western academic disciplines, literature, art, and popular culture have contributed to the creation and perpetuation of these Orientalist stereotypes.

Furthermore, Said (1978) critiques how knowledge about the East has been produced within Western institutions, arguing that it has often been tainted by political agendas and cultural prejudices. He calls for a more nuanced, self-reflective approach to understanding and representing the East, one that acknowledges the complexities and diversity of Eastern cultures and societies.

Postcolonial writers find the need to write in order to defend their cultural heritage, which the Eurocentric hegemony tries to wipe out and defile. Furthermore, it urges colonized people to stand up to resist and fight back, which raises the idea that Franz Fanon wrote about, which is the concept of violence. According to Ndayisenga (2022), there is a dual meaning of violence according to Fanon: the violence of the colonizer and the counter- violence of the colonized, which balance each other. The study also elaborates on Fanon's idea that there will be an everlasting combat between the colonized and the colonizer, the more the colonizer intensifies their violence against the colonized, the more the colonized fight back and resist the colonial aggression.

Feminism is a literary theory that calls for women's rights, and their continuous attempt to fight oppression, which paved the way for their liberation, feminism as a movement calls for enhancing the life quality for women and engaging them in the political, social, economic fields (Arizah, 2020).

Throughout history, women all over the world have suffered from the oppression of patriarchal society. Specifically, African American women and women in diaspora. In viewing the Subaltern discourse, Gayatri Spivak highlights the notion of women's

ranking in society, and she integrates Postcolonialism with feminism where she connects the issues that women face with their ranking in society, which is determined by men. Spivak examines women's relationship with men as the relation between the colonized and the colonizer, where women are looked down at, and considered as unequal to men. Moreover, they are marginalized, and positioned as the “other” (Rose 2014).

Postcolonial feminism arose as a reaction to a feminist movement that focused solely on women's experiences in Western cultures. Postcolonial feminism called for sisterhood and the incorporation of the ideas of indigenous feminism and other feminist movements of third-world peoples. Postcolonial writings examine the effects of colonial rule on the fields of feminism (McLeod 2020).

Additionally, Bell hooks a prominent feminist critique, she highlights the issues of black women such as the stereotypical images that are imposed on them, and how they suffer from patriarchy, and subjugation, and have to deal with racial oppression. Moreover, hooks call for solidarity and sisterhood to overcome these challenges (Dergisi 2021).

CHAPTER FOUR

Analysis

This chapter discusses Toni Morrison's and Leila Aboulela's representation of Sisterhood in their novels *Sula* and *Bird summons*.

4.1 The Representation of Sisterhood in Toni Morrison's *Sula*

In her works, Toni Morrison addresses African American women's issues and tries to be their voice by writing about their sufferings. Furthermore, Morrison tends to imply, explicitly and implicitly, that through her work she highlights the importance of sisterhood among African American women, whose suffering is beyond measurement. Morrison "focused on the suffering and struggle of Blacks in the United States. Morrison emphasized that to be a black woman is more different than to be a woman. Morrison presented how Black women could survive in hard conditions; she also demonstrated the African American women's life vividly and the characters in her novels have suffered beyond what one can think human beings can endure" (Tanritanir & Ayademir 2012, p. 3).

Therefore, through forming a bond, African American women can guide, support, and take care of each other despite their differences, as in the case of *Sula*. *Sula* was first published in 1973. The story is set in the fictional town of Medallion, Ohio. The novel primarily focuses on the lives of two African American women, in a black community Sula Peace and Nel Wright. The Narrative begins in the early 1900s, when slave descendants inhabit a place up on the hill, which they call "The Bottom" an ironic name that represents the condition of the African American people. In the Bottom, Nel Wright and Sula Peace find each other as young girls, and they become close friends. Sula comes from a chaotic household and is seen as somewhat unconventional, while Nel comes from a more

traditional and conservative family. Despite their differences, they develop a deep bond and become inseparable. Nel Wright and Sula Peace's personalities are shaped according to their surrounding and the way they are raised in their households. Therefore, the analysis will start by demonstrating the relationship between Nel and Sula's mothers, how this relationship affects them, and how their personalities are shaped accordingly.

To begin with Nel's relationship with her mother. Nel Wright's mother Helene is a domineering, conservative woman. Helene's mother was a prostitute for it was her occupation. Therefore, Helene's grandmother religiously raised her, in order to avoid following her mother's example. This could be seen in the following quote, "Helene was born behind those shutters, daughter of Creole whore who worked there. The grandmother took Helene and raised her under the eye of the Virgin Mary, counseling her to be constantly on guard for any sign of her mother's wild blood" (Morrison 1973.p.17).

On the other hand, Helene's husband is always absent from work, and she finds herself alone in running her household, and raising her child. Therefore, Helene follows in her grandmother's footsteps but with more exaggeration. Helene smothers her daughter while raising her, and she succeeds in molding Nel's personality the way she wants, submissive, obedient, and silenced to fit in with the black community ideals, to be, a well-mannered, proper woman, whose only dream, is to find a good husband. This is demonstrated in the following quote, "Under Helene's hand the girl became obedient and polite. Any enthusiasms the little Nel showed were calmed by the mother until she drove her daughter's imagination underground" (Morrison 1973, p. 18).

Moreover, Nel's controlling heartless mother does not only want to determine her daughter's fate but also wants to change her physical appearance. Helene is not fond of Nel's "broad flat nose (although Helene expected to improve it somewhat)" (Morrison 1973. p. 18). Hence, Helene forces Nel to put a clothespin on her nose. "go 'head and pull your nose. It hurts Mamma. Don't you want a nice nose when you grow up?" (Morrison 1973.p. 55).

In this perspective, living in a patriarchal society in the time of slavery, and after the emancipation proclamation, African American women find themselves in an extremely sensitive position. In her paper, Pascual (2020) argues that society is divided into three sections, on the top of the social status based on race and sex, are white men, then followed by white women and black men, and finally, at the bottom are black women, and in some cases they are not categorized. Therefore, black women suffered tremendously for being poorly treated by the white community, and the black male.

In this sense, Ghayatri Spivak in her famous article "*Can the Subaltern Speak*" was published in (2009), points out that the Subaltern as a concept means; marginalized, inferior people who are suffering under colonization. Spivak as a postcolonial writer does not only speak out for the colonized people in the third world, but also she addresses specifically postcolonial women around the world. Moreover, she encourages them to speak up against injustice and social oppression. In their paper, Ouakouk & Bekkari (2023) argue that "Spivak's work was not dedicated merely to Subalterns as a whole. Rather, she speaks heavily of the injustice and harmful oppression against women in general, and Third World women and non-Europeans in specific. She expressed her desire to deliver and possibly give a voice to the subalterns who cannot speak or are silent". (Ouakouk & Bekkari 2023, p. 9). Ouakouk & Bekkari (2023) elaborate further, that

Subaltern women are subjected to all sorts of injustice, such as; verbal and physical harassment, discrimination, rape, sexism, and violence. Not all these horrible acts come from the colonizers, but also from the Subaltran men.

Although *Sula* is set after the emancipation proclamation. Morrison sheds light on the status of African Americans in the aftermath of slavery. In his paper, Washington (2012) argues that, although the slavery period has ended. Hence, African American people should be treated as equal to white people. However, African Americans are prohibited from engaging in any social and political activity that is related to whites. Furthermore, African Americans must not share in using the public facilities with the Whites. Blacks and Whites have to be always separated.

Helene faces this racist segregation when she is summoned to her grandmother's funeral, her grandmother's house is in the city, Therefore, she goes with little Nel by the train, however, mistakenly, she enters the White cabin, and does not notice the marked door for "colored only". This mistake puts her in an embarrassing situation with the white conductor, who addresses her aggressively and asks her to go back to the colored cabin. This appears in this quote m when the white conductor addresses Helene, "What you think you doin', gal?. What was you doin' in there? What was you doin' in that coach yonder? We made a mistake, sir. You see, there wasn't any sign. We just got in the wrong car, that's all sir. We don't 'low any mistakes on this train. Now get your butt on in there." (Morrison 1973.p.21). Moreover, Helene faces another racist incident, when she and her daughter want to use the bathroom, during their trip to her grandmother's house, and since black people are prohibited from using the public facilities with whites. Helene and her daughter squat on the ground hiding between the grass by the train along with the black women and their children, while white people are watching them from the train windows.

This is shown in this quote, ” The restroom, Helene repeated. The woman pointed out the window and said, yes ma’am. Yonder.” [...]. The other woman stalked off to the field of high grass on the far side of the track. Some white men were leaning on the tailing in front of the stationhouse. [...]. She looked around for the other woman and, seeing just the top of her head rag in the grass, slowly realized where “yonder” was.” (Morrison 1973. p.24).

Since African American women are at the bottom of the hierarchical pyramid. They are struggling in a racist sexist patriarchal society. African American women struggle to find a decent job to support their families, after being abandoned by their men who they focus solely on how to maintain their social status. Therefore, they find themselves the only providers in their families. Pascual (2020) also explains the absence of black men from the familial picture by saying that “Most of them are pictured as almost invisible figures within their household, that they either abandon their families or betray their wives and abandon the household. Black men are pictured as accepting figures of the patriarchal society, only fighting for their rights, only caring about being man enough and not demasculinized” (Pascual 2020, p. 30). Therefore, African American men do not only protect and support their women from racial aggression, but also they encourage the dehumanization of African American women. As Hook states, “Most black slaves stood quietly as white masters sexually assaulted and brutalized black women and were not compelled to act as protectors. Their first instinct was toward self-reservation” (Hooks 1981. p. 35). As a result, for black women to support their families, some of them work as concubines. However, this act put their reputation at risk. African American women are not only seen as inferior, and marginalized, but also they are seen as the embodiment of female evil and sexual lust. In her book, Hooks (1981) demonstrates the negative stereotypical images of African American women. She states that “Black women were

naturally seen as the embodiment of female evil and sexual lust. They were labeled "Jezebels" (Hook 1981. p. 31).

In this sense, Nel's personality is shaped according to her mother and her surroundings. Nel at a young age witnesses remarkable racist incidents; therefore, she knows her current status quo. In addition, her mother's obsession with forcing little Nel to fit into a stereotypical culture is determined by a patriarchal community. Nel, as a result, becomes submissive, and vulnerable, seeking affection and support.

On the other hand, Sula Peace after the death of her father, she leaves with her mother Hanna, to her grandmother's house Eva. When Eva's husband Boy Boy abandons her, she has three children to feed. Therefore, she leaves her children with the neighboring family to secure a job, and after eighteen months, she comes again for her children with one leg and money. People in Eva's community "said Eva stuck it under a train and made them pay off. Another said she sold it to a hospital for 10.000\$" (Morrison 1973.p.31). Eva, with this money, builds a big house with many rooms and floors, and she opens it to anyone who needs shelter.

During her stay at her grandmother's house, Sula is detached and secluded. Her mother is not taking care of her nor giving her love and affection. Hana is always busy making relationships with as many men as she can., Sula always wonders if her mother loves her, however, on one occasion she hears her mother telling her friends, "I love Sula, but I don't like her" (Morrison 1973.p. 57). Eva's house misses law and order and with the absence of parental guidance, Sula becomes hostile, carefree, and rebellious.

Even though, Nel Wright and Sula Peace are the opposite of each other in terms of their lifestyles and characters. However, they share the same struggle and discomfort.

Therefore, when they met, they knew they completed each other, and with their bond, they supported and took care of each other. As Morrison mentions, “Their friendship was as intense as it was sudden. They found relief in each other’s personality. Although they were unshaped, formless things” (Morrison 1973, p. 53). Nel and Sula as black girls living in the Bottom know their status quo, therefore, they “discovered years before they were neither men nor white, and all freedom and triumph are forbidden to them” (Morrison 1973, p: 52). For this reason, they have to “set about creating something else to be” (Morrison 1973, p. 52). Therefore, through their bond, they skip what bothers them, and focus solely on themselves, not only to empower themselves but more importantly, to heal their spiritual wounds.

In this sense, Nel and Sula begin to discover how their bond can empower them unconsciously. Further, how this bond is going to affect their personalities accordingly. As for Nel, as I mentioned earlier, due to her relationship with her domineering mother she lacks confidence and self-respect. However, Nel with Sula feels comfortable in her skin and grows confident. Hence, she stops caring about her physical appearance and focuses more on her mind and soul. Nel after she meets Sula, accepts the natural beauty that distinguishes her, and learns how to embrace it. Nel stops using her nose pin and she “slid it under the blanket as soon as she got in the bed” (Morrison 1973, p. 55). Moreover, she stops worrying about “the hateful hot comb” that she has “to suffer through each Saturday evening” (Morrison 1973, p. 55) when her mother straightens her hair every Saturday evening.

As for Sula, as mentioned before, Sula has an agitated temper and a chaotic mind, she lacks a sense of belonging. Therefore, she always feels detached. With Nel, Sula feels cared for, her existence now matters to someone. Besides, when Sula is upset about the

way her mother treats her, Nel comes to her “pulling her away from dark thoughts back into the bright, hot daylight” (Morrison 1973, p. 57). Moreover, Sula does not understand how to show affection, and she “could hardly be counted on to sustain any emotions for more than three minutes” (Morrison 1973, p. 53). Sula now is calmer and self-composed in the presence of Nel.

Moreover, Nel and Sula enjoy each other’s company and their souls become so intimate to the extent that they display their unity and bond through their little game. This is shown in an incident when Nel and Sula as young girls start playing in the grass play they dig two holes, where both “together they worked until the two holes were the same” (Morrison 1973, p. 58).

Weems (2004) argues that African American women have always shared an unbreakable bond where each member gives and receives equally. They form a supportive community demonstrating a strong sense of responsibility for one another and showing empathy for shared experiences. Their interactions are based on love, including constructive criticism, and the exchange of common and individual experiences. African American women need each other to repair the damage that occurs due to patriarchy and racism, Nel and Sula know this, they know as black girls that through sisterhood they will support and empower each other. Moreover, Nel and Sula knew from the moment they met that they needed each other, to mend the broken pieces in each one’s personality, therefore, their bonding was a necessity. As this quote illustrates, “Their meeting was fortunate, for it let them use each other to grow on they found in each other's eyes the intimacy they were looking for" (Morrison 1973, p. 52).

Furthermore, Nel and Sula as black girls, are learning that through sisterhood, they can love themselves and each other, while this love can be implemented in different forms

such as; care, support, empowerment, and the ability to stand for each other in the time of need. Furthermore, through sisterhood, they created a sense of selflessness as a result; they established an efficient relationship based on mutual nurturing, self-love, and the ability to erase insecurities. (Oliveira 2011, p: 50), points out that “women, especially black women, with the means to experiment with themselves as they discover each other. Women’s intimate and fluid connection helps them see their beauty and their importance, because they can envisage themselves in the other and, thus they can see their worth. Sisterhood creates the possibility for black women to develop their subjectivities by aligning themselves with girlfriends”.

Moreover, Morrison demonstrates through *Sula* that sisterhood means making sacrifices and being selfless when it comes to standing up for each other. In this scene, Sula feels responsible for protecting Nel, when some boys try to harass Nel on her way to school, Sula rushes to protect Nel, and immediately, in an irresponsible act, she cuts her finger with a knife to scare off the boys, and eventually she succeeds. However, Morrison describes her act as, “Her aim was determined but inaccurate” (Morrison 1973, p. 54). This scene can give us an insight into Sula’s character, that she is ruthless and violent. Beckerman (1981) describes Sula’s act as “She has reacted with the violence which she can *act*, she does so irresponsibly” (Beckerman 1981, p. 31). Nevertheless, the reason why Sula reacts with violence has a historical, and social background related to African American people, which will be explained later.

From another perspective, Morrison tries to intrigue through *Sula* the reader into questioning the validity of sisterhood, when this bond faces life challenges. Furthermore, Morrison puts Nel and Sula in two incidents, which jeopardize their relationship, and how they react accordingly.

The first incident occurs when Nel and Sula were young and playing by the river. They met a little boy named Little Chicken. Nel and Sula offer to play with him, and Sula “picked him up by his hand and swung him out [...] When he [Little Chicken] slipped from her hands and sailed away out over the water” (Morrison 1973, p. 60-61). Assumes to be dead, Nel and Sula are consumed with guilt thinking that they are responsible for drowning Little Chicken. As a result, Sula starts crying and collapses, but Nel is beside her comforting her and telling her “It ain’t your fault” (Morrison 1973, p. 63). Sula feels safe in Nel words and protected in her presence, therefore, Sula “stood up and allowed Nel to lead her away” (Morrison 1973, p. 63). At the time of the investigation, Nel and Sula “did not touch hands or look at each other, there was a space, a separation between them” (64). Sula thinks that at any moment the sheriff will point at her and accuse her of murdering Little Chicken “although she knows she had done nothing” (Morrison 1973, p. 65), on the other hand, Nel is afraid that they may accuse her for helping Sula. Nel and Sula are experiencing for the first time a predicament that may jeopardize their friendship, while they eagerly anticipate the result.

Finally, when everyone in town knows that it was not their fault, and it was an accident, Nel and Sula feel relieved, their bond grows stronger, and they know now that they only have each other and that is enough for them. Therefore, at Little Chicken's funeral, Nel and Sula “Held hands and knew that only the coffin would lie in the earth; the bubbly laughter and the press of fingers in the palm would stay aboveground forever” (Morrison 1973, p. 66).

The other incident is when Nel and Sula grow up, Jude Greece a young ambitious black man, plans to marry Nel. Jude dreams of marrying someone who does not treat him like his mother, someone who can share with her his dreams, hopes, and plans. Jude wants

to marry someone “who had never seemed hell-bent on marrying, who made the whole venture seem like his idea, his conquest” (Morrison 1973, p. 83). This indicates the mentality of black men in how to be superior and domineering, forcing their desires and needs upon black women, Jude as the other black men desperately want to change their status in their community and climb the hierarchical ladder, and always unsatisfied with their status quo. However, Nel’s personality is quite the opposite. As Morrison illustrates in this quote, “She [Nel] had no aggression. Her parents had succeeded in rubbing down to a dull glow any sparkle or splutter she had” (Morrison 1973, p. 83). However, Morrison points out that Nel is a different person from Sula, Nel feels comfortable herself with Sula, and for Nel, Sula is her haven to go to if someone or something bothers her. On the other hand, Sula wants to do anything to make Nel happy, what they feel for each other is mutual. Morrison suggests that “their friendship was so close, they had difficulty distinguishing one’s thought from the other” (Morrison 1973, p. 83). Therefore, when Jude asks Nel’s her hand for marriage, Sula feels happy, even when Jude tries to catch Sula’s attention, she responds to him thinking if she makes him happy Nel will be happy too. Moreover, Sula remembers, “They never quarreled, the way some girlfriends did over boys, or competed against each other for them. In those days a compliment to one was a compliment to the other, and the cruelty to one was a challenge to the other” (Morrison 1973, p. 84).

Nel with Jude is experiencing a new feeling a feeling to be desired by someone who “saw her singly, she didn’t even know that she had a neck until Jude remarked on it, or that her smile was anything but the spreading of her lips until he saw it as a small miracle” (Morrison 1973, p. 84).

Eventually, Nel chooses to be a domestic wife. However, this choice costs her to accommodate Sula's friendship. As the narrator describes, "Nel's response to Jude's shame and anger selected her away from Sula." (Morrison 1973, p. 84). When Nel chooses to marry, she as a married black woman has to follow what the community compels her to do, or she will be cast away, she has to act according to the social norms. Nel withdraws from Sula's life to prepare herself for her new life. Dharitri (2019) in his paper illustrates that, "The two friends are compelled to start a life of their own by the society. Nel decided to marry according to the conventions of society. This shows how society controlled women in the society through different social issues like marriage. And this decision of Nel made Sula move away from Nel (Dharitri 2019, p: 3). Sula on the other hand chooses to leave, when she sees that Nel is no longer close to her, Nel now is busy in her new life. "She [Sula] had clung to Nel as the closest thing to both another and a self, only to discover that she and Nel -were not the same thing," (Morrison 1973, p. 109). Therefore, Sula leaves the town to experiment with something new, away from the societal conventions.

In this perspective, Morrison demonstrates to the reader the consequences of not maintaining sisterhood through Nel and Sula. After ten years, Sula returns to her hometown, and she becomes a replica of her mother, not different from Sula, Nel also becomes exactly like her mother. Sula is rebelling against societal conventions, she is having many affairs with men as her mother was, and she is careless and ruthless. On the other hand, Nel becomes a mother of three children always visiting the church and doing her sermons, she makes sure that everyone in town knows that she is an obedient housewife and follows the society norms. Sula visits Nel at her house and sees how Nel has changed and has three children, she is now occupied and there is no room for Sula in

her life, However, Nel is very happy to see Sula, she remembers the joyful time she spent with Sula, Nel remembers” (Morrison 1973, p. 95). Sula. Who made her laugh, who made her see old things with new eyes, in whose presence she felt clever, gentle, and a little raunchy. Sula, whose past she had lived through and with whom the present was a constant sharing perception”.

Nonetheless, Nel and Sula choose different paths. Sula chooses to be rebellious and does not abide by society's rules, while Nel chooses to be obedient, and follows society's instructions. However, none of them feels as happy or comfortable as when they were together. Sula feels deserted and outcasted, she does not differentiate between what is right and what is wrong, and she lives her life carelessly. While Nel yearns for a sense of belonging, she misses how to be loved by someone, someone who can understand her and feel comfortable with her, although Nel thinks that her husband Jude will compensate for the loss of Sula. However, she was wrong, Jude like any other Black man thinks of himself and his desires and focuses on pursuing his dreams alongside white people.

Nel and Sula’s reunion makes it possible for their bond to be established again because they need each other. However, everything falls apart, when Sula makes love with Jude, Nel’s husband, Nel feels betrayed, and cannot fathom the idea that her only, and dear friend could betray her. This second incident affects Nel and Sula’s bond forever, Nel could not forgive Sula for her infidelity with her husband. On the other hand, Sula with her troubled life and mind could not understand Nel’s reaction, considering the nature of their relationship she thinks, “She had no thought at all of causing Nel pain when she bedded Jude”. (Morrison 1973, p. 119). Sula also thinks that she never understood the concept of marriage for “having lived in a house with a woman who thought all men available” (Morrison 1973, p. 119).

From the previous discussion, Nel and Sula's behavior refers to the historical and social aggression that African American women witnessed. (Miller, 2023) argues that the psychological effect of slavery and trauma on African American women have been profound and long-lasting, the experiences of slavery including dehumanization, and violence, have had a significant psychological impact on African American women and their descendants. The historical trauma has become embedded in the collective memory of the African American community. African American women continue to experience racial trauma as a result of systematic racism, discrimination, and microaggression, contributing to ongoing mental health challenges. Therefore, psychological trauma has caused cultural and identity problems for African American women. Many struggle with issues of self-worth, self-identity, and a sense of belonging.

This can be seen in Sula's character, her childhood trauma and family dynamics make her upbringing in a household marked by instability, negligence, and familial discord, which plays a significant role in shaping her personality. Sula witnesses her mother's struggles contribute to her early understanding of the world and her place within it. Furthermore, these early experiences have developed emotional psychological violence, which makes Sula refuse her gender role and reject the societal norms and expectations imposed on her. This discussion leads us to Frantz Fanon's violence theory. In his paper, Hilton (2014) examines Fanon's theory of the psychological effect of colonization and oppression; he argues that the experience of being colonized leads to profound psychological trauma and a sense of inferiority in the colonized people. Therefore, Fanon views the use of violence by the colonized as a response to the structural violence and dehumanization inflicted upon them. As a result, Sula rejects an obedient subjugated black woman, and she wants to live her life by her rules.

(Shovon 2022) argues that “The main cause of the damage to the friendship is their “conflicting modes of moral perception” Sula learns to take care of herself and takes responsibility for her actions in ten years and thus becomes confident about her activities. In these years, Nel learns to take care of her husband and her children and becomes a little oblivious about herself. She feels insecure and loses her confidence because, in these years, she forgets to express herself. There is limited scope for women in Bottom to express their individualism, and the existence of self is dependent on its relation to the entire community (Shovon, 2022. p. 3).

Nel and Sula after this incident separate again. Nel believes that her life has been ruined because of Sula, therefore, she spends the time hating Sula and regretting her relationship with her. Nel misses Jude and thinks that he stopped since she left. Nel could move on with her life and hence fall into despair.

One day Nel hears that Sula is sick, and she cannot prevent herself from visiting her. In Sula’s room, Nel sits and confronts her, and starts arguing about the reason that made Sula betray her only friend. While Sula is focusing on their friendship, their bond is stronger to be ruined by this insignificant incident. Sula reminds us that “if we were good friends, how come you couldn’t get over it” (Morrison 1973, p. 145). Nel and Sula in their subconscious are certain that they need each other more than they need men because they know how men are in their society. However, Nel is driven by her anger and denies the truth.

After a while, Sula dies because of her illness alone. Nel visits her grave in the cemetery, remembering every little detail about Sula, while Nel is walking, she stops “Her eyes twitched and burned a little. Sula? She whispered, gazing at the top trees. Sula?” (Morrison 1973, p. 174). Nel now understands Sula’s words, she understands that she

needs Sula more than anyone in the world. Nel final words are “All that time, all that time, I thought I was missing Jude.” And the loss pressed down on her chest and came up into her throat. “We were girls together,” she said as though explaining something. “O Lord, Sula,” she cried, “girl, girl, girl girl girl.” It was a fine cry – loud and long- but it had no bottom and it had no top, just circles and circles of sorrows” (Morrison 1973, p. 174).

4.2 The Representation of Sisterhood in Leila Aboulela’s *Bird Summons*.

Leila Aboulela’s writings often explore the themes of sisterhood within the context of diaspora, highlighting the experiences of Arab Muslim women navigating new cultural, social, and geographical landscapes. In her works, she delves into the complexities of sisterhood among women in diaspora, addressing issues such as identity, belonging, cultural adaptation, and the preservation of traditions. Aboulela portrays sisterhood and mutual support that developed among women living in diaspora, highlighting how they come together to overcome challenges such as discrimination, homesickness, and the complexities of combining two cultures. In *Bird Summons* (2019), Aboulela offers readers insights into the diverse experiences of Arab Muslim women living in a new cultural environment. In the novel, she captures the complexities of identity, the resilience of women, and the ways in which sisterhood serves as a vital source of strength in the face of the challenges posed by diasporic life. Aladaylah (2023) also mentions that Aboulela creates a fictional ambiance to have an impact on the reader to highlight the importance of transformation while being dislocated in a diasporic place, Aboulela through Salma, Moni and Iman want to show how they can reform their new identities without abandoning their origins, memories, and beliefs. Further, to overcome the pressure that comes along with this journey.

In her novel *Bird Summons*, Aboulela traces the journey of the main three characters, Salma, Moni, and Iman, Arab Muslim women who live in England, who embark on a road trip through Scotland to visit the grave of Lady Evelyn a Scottish woman who converted to Islam. Moreover, to “honor [Lady Evelyn], the first British woman to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca” (Aboulela 2019, p. 1).

The story follows three Muslim Arab women from different backgrounds who come together in the Scottish highlands for a spiritual vacation. The novel portrays the complexities in their relationships and how they support, and challenge each other. The theme of sisterhood is central in the novel, as the three main characters, Salma, Moni, and Iman, form a bond that transcends their differences. Their interactions and shared experiences during their spiritual journey highlight the importance of sisterhood. Despite their struggles and conflicts, they find strength in their collective support for one another. In their paper, Awad & Arkhagha (2021), while examining Salma, Moni, and, Iman’s spiritual journey and all its dimensions, they come across the term “supportive sisterhood”, where the three characters need to bond while exploring their identities, and life choices. Throughout the novel, the concept of sisterhood is explored within the context of cultural and religious identity. The characters navigate their personal beliefs and traditions while also grappling with the challenges of being Arab Muslim women in a multicultural society.

In his paper, Aladaylah (2021) discusses the dislocation narratives in Aboulela’s novel *Bird Summons*. His paper explores how Aboulela seeks to negotiate and present issues related to diaspora, dislocation, fragmentation, and identity transformation. Moreover, he highlights how Aboulela uses a spatial metaphorical journey in the novel to open a space of spiritual freedom for the characters who are part of diaspora. The

protagonists of the novel embark on a physical journey, crossing boundaries and traveling to achieve transformation within their consciousness, both intellectually and spiritually. The characters in *Bird Summons* are depicted as dislocated diasporic identities burdened with ambivalent wounded consciousness, and the novel explores their struggles with social dissonance and ambiguities of identity.

The novel delves into the importance of sisterhood, portraying the characters' emotional and spiritual connections as they confront their pasts and envision their futures. Through their shared experiences, conflicts, and resolutions, *Bird Summons* underscores the transformative power of sisterhood and the ways in which women can find strength and support in each other.

In this section, the three main characters Salma, Moni, and Iman are discussed concerning sisterhood. The first character to discuss is Salma, Salma is originally from Egypt, her age is around forty, she is married to a Scottish man, and she has four children, she works as a massage therapist. Salma has a strong leading personality, when she speaks “people listen” (Aboulela 2019, p .16). Salma is a successful community housewife, she has a good job, and a good relationship with her husband who loves her and gives her freedom to do whatever she wants, moreover, her “four children were burly and good at everything: school, sports, hobbies” (Aboulela 2019, p .6). However, she could not stop the feeling of the cultural displacement “she [Salma] was the one who must always be making the effort to belong. Digging deeper all the time, craving connections, self-conscious that her roots, despite the children, might not be strong enough” (Aboulela 2019, p .33). Salma feels a deep longing for a connection to her home culture and struggles with the challenges of assimilating into a new society.

Back in Egypt, Salma first studied medicine, but her degree was not accepted in Britain, because it “was not sufficient” (Aboulela 2019, p .9), therefore, she tried to do the qualifying test, but she failed twice. Salma, heartbroken, starts to find other alternatives and trains herself to become a massage therapist. Moreover, Salma always feels alienated and distant from her family. She believes that her kids have a special language with their father, David. Salma understands every word they say, yet she does not know what they are talking about, she “would then feel that they were his [David] and not hers. She was the outsider, the foreign wife, and they were one unit” (Aboulela 2019, p .33).

Moreover, Salma’s identity is fragmented, as she navigates between her Egyptian background and her life in Britain, Salma remembers how was to live in Egypt and misses life there, how she would take the bus with Amir, heading to have “Foul and Tamiyah and tea with mint” (Aboulela 2019, p .34) to eat for breakfast. Salma and Amir were to be engaged, however, everything changed when she traveled to Britain.

The second character is Moni, Moni is a Sudanese woman, who has a disabled son Adam who has severe cerebral palsy. Moni dedicates her life to taking care of her son neglecting herself and her husband Murtada, Moni rejects her husband’s proposal to go with him as he has a good job offer in Saudi Arabia. Moni prioritizes her son’s well-being and the medical care he receives in Britain.

Furthermore, Moni accuses her husband of being indifferent about his son’s situation, while Murtada begs her to move on and return to her old self, how Moni and before Adam was positive and successful “ with her higher-powered bank job and independence” (Aboulela 2019, p .13). As it shown in this quote, “You [Moni] need to get back on track, Moni. Be fair to yourself. Get this through your head, Adam isn’t going to be better”

(Aboulela 2019, p .19). Moni struggle revolves around changing societal norms and stereotypes regarding disability and motherhood. Moni wants to find her own identity and break free from the confines of societal expectations. In Sudan when Moni and Murtada went to visit his family, for his brother's wedding, people were cruel and judging about Adam's health status and "so blatantly curious, at turns blaming her (it had to be someone's fault) and pitying her, that she was miserable" (Aboulela 2019, p .12). Therefore, she would keep Adam at her room all the time to keep away predators off him and her, and promised herself that she would never go to Sudan because people there do not understand.

The third character is Iman, Iman is a Syrian civil war refugee, and she comes to Britain seeking for better life. Iman longs for stability in her life as she is "in her twenties but on her third marriage. Once widowed, and once divorced" (Aboulela 2019, p .3), moreover, she yearns to be reunited with her scattered family members, especially her mother. Iman was exposed to suitors at a young age, she could not pursue a proper education. Iman's second marriage allowed her to go to Britain but unfortunately, she got divorced after her husband was imprisoned.

Iman longs to be financially and emotionally secure, but she does not have a degree, she does not work, also her English language is poor, however, Iman is very beautiful, therefore, she depends on her beauty to secure a financially stable husband. Iman meets Ibrahim in Britain, Ibrahim is a student at the university away from his family and alone in Britain, he is always afraid to have affairs with women, therefore, to prevent himself from sins, he seeks marriage, when he sees Iman he is infatuated with her beauty, and marries her secretly, without the knowledge of his parents.

Furthermore, Iman's character is marked by her obedience and dependence on others. She consistently follows instructions and feels powerless to alter her destiny, despite her strong desire for a new sense of identity and self-awareness.

It is worth mentioning that all three characters are subjected to the stereotypical image that haunts Arab Muslim immigrants in Europe. This leads us to Edward Said's book "*Orientalism*", published in 1978. In his book, Said examines the relationship between the East and the West, he argues that the Western knowledge about the East, particularly the Arab and Islamic world, is not based on objective understanding but rather on a set of preconceived notions and cultural biases. Said coined the term "Orientalism" to describe the Western academic and cultural discourse that perpetuates these stereotypes, portraying the Orient as exotic, backward, and inferior (Said, 1978).

Aboulela as any other Arab Muslim Anglophone writer sheds light on this issue, specifically Arab Muslim women who are misrepresented and marginalized in Western societies. Arab Muslim women in diaspora often find themselves at the intersection of multiple stereotypes and cultural expectations. They are not only subjected to orientalist depictions of being exotic and submissive Middle Eastern women but also face Islamophobia and the assumption that they are oppressed because of their religious and cultural background.

Salma, Moni, and Iman's unexpected friendship transcends their differences. Their interactions and shared experiences highlight the power of sisterhood. Despite their struggles and conflicts, they find strength in their collective support for one another.

Salma meets Iman throughout the Arab Muslim women group, that Salma leads. Since then Iman is always been with Salma Aboulela describes the relationship between

Salma and Iman “If you wanted to be mean, you would say that Iman was Salma’s sidekick, if you wanted to be nice, you would say she was like devoted, much younger sister” (Aboulela 2019, p .3). Iman feels safe with Salma she thinks that Salma fills the gaps In Iman’s life, she considers Salma as her family, for example, when Iman marries Ibrahim “Salma had helped her with all the preparations, hosting the henna party at her house and even sugaring Iman’s legs for her” (Aboulela 2019, p .10).

On the other hand, Salma thinks of Iman as if she is her daughter, when the gap between Salma and her children widens as they grow older and “ they became more British and less piece of her” (Aboulela 2019, p .7), she comes closer to Iman, Iman is always there when Salma needs her. Iman always knows Salma’s intentions, therefore, she does not feel the need to justify her actions all the time. Moreover, Salma feels like herself in front of Iman, she does not need to pretend to be someone else she even “didn’t feel self-conscious about her accent [...] Iman was easy to talk to, easy to understand” (Aboulela 2019, p .7) in comparison to Salma’s children. One may think that Salma imagines in Iman a reflection of how her daughter would be if she stayed in Egypt and married Amir.

Moni and Salma meet when Moni takes Adam for his message therapy session, however, she does not find the two British therapists that she is accustomed to, rather, she finds Salma taking Adam to the session, however, Moni questions Salam’s abilities, for being an Arab descendant, which indicates how Arabs are looked at and compared to the Westerners. Moni thinks that Salma will not be efficient while dealing with Adam thinking, “Salma would neither be as professional nor as qualified as her British counterparts” (Aboulela 2019, p .30). However, Moni is surprised, when she finds that Salma “was even better with Adam” (Aboulela 2019, p .30) than the other British

therapists. Moreover, Salma offered to give a session to Adam “free of charge” (Aboulela 2019, p .30) during Christmas vacation when the center was closed.

Since then, Salma and Moni have become friends. Moni admires Salma for the support she has shown amid her misery, and she feels secure knowing she has someone kind and supportive by her side. Also, Moni benefits from Salma as she works in a medical care institution, and has all the medical knowledge and the proper practice, Moni can ask about Adam’s health condition when it is needed. Moni in return she tries to return the favor, when she cooks for Salma Falafel (Aboulela 2019, p .32), or when Moni shares with Salma her Arabic cuisine recipes, as if Moni knows Salma for a long time, thus, knows that anything that reminds her of her home country would make her happy.

Additionally, Salma succeeds in persuading Moni to leave Adam in the nursing home to go with them to Lady Evelyn’s grave, Salma thinks that it is a great opportunity for Moni to have some leisure time away from her distressful situation.

On their way to their spiritual journey Salma, Moni, and Iman start questioning the role of patriarchy in their lives, and what to expect from men within the diasporic context. Tom (2021) argues that women in diaspora may find themselves caught between the cultural expectations and their ethnic heritage and the opportunities for gender equality in the host culture, she adds that sisterhood provides a safe and supportive space for women to discuss also to challenge patriarchal norms, and to empower each other.

As for Moni, she believes that her husband is not supportive, and does not care about his son’s health condition, Moni feels alone struggling with her disabled son, her all she wants from her husband is to be by her side, reassuring her that Adam is going to be better. Moreover, Moni feels that she carries a huge burden on her shoulders, and she

wishes that Murtada would take the lead so she could rest. However, Murtada's only concern is to be in a place where he can be himself in an Arabic country, and find a decent job, a place where he cannot be judged or always have to feel the pressure to live according to the West lifestyle, he says, "Why live where I'm not wanted? (Aboulela 2019, p .27), while he can be in a place where he can wear his "Jellabbiya and saunter to the mosque in his slippers" (Aboulela 2019, p .27), prioritizing his needs over Moni and Adam. Moreover, Moni questions the concept that determines the wife to be obedient to her husband, Moni is wise enough to know that obedience is the acknowledgment of leadership, however, leadership can be questioned and interrogated (Aboulela 2019, p.33).

As for Salma, Salma always compares her husband David with her Egyptian friend Amir. Salma admires her husband and admits that he loves her, he is supportive of her and also helps her in the house and the kids. However, she feels that he is indifferent when it comes to her wishes and needs, for example, when Salma's medical degree was rejected in Britain and failed twice in the qualifying exam, David did not encourage her to pursue her dream of becoming a doctor, on the other hand, Amir was always encouraging her to follow her dreams. Amir always addresses her as Dr. Salma (Aboulela 2019, p .9), as he knows this is the only thing that she ever wanted in her life.

Therefore, Salma after all these years cannot forget Amir and starts to contact him over the phone, Salma feels alive again, she believes that Amir knows what she wants, is capable of feeding her ego, boosting her self-esteem, and acknowledging her capabilities.

Finally, Iman, Iman questions the difference between marriage and prostitution, with her unfortunate marriages, she loses track. Iman was fifteen years old when she was married, therefore, she does not understand the concept of marriage. Iman thinks marriage

is like prostitution the relationship between the man and the woman is based on reciprocal interests, “the man pays and the woman serves” (Aboulela 2019, p .35). All the men she meets enjoy her beauty, even her last marriage with Ibrahim, she believes that he marries her for one purpose, he does treat her as his wife, also he tries so hard to hide her form others.

Moreover, Iman remembers how obedient she is to all of her husbands, and how the three of them control her life, she never has an opinion, she always does what they tell her to do, even on the slightest things for example, each one has an opinion on what she should dress. The first wanted her to wear these long, loose abayas or plain coats. The second thought she should lighten up and wear trousers and colours, not attract attention to me. Then Ibrahim encouraged her to copy [Slama] (Aboulela 2019, p .154).

On their way to the loch, Ibrahim calls Iman and meets her on the way, Ibrahim divorces Iman because his parents are visiting him after they found out that he secretly got married, he is afraid that his father will cut off his allowance. Ibrahim brings all of Iman’s stuff and puts them in Salma’s car, Salma is infuriated, and she attacks Ibrahim with harsh words. While Iman is devastated, thinking “she was in the way: unnecessary. Only her beauty was valuable” (Aboulela 2019, p .59)

Therefore, when the three women reach the cottage, and as an act of rebellion, Iman starts to wear customs as a way of acquiring a new identity. She believes that she does not have the chance to choose what she wants, therefore, she thinks that now it is time to choose her path, “It is as if she wants to change her identity because of not being wanted or accepted in the West” (Awajan 2023. P. 6). Eventually, Iman chooses to take off her hijab, because she wants to break free from traditions, as she thinks that she never chooses to wear it, rather it was forced upon her as an act of habit (Aboulela 2019, p .155).

From all that is mentioned above, it is clear that the three women reach a point where they are overwhelmed, they are struggling to find the right path, and they are stuck in both worlds. However, now they have to accept the change, by liberating themselves from the shackles of the past and their old mentalities through transformation. Awajan (2023) states that through their transformation, they are able to overcome their issues and adopt their new identities as Arab Westerners.

Throughout the novel, Salma, Moni, and Iman offer each other emotional support during their struggles. They listen to one another, provide comfort, and offer advice when needed. For instance, Salma and Moni, sympathize with Iman, they try to uplift her spirit when Ibrahim leaves her, Salma tells Iman that she is better than him, she always thought that that is why she discouraged her from marrying him (Aboulela 2019, p .66). Moreover, Salma plans to bring Iman at her house because now she does not have a place to shelter her (Aboulela 2019, p .51).

On the other hand, Moni with her wise words, answers Iman's question and her answer opens Iman's eyes and mind about the true nature of marriage and the difference between marriage and prostitution. Moni with ease answers Iman in a way as an older sister teaches her little sister, "If a woman doesn't have her means, it could feel that way. If she is passed from one husband to the next without choice if there is no love or understanding, it could feel that way. But one is halal and the other haram. One is blessed, and the other isn't; that should be a sufficient difference." (Aboulela 2019, p .60). Iman after Moni's precious words, changes her perception about marriage, now she knows that love should be added to the equation. Both men and women should serve each other without expecting something from the other (Aboulela 2019, p .65).

Furthermore, sisterhood challenges the three women's perspectives in how they envision their struggle. Salma, Moni, and Iman one of them looks at her struggle from her point of view. Thus, they either may succumb to disappointment, or take decisions they may regret. However, their bond gives them a platform to confront each other to share mutual awareness. Salma, Moni, and Iman challenge each other by confronting one another about her downfall. For instance, when Iman and Moni, confront Salma about her relationship with Amir, they advise her to let it go, because it will ruin her marriage, Iman says it is just bad cheating on David, and she explains that David is a good person and treats her right, while Moni advises her to stop before it gets out of hand (Aboulela 2019, p .152-153).

On the other hand, Salma and Iman confront Moni about the way she handles her life, they blame her for ruining her marriage. Salma says that Moni is prioritizing her son over Murtada and herself. Moreover, Salma advises her to make a balance in order to make her marriage work, while Iman adds that Moni is not a good wife, and pushes her husband away (Aboulela 2019, p .153-157).

Furthermore, Salma and Moni confront Iman about taking her hijab off to fit in Western society. Salma explains to her that taking the hijab off is not a part of tradition, rather it is to protect her from men, and Salma advises her to concentrate on other things to build her new identity, rather than focusing on her beauty (Aboulela 2019, p .156). While Moni is suggesting implicitly that it is not by taking off her hijab Iman, it is about keeping their Muslim identity in the West.

Eventually, the heated discussion turns into a quarrel, and every one of them wants to prove her point. Therefore, Salma, Moni, and Iman feel distant from each other every one of them wants her personal space to contemplate her status quo. However, this is the

tipping point for Salma, Moni, and Iman, for their transformation. Aboulela draws a vivid picture to the reader of their transformation, the internal feud that they have is represented as a physical metamorphosis.

Awjan (2023) adds that Salma, Moni, and Iman undergo a metamorphosis, transforming into different shapes and creatures. This transformation is a metaphor for the challenges they face as Arabs living in the West and their journey to construct new identities as Arab Westerners. In the novel, Moni becomes a rolling ball, representing her feeling of being overwhelmed and trapped, Iman transforms into a grotesque mix of mammal and reptile, symbolizing her feeling of being caught between two worlds, finally, Salma becomes immobilized, losing her strength, which mirrors her feelings of being powerless and trapped by her choices.

At the peak of their transformation happen in the forest. The three women in their unusual state cannot forget each other, so they start calling each other's names, except for Iman who loses her ability to speak, the three of them know that they need each other to overcome this predicament, therefore, when they meet they "they clung to each other" (Aboulela 2019, p .208). Moreover, they feel the power of their togetherness a "unified effort" (208), Salma and Moni say, "We are together" (Aboulela 2019, p .208), while Iman draws a large circle around Salma and Moni, and joins them as if she wants to say we are together as well (Aboulela 2019, p .208).

Furthermore, Salma's inability to move surrenders her to her friends, whom she trusts to lead her to the right path, and she knows that it is normal behavior sometimes, to ask for help and to be dependent. Salma also stresses the power of sisterhood "Sisterhood was the most valuable and worthy of investments. Moni and Iman might see her as their leader,

but she was the one who needed them. She could not now move an inch without them” (Aboulela 2019, p .209).

Finally, together they overcome their transformation predicament, and it seems like it is an awakening or a rebirth every one of them now sees the full image, they see now what they are missing, and the moment of epiphany has prevailed. Iman embraces maturity along with accepting her Arab Muslim identity. Aboulela describes Iman's spiritual transformation as “she had grown up. She wore maturity like a cape and it was the best piece of clothing she had ever put on” (Aboulela 2019, p .217). Hence, this indicates that Iman now wants to start a new life, to be self-dependent, moreover, to care more about her inner self rather than her beauty.

Moreover, Moni starts to love her life (Aboulela 2019, p .218), also she changes her perspective, and she wants to handle her life differently, by embracing her son's health condition with love and not as a burden, and having more children who they could love Adam and support him (Aboulela 2019, p ..218).

Finally, Salma stops putting herself down for not passing the medical exam to become a doctor and “Hiding her low self-esteem beneath the efficiency” (Aboulela 2019, p .219), she learns to accept her fate that she is a skilled massage therapist who has a loving husband and beautiful family, therefore she stops chasing the past and embraces the present.

In the end, Salma, Moni, and Iman end their journey by reaching Lady Evelyn's grave, they return together holding hands, through their unity they have healed and they learn to forgive themselves and each other, enabling personal growth and emotional transformation.

Aboulela uses the relationship between these women to depict the power of sisterhood and how women can find strength and solace in each other's company, even in unfamiliar and challenging circumstances. Through the characters of Salma, Moni, and Iman, the novel presents a compelling portrayal of sisterhood that resonates with the reader.

Given the above debate, the reader can find how the two writers depicted the struggles of African American women, and the diasporic women, further how both highlight the importance of sisterhood, albeit in different contexts.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter aims to demonstrate the results of the study and to answer the study questions that are presented in chapter one. Furthermore, the study presents some recommendations that may contain other issues in the representation of sisterhood in Toni Morrison *Sula*, and Leila Aboulela *Bird summons*.

5.1 Conclusion

1. How is sisterhood represented in Toni Morrison's *Sula*?

Toni Morrison's representation of sisterhood in *Sula* through postcolonial and feminist lenses is evident in *Sula*. From a postcolonial perspective, Morrison's portrayal of sisterhood can be seen as a response to the historical and cultural impact of colonialism on African American women. In her novel, she often depicts the complex relationships between women who have been marginalized and oppressed by colonial and postcolonial systems. Morrison explores how sisterhood can provide strength and resilience in the face of systematic patriarchal oppression.

Moreover, Morrison's representation of sisterhood through the lens of feminism emphasizes the importance of solidarity, support, and empowerment among women. Morrison highlights how women come together to challenge patriarchal norms and structure and to navigate the complexities of their lives. Morrison's portrayal of sisterhood often emphasizes the bonds of friendship and shared experiences that unite women in the face of adversity.

Furthermore, Morrison represents through Nel and Sula how their relationship evolves. Through their friendship, Morrison explores themes of independence, identity, and the complexity of female relationships within the context of a postcolonial society.

2. How is sisterhood represented in Leila Aboulela's *Bird Summons*?

Leila Aboulela's *Bird Summons* presents sisterhood among diasporic Arab women through a postcolonial and feminist lens, by exploring the complexities and interconnectedness of their experiences, identities, and relationships. The novel delves into the ways in which Salma, Moni, and Iman navigate their hybrid cultural identities in the West while challenging patriarchal norms.

Leila Aboulela's representation of *Bird Summons* through a postcolonial lens portrays the diasporic Arab Muslim women struggling in the West to find new identities while challenging the stereotypical images about Arab Muslim women in the West. Hence, sisterhood is presented as a means of resisting and transcending the Western culture complexities. Furthermore, Leila Aboulela represents sisterhood through the feminist lens, where the novel examines the patriarchal norms and expectations that shape the lives of diasporic Arab women. Thus, sisterhood is depicted as a space for these women to challenge and subvert traditional gender roles and expectations, as they find strength and support in their shared experiences of resistance and empowerment. Sisterhood is portrayed as a source of empowerment for the main characters, Salma, Moni, and Iman draw strength from their collective experiences, challenges, and triumphs, fostering a sense of solidarity that enables them to confront and overcome the constraints imposed by Western culture and the patriarchal system.

3. What are the similarities and differences between both writers in presenting sisterhood in their novels?

Sula by Toni Morrison and *Bird Summons* by Leila Aboulela are both novels that explore the complexities of female relationships and sisterhood. While the settings and cultural contexts of the two novels differ, there are several similarities in how they depict the bonds between women.

Both novels are rooted in specific cultural and social contexts that shape the experiences of the female characters. *Sula* is set in the African American community of the early to mid-20th century, while *Bird Summons* explores the experiences of diasporic Muslim women from different cultural backgrounds. Despite the differing contexts, both novels address the impact of societal norms, cultural expectations, and historical legacies on the lives and relationships of the female characters. Moreover, both novels delve into the theme of independence and the quest for individual identity within the context of sisterhood. In *Sula*, Sula and Nel's paths diverge as they seek to define themselves in the face of societal expectations and personal desires, also the betrayal and subsequent reconciliation between Sula and Nel highlight the fragility and resilience of their bond. Likewise, *Bird Summons* delves into the individual struggles and aspirations of Salma, Moni, and Iman highlighting their efforts to assert their independence while navigating the complexities of their relationships with each other.

Furthermore, both novels portray the complexities of female relationships, particularly the bond between sisters. In *Sula*, the relationship between the protagonist, Sula, and her childhood friend, Nel, evolves and is marked by love, betrayal, and reconciliation. Similarly, *Bird Summons* explores the intricate dynamics between the

Salam, Moni, and Iman who embark on a spiritual journey to the Scottish Highlands, delving into their struggles and how they support and challenge each other.

Additionally, *Sula* and *Bird Summons* share similarities in their exploration of the complexities of female relationships and sisterhood, portraying the multifaceted nature of women's bonds, the quest for individual identity, and the impact of cultural and societal contexts on these relationships.

5.2 Recommendations

1. More studies should be done on Leila Aboulela's *Bird Summons* tackling the challenges that Arab immigrant women face in diaspora.
2. More studies should be done on Leila Aboulela viewing Edward Said's theory about orientalism in her literary works.
3. More studies should be done representing sisterhood among Arab Muslim women in diaspora.
4. More studies should be done representing the challenges that may face Postcolonial women that might affect sisterhood.

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