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# **Narratives of Homeland: Displacement and Homelessness in Christy Lefteri's *The Beekeeper Of Aleppo***

**Thesis Submitted to the Department of Letters and English Language in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for Master's degree in literature and Civilization**

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## Declaration

We hereby declare that the thesis entitled “Narratives of Homeland: Displacement and Homelessness in Christy Lefteri’s *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*,” is our own work and all the sources we have quoted have been acknowledged by means of references.

Signature

Date

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## **DEDICATION**

To all the refugees around the world.

## ABSTRACT

Refugees' movements, displacement, and modern-day diaspora are considered the major phenomena that the world has to deal with in a period of worldwide tensions and wars. Therefore, homelessness and displacement in *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* (2019) by Lefteri Christy are the main interests of this dissertation in which we explore what the refugees are facing along their journey to reach safe zones or to seek asylum. The selected novel highlights also the nature and reality of refugees after the Syrian war broke out, and it gives a truthful description of the effects of war and displacement on their spirits and lives. This study clarifies many terms which stand under the umbrella of displacement, including resettlement, loss, memory, nostalgia and belonging, as it deals with the historical context of the Syrian war and its origins. That is why, the first chapter deals with the historical background of the Syrian war in addition to the Arab Spring. Moreover, it tackles the concept of Diaspora by referring to some key texts in Diaspora studies. The second chapter analyzes the novel in light of important ideas of Diaspora studies and Postcolonialism in order to highlight the daily struggles of Syrian refugees and their nostalgia for their lost homelands.

**Key Words:** The Arab spring, The Syrian war, Displacement, Homelessness, Nostalgia, Homeland, Christy Lefteri.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

**ILO:** International Labor Organization.

**PRC:** The Palestinian Return Center.

## INTRODUCTION

At the heart of Postcolonial Literature, Diaspora has proved to be a mainstream subject that captures the interest of numerous writers. Diaspora, in fact, deals with different topics, including immigration, displacement and homelessness. It is, by definition, a movement of migration of a group of people outside their native country but they still share the same national and cultural identities. Originally, the term Diaspora is derived from the translation of the Hebrew word “Galut,” and thus refers to the dispersal of the Jews from Palestine. Nowadays, this concept is widely used to refer to war refugees, immigrants and exiles, those who have been crucially marked by other’s culture and language, in addition to displaced people (be it forced displacement, or voluntary displacement).

As far as it is concerned, Diaspora is an umbrella term that denotes many concepts such as homeland. In this sense “home” is not just that place that which one lives in, it is where one feels safe and surrounded by his or her loved ones. It is, before all, a maker of identity, and sometimes home can be that beautiful place which means belonging. The absence of fixed stable home triggers displacement, and therefore the painful journey. As a matter of fact, Diaspora is highly connected to the states of exiles and refugees.

Owing to the fact that literature is the mirror of society, immigrant writers have played a vital role in voicing their situation on both national and internal levels. For this reason, they usually write about their homelands and how they cannot find a sense of belonging to the new places they are living in. As a matter of fact, they are torn between two worlds, and thus are exposed to a totally new culture, society and life different from the ones they have left behind. Here, it is noteworthy that the idea of being homeless is involved with displacement. In this

regard, Diaspora writers are struggling to conform with the new world and community they are coerced now to live in after being homeless and displaced. Consequently, they lose their sense of belonging to their culture, language and national identity. Diaspora writers weaponize their works of literature so as to portray this dilemma.

In this sense, the Syrian war has exported unlimited number of displaced people to the unknown and it has a great impact in diaspora works. Inspired by the Arabic spring, March 2011 is considered as the beginning of the Syrian conflict where it starts by pre-democracy demonstrations; then the country descends into a civil war, where it configures now the biggest displacement crisis in the world. More than 12 million people have been killed or forced to leave their homes and as the war continues the number of displaced people continues to grow. This big humanitarian crisis makes people suffer both inside and outside Syria. They eventually risk their lives on the way to neighboring countries and Europe looking for safety and a better life. The UN estimates that 6.2 million people are internally displaced, and since the beginning of the Syrian war, the western world is witnessing the largest forced migration of people since the Second World War.

More than half of the Syrian population is displaced, and Syrians are either living in refugee camps or poor neighborhoods struggling to fulfill their needs. Moreover, the word “refugee” is defined as, an individual who have been forced to leave his or her country due to political or religious reasons, or due to threat of war or violence. This war effected men, women and also children who became uneducated and lose their opportunity to continue their educational lives. Most of them lost their homes and jobs, therefore, they are trying to find jobs in another country which is mostly impossible, so they start using their skills in anything that may help

them. Even children start working in factories and sometimes in illegal things losing the sense of childhood and the purity of their souls.

The Syrian war became the interest of many writers around the globe, and a lot of them write about it even those who have no relationship with it like Christy Lefteri. She is the daughter of Cypriot refugees who fled from their country to London in 1974 during the Turkish invasion while she was born in London in 1980. Lefteri is a lecturer at Brunel University in creative writing, and she has two novels, the first one was published in 2010 *A Watermelon, a Fish and a Bible* in addition to *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* which is newly published (2019).

*The Beekeeper of Aleppo* was inspired by the stories that Christy heard while she was working as a volunteer at a Unicef supported refugees center in Athens. She was trying to use her skills to help the Syrian children there by playing with them and teaching them English, there were not only Syrians but a lot of refugees from different places in the world; in the evenings she was interviewing people in the square from Syria, Afghanistan, and other countries. The stories she heard, people she met, and things she saw created this story of two Syrian refugees which is narrated by “Nuri” who escaped with his wife “Afra” to England via Turkey and Greece looking for safety.

On the basis of what is mentioned above, this research seeks to highlight the struggles of the homeless people around the world through the story of Syrian refugees, and how they become displaced because of political conflicts. Hence, the overall purpose of this dissertation is looking at the effects of homelessness and the factors that would help to explain the psychological damages as well in addition to the terms which stand under the umbrella of diaspora.

Actually, the choice of this novel is inspired from what is happening in Syria today. It handles the sense of belonging to the Arabic world and how people are really agonized not only in Syria but also in multiple places around the globe. This study is inventive; the events are taken from real stories of refugees who are suffering in the camps around the world and they narrate their stories from where the author was inspired. This research can be helpful as it seeks to shed a light on the painful journeys of refugees looking for safety in deadly boats since it is no longer available in their countries. Otherwise, it entices to know more about displacement and how people are deeply affected by wars mostly. According to that, the significance of this dissertation lies in the fact that there is little research in the literary field about the Syrian crisis considering it is rather recent, and thus, unexplored. Unlike other Diaspora authors, Christy Lefteri is neutral while writing the story and she is describing what happens according to events she has been told, and she has no relationship with Syria or the Arabic world in general as mentioned earlier.

A set of objectives have been determined in this work. This dissertation will examine the deep and painful sufferance of homeless Syrians who were forced to leave their homes seeking for peace and safety in some other places around the world. In addition to that, it investigates the intention of the writer since she is neutral and has no relation with the issue of the Syrian war as it is mentioned above, and whether she is providing a faithful representation of the true events. Added to this, the present research aims to demonstrate the issues of displacement and homelessness through this literary work in diasporas writings and how the writer succeeded to portray it. Moreover, the study examines the various effects of war on homeless Syrians and how they become traumatized and uprooted from where they belong which fragments their beings and identities. Yet, the writer highly depicts the painful lives of the refugees in the case of Syria

through her words and producing this emotional and unforgettable novel to the world she reminds the humanity that, these peaceful lives can be ended any time at any moment.

Because of the lack of publications about Christy's novel since it is newly published, and since this work is going to be the first to discuss it, there are few reviews that are collected here. A review published in *The Irish Times* entitled "*The Beekeeper of Aleppo: Fictionalizing the refugee crisis from personal experience*", explores the origins and the inspiration behind this novel. Since Christy's parents are refugees, she had a good understanding of the effects of the war on people and the trauma created by it. Also, the novel is not just about the journey of "Afra" and "Nuri" towards the UK through Turkey and Greece, but it is about their relationship as a couple. It is explained here by the reviewer that "The Hope Center" where the author volunteered, was the source of inspiration of the novel's events and characters through the stories she had heard there which are based on real painful journeys of refugees around the globe.

Another review of the novel in "KIRKUS" by a publisher named Ballantine, reviews the deep struggles of the characters and how the war destroyed their dreams, homes and even their son where they became refugees and homeless. Ballantine mentions how the book was narrated by "Nuri" the beekeeper and how he was the guide of his blind wife "Afra." Here his mission was not that easy even when he was trying to show that he is strong but at the end Christy removed this persona and focused on showing how weak and wounded he is because of the experiences they underwent.

Melissa Brown is one of the reviewers of *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*; according to her this emotional novel really written by heart and the spirit of the author is clearly remarked since her personal experience has also an impact on her. In her review, Melissa mentions also some

important themes that appear in the novel such as hope and how the characters are living in between; sometimes they are full of hope and other times no hope because of the things they went through and also what they have lost is not easy to forget. She concludes that the characters give hope; in a meaningful sentence about the characters of the novel, she says they are “people who bring life rather than death.”

In addition to this, Uday Balakrishnan reviewed the novel in an article published by “The Hindu” entitled “*The Beekeeper of Aleppo* by Christy Lefteri: county roads take me home”. He was deeply influenced by the novel and the story of the refugee couple, how it is narrated, and the events they went through, also the single details that were smartly used by the author. According to him Christy’s novel is like a voice to the homeless people around the globe and those who found themselves victims. Uday Balakrishnan as many reviewers, knows Christy’s parents story and due to this she is maybe the capable person to write about the struggles of the refugees because she is aware of what is happening and how people are really suffering even when her parents were just trying to avoid the past and trying to build and establish new life.

The present work will be based on postcolonial theory, mainly Diaspora studies. It begins with Edward Said, the one who defines its roots, origins, principles and issues as it is highly represented in his works such as *Out of Place: A Memoir* (1999). Actually, it has many aspects and the most important one is it defines the feeling of displacement and how it feels as being exile living the location in-between cultures and languages. This theory has been chosen because it allows us to effectively explore Christy’s novel since this work is going to deal with postcolonial issues in relation to the Syrian war. Under this idea, the focus is turned to some significant works that identify the basis of this theory like *Out of Place* by Edward Said, Homi Bhabha’s reflections on “Third Space,” and Salman Rushdie’s “Imaginary Homelands.”

This work is divided into two main chapters. The first one is about the socio-historical context and theoretical background of the present work, which starts with an overview of the the Arab spring and the Syrian War; this part sheds the light on the history of the Arab Spring and how it started. The second section investigates Refugees and The Syrian Crisis and how this war creates a flood of refugees around the globe (there is a formal interview with a Syrian refugee). The third section ends with defining the main concepts of this work Diaspora, Homelands, and Displacement by introducing key texts by significant figures in the field of Postcolonialism, mainly: Edward Said, Salman Rushdie, and Benedict Anderson.

The second chapter deals with Homeland, Displacement, and Homelessness in *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*, where the issues of displacement and homelessness that refugees suffer from will be examined in Christy's novel. The first section, Christy Lefteri and *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* introduces Lefteri's personal life and sheds light on how the writer started working on the novel and what inspired her to create this piece of work. The second section Homelessness and Displacement focuses on how the writer presented those issues along with trauma as an effect of displacement and the ongoing crisis in Syria. The third section, Resettlement, shows the effects and challenges that faced the characters and affected both physical and psychological well-being. The first subsection Loss and Culture shock will deal with effects of the new environment on the refugees so far from their homelands. The final section Lost Homelands: Belonging and Affiliation, is devoted to investigating the ways in which the characters deal with their shaken sense of belonging, the need to have a home, the desire to belong and the idea of nationalism. The fifth section, Narratives of Homelands: Nostalgia and Memory, introduces nostalgia and memories as results of displacement and ways to cope with the new refugees' situation in order to stay connected with the original homeland.

## **CHAPTER ONE:**

### **Socio-Historical Context and Theoretical Background**

From peaceful protests and civil uprising calling for freedom and liberality a violent conflict arose between the Syrian government and rebel groups starting in March 2011. The conflict was influenced by the Arab spring in which thousands of people have been killed during the fighting and much more refugees were displaced around the globe. The conflict in Syria spread rapidly inside and outside the country and escalated into full-blown warfare, while the biggest victims in this bloody game are civilians who lose their families, homes and their lives by being displaced from homelands.

#### **1. The Arab Spring and the Syrian War**

The end of 2010 and the beginning of 2011 witnessed what is called “the Arab spring.” It was a series of pro-democracy uprisings that involved several Arab Muslim countries such as Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Morocco, Syria, Yemen, and Bahrain. Most of the events were during the spring of 2011 when someone called it the Arab spring and the phrase stuck. Moreover, these revolutionary events started by groups of rebels in several countries who were calling for reforms in political and social systems. Freedom and democracy were dreams that had been denied by dictator rulers who had been in power for decades and could not let people reach it (Shinta 162).

People were starving and suffering from low living standards and oppressive regimes, which led them to raise their voices against the governments. Those events spread rapidly through social media, but it ended up by social violence and civil wars like in Yemen, Sudan and

Libya. Nevertheless, not all the movements could be seen successful since some failed or at least could not reach the intended goals such as democracy and freedom.

Citizens started being aware of their rights especially in North Africa and they started to believe that it is the right time to make some changes. Things went so deep and became more serious when the spark of the Arab spring in Tunisia started with Mohammed Bouazizi, a street vendor who set himself on fire; this sacrificial act incited people to demonstrate against the government and start calling for reforms. Those demonstrations spread rapidly through social media in which it became known as “The Jasmine revolution” that led the authoritarian president Zin Al Abidine Ben Ali to abandon everything and he fled to Saudi Arabia after more than 20 years in power, and people gained what they were looking for (Blakemore n.p).

The success of the Tunisian revolution inspired neighboring countries to follow in the same path. Along with Tunisia, the street protests in Tahrir Square in Cairo, Egypt against Hosni Mubarak -who ruled the country for more than thirty years-, raised up their voices calling for reforms and better future, which led the president to step down. It was thought that the country had reached its ultimate goal, yet, there was another battle to fight when Mohamed Mohamed Morsi Issa Al-Ayyat took over the presidency. Since his government mixed between religion and the state, people lost faith in him; they went to the streets again calling for the separation between the two. The country’s fate went downhill when Abd Al-Fattah al-Sisi, a former military leader, claimed presidency until today. His regime presides over the worst human rights crisis in the country instead of finding peaceful solutions that may serve the country and the citizens as well, since they went through hard times and are in need of a faithful leader who has the ability to give a life and hope to the county again (Shinta163).

Not so far from Egypt and Tunisia, Libya also had its own battle against the authoritarian dictator colonel Muammar Al Kaddafi. He was dragged by street fighters and was executed. The country went through a civil crisis and was ruled by two governments when people were suffering because of this separation with the lack of food, healthcare, transportation, social services in addition to the violence in the streets every day and night. The hard life in Libya led people to flee their country to other places in the world; Libyan refugees invaded the globe in a short time looking for hope, safety, and new life opportunities that had been missed in their mother country. Such refugee movements led to a global crisis, which would become worse with the Syrian crisis.

Since the beginning of the Arab spring, leaders have been ousted. While in Syria, the country fell into a civil conflict that started in 2011 under Al-Assad's government which is still fighting the civilians. The Syrian case is considered as the bloodiest civil war and the worst humanitarian crisis since the Second World War with over 300.000 people dead (UN). The numbers are still increasing making Syrians the largest refugee population in the globe. The wave of the Arab spring that started in Tunisia reached Syria with small peaceful protests in the city of Deraa, when a group of people started calling for the removal of Bashar Al Assad and his authoritarian government (Cornell University Library n.p). The war in Tunisia –Jasmine Revolution- or the Arab spring in general is considered as the sparkling light that inspired Syrians to rebel and demonstrate against Bashar Al-Assad and his government. They believe that they could change their country and remove their authoritarian president especially when they were following the latest news on TVs and social media of the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions.

After the death of his father Hafez who ruled the country since 1971, Bashar Al-Assad, also the head of the Ba'ath party, took the presidency in 2000 and he inspired hopes on several

plans and reforms to the country as he assumed power. Nevertheless, he made people lose faith in his government and want to end this political repression led by the ruling family and the one-party system. This system had an impact on social activities and freedom of media which extinguished the hopes of politicians and, thus, Al-Assad failed to deliver his promised reforms (Biography n.p).

Syria had witnessed a rapidly growing young population that was considered as one of the fastest population growths in the world (Manfreda n.p). The country was unable to balance the fast growth of its population with the sputtering economy, in addition to the personal needs like food, clothes and the lack of schools as well as jobs. The economic reforms that were initiated by Hafiz Al-Assad in his later years and accelerated after Bashar Al-Assad came to power; those reforms opened the doors to private investments that served the wealthy families as well as the upper and merchant classes, particularly in Damascus and Aleppo. As a result, there was inequality in jobs and youth unemployment increased (Manfreda n.p).

On the other hand, the issue of draught is another natural crisis that Syria experienced between 2006 and 2011. The draught proved to be the most devastating over nine decades. Researchers from NASA and the University of Arizona state that the Syrian draught was the worst in the past 900 years and almost the worst in 500 years. It had a worse impact on both the country and its population where 75% of Syria's farms failed and 86% of livestock died (United Nations). It led people to leave their homes and cities moving rapidly to other places as a result of the lack of life resources such as food and water. Four years of drought were enough to turn 60% of the country into a desert and families became hungrier and homeless. Thus, it created stress all over the country and it was one of the main causes that paved the path to rebel against Al Assad and his government (Manfreda n.p).

The civil war in Syria started with peaceful protests and ended up with a big humanitarian crisis. In mid-March in a small southern town of Dar'a, a group of students put anti-government graffiti on the walls and, as a result, they had been killed by Al Assad's government which led the residents to step out for demonstrations for the torture of the students. The demonstration spread to several parts of the country by the use of social media which had a significant role in planning and ruling the demonstrations. The angry voices began to raise calling for the removal of their dictator president and demanding reforms, equal rights, political freedom, freedom of speech and press, and allowing political parties. The government declared the repeal of an emergency law on 21st April to suspend constitutional rights that had been used since 1963(Cornell University Library). The same month witnessed what is known as "crackdowns." This last had been used by the Syrian government to scare people and force them to leave the streets, and even shooting hundreds of demonstrators by using tanks and snipers by the military forces. The conflict became more difficult when Bashar Al-Assad and his government shut off electricity all over the country with the lack of food and water and all the simple life conditions had gone (Cornell University Library).

The conflict in Syria got worse because of the various ideological divisions. They were divided into four main groups: The rebels who made an army after calling for the removal of Assad's government and it was supported by the USA, Saudis and Turkey; the Assad and his government who were fighting the protests were supported by Russia and Iran; the Kurds who were calling for their equal rights with the Syrian Muslim brotherhood, were also supported by the USA; and there is ISIS that established a "Caliphate" across the Syria-Iraq border and were this last formed and entered the conflict to fight the Kurds. This being the state of affairs, the war

began on 15 March 2011 and each party was supported by its allies (Cornell University Library n.p).

When Bashar Al-Assad was asked in an interview with *The Wall Street Journal* (2011) about the wave of the Arab spring and the dictator rulers that had been removed by their people, he admitted that his country is saved but in reality everything was saying the opposite; in the first 18 months of the conflict there had been 60.000 deaths (United Nations). Moreover, buildings, schools, universities, homes even mosques and supermarkets had been destroyed. As a result of this bloody conflict, people became displaced and they started fleeing from the war looking for safe places as they did not expect the conflict to reach this state where several powers, besides the government and the rebels, are fighting against each other.

As things got worse and there was no hope to stay in the country, Syrians started fleeing to neighboring countries. Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and even the North African countries such as Algeria, and Europe: Germany, Greece, and England were the destinations to Syrians who left all their memories there, wounds and happiness, smiles and tears, weddings and funerals. Syrians became refugees in several countries by creating the largest number of refugees all over the globe living in refugee camps, and most of them are displaced now with the increase of the number of migrations.

## 2. Refugees and The Syrian Crisis:

Historically, Syria has been an important hosting country in the Middle East. It was a favorable destination for the Palestinians since the partition of Palestine in 1947 and the creation of the Israeli state in 1948. More than half of the population of Palestine has fled, and their numbers are increasing with the possibility to reach higher degrees. There were camps for them all around Syria, in Aleppo, Hama, Homs, Latakia etc. There were about 526.000 registered Palestinian refugees in Syria (Berti42), as they enjoy the same rights as Syrians except the right to vote.

Since the outbreak of the civil war in 2011, Syria has produced the largest number of refugees and displaced people in the world history since WW2, with more than five million people fleeing their homes to neighboring countries; and more than 6.6 million are internally displaced within Syria (Semsek161). The situation has worsened, and the Syrian population has reached high numbers in such a short time, notably in 2016 when the number of refugees was the highest ever recorded. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Antonio Guterres, said that the Syrian crisis is reaching a dangerous turning point since the conflict has shown no sign to its end. Families are struggling to survive in Syria and others are risking their lives to the way to Europe (qtd. in Tan 307). With the civil uprising now in its 10<sup>th</sup> year, the crisis has caused the decline of the quality of life.

Ideological differences in addition to political and religious tensions have always played a crucial role in human forced displacement which often stands for dispossession and loss of patrimony or habitat. Millions of dislocated Syrians are seeking asylum in other countries when in fact they need long-term solutions. Turkey has taken the responsibility for the largest number

of refugees, with more than 2.733.655 registered Syrian refugee, followed by Lebanon, where about 1.033.513 million Syrians exist. Jordan is hosting approximately 686.400 persons in mainly four camps, according to the UN high commission for refugees. Other 225.455 Syrians arrived in Iraq, and about 117.350 Syrians are hosted in Egypt (Karakoulaki et al. 114). In conflict situations, uprooted people may be unable to reach borders safely due to geographical and physical obstacles or restrictions by outside countries on their right to seek asylum.

Indeed, the armed conflict and violence in Syria has brought about also non-Syrian refugees. according to Syrian Needs Analysis project, after the onset of war, about 120.000 Palestinian refugees from Syria have left the country; 12 percent were obliged to seek shelter in Lebanon and the rest went to Jordan .Yet they were not welcomed since April 2012 and over 100 Palestinians were returned to Syria by the Jordanian authorities between 2013and 2014 because they had problems in documentation as they cannot live legally in refugee camps for Syrians, the reason why they could be evicted from housing (7).Over 3600 persons were killed according to the Action Group for Palestinian in Syria ( PRC 3-7)

The Syrian crisis shed the light on migration as the phenomenon of our era and made it more and more a subject of national and regional security. Consequently, the new trends of refugees in the Middle East are considered a new challenge for the hosting countries, because it creates major economic and social problems considering food prices for example. The search for work is also an issue and refugees have to move toward cities where they work under unsafe conditions causing an increased unemployment rate across the host country. In this account, refugees become not only economical competitors, but an existential threat for hosting citizens too. This can be seen in Turkey where the government faces the challenge of integrating more

than 3.5 million Syrians in the Turkish society, since it contains the largest population of refugees (ILO n.p)

An Eighteen-years-old migrant from West Africa said that “everyone is a migrant and the world is created for us to explore it; you never know, you might find yourself having to migrate in the future (Dooley n.p). This highlights the fact that migration is as old as the history of mankind; it has always existed, and it continues to be a part of the human experience throughout history. As a global phenomenon, migration, whether forced or not, has imposed itself in a significant manner particularly on post-colonial societies; especially with the new trends of displaced people and refugees which make diaspora the phenomena of our era.

The ongoing movement of migration and forced displacement make Syrians people in diaspora. Diaspora as a life transition has been always motivated by social, political and economic factors; however, modern day diaspora is a result of a continuous series of wars, persecutions and conflicts. Thousands of people risk their lives by crossing borders and seas, with a little hope to reach a safe destination, a better and dignified future and a new home. Yet, it creates racial and linguistic challenges for populations and a crisis of identity. Refugees or displaced people who are becoming diasporas, are displaced also between two cultures, languages, identities and two conflicting homes as well. Hence, they have to face such traumatic results in relation to nostalgia and the fact that the past cannot be restored, because diaspora is not only about place but also it is related to human feelings, emotions and experiences. It is almost always accompanied with notions of hybridity, fragmentation and (re)construction, fractures of memory besides ambivalence.

### **3. Diaspora, Homelands and Displacement:**

When a group of people or ethnic groups have been scattered or forced to leave their homeland to another place they are known as diasporan people. Ashcroft et al define diaspora as “the voluntary or forcible movement of peoples from their homelands into new regions ...” (68). The term Diaspora was used in Ancient Greece derived from the Greek translation of the Hebrew bible and is based on the word “Galut” that means “exile”. (Yemini and Berthmière 262), while the Greek word (διασπορά) means desperation or scattering (Longley n.p). In fact, there are two kinds of diaspora: voluntary and forced. Voluntary diaspora refers to a group of people that have left their country for the sake of their personal benefits like religious or economic affairs, while forced diaspora that is created by force refers to people who were forced to leave their country as a result of events such as wars, drought, imperialism, and so on(Longley n.p). Both Diasporas people celebrate their traditional cultures and festivals and they still honored and have the sense of belonging.

Furthermore, Diaspora was and is still a complex affair that has been used to describe the status of the Jews who have lived most of their existence as diasporan people. In 722 BCE, the king of the Assyrians Sargon II conquered Israel and destroyed it which led people to leave and the Jewish were scattered around the Middle East. In this regard, Joseph Albo, a Jewish philosopher and philosopher and theologian of Spain, attests “We have lost our hope for freedom and we seek only to survive in the Galut, with our poverty and our degradation” (Albon.p). According to Albo, they lost the most important thing which is freedom as they wanted to establish free independent nations. In the 6<sup>th</sup>Century B.C, during the Babylonian period, the king Nebuchadnezzar II deported a number of Jews in the kingdom of Judah and they were allowed to stay there as a unified community in Babylon. The Jewish diaspora was scattered around the

world and there have been three groups of Jews: one group in Egypt, another group in Babylon and one in Judaea and it was the worst scenario that awaited them (Britannica).

In 6 BCE, the Roman Empire took Judaea under control, and the Jewish king of the Judeans was allowed to stay, while the Romans were so strict in controlling everything like trade, imposing taxes and religious practices. After a while, the Romans annexed Judaea, destroyed Jerusalem and drove the Jews from Palestine (Longley n.p). During World War Two, Nazi Germany burned and killed millions of Jews who held different nationalities such as Ukrainians, Russians and others from Eastern and Western European countries. When the war ended, and before the establishment of Israel, the Jewish people were sent to Palestine and they established what is now known as Israel that contains different cultures, languages, and multiple communities in which they formed one whole Jewish society. Today the Jewish Diaspora is still spread all over the world.

Another ethnic group that is in Diaspora is the African Diaspora that started with the Atlantic Slave Trade spanning from the 16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. People in central and western Africa were taken as slaves including men, women, and even children to the Americas, and then the African diaspora increased rapidly. Baron De Vastey states that:

The enemies of Africa wish to persuade the world that five out of the six thousand years that the world has existed, Africa has always been sunk in barbarism, and that ignorance is essential to the nature of her inhabitants. Have they forgotten that Africa was the cradle of the arts and sciences? If they pretend to forget this, it becomes our duty to remind them of it. (33)

According to him, Africans were always seen as inferior, but in fact Africa has its own history before they became scattered around the world. In reality, the African diaspora started centuries before the Slave Trade when millions of Sub-Saharan Africans migrated towards several parts of Asia and Europe looking for some opportunities to free themselves from employment and poverty that surrounded them. African diaspora played a vital role in the Americas and strongly influenced the politics and cultures of the New World (Chambers n.p).

The Chinese diaspora is also another issue that had a huge impact in the world. It began in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century where millions of Chinese left their country to several places around the world like North America, Japan, Australia, and also Southeast Asia as a result of political corruption, oppression, starvation, wars and so on. The Chinese diaspora spread when a huge number of people went to look for better life conditions far away from their homeland and it led them to change their destination to several countries. They were at first unskillful and jobless but today, the Chinese diaspora grew up and people became skilled which promoted the growth of the globalized community (Academy for Cultural Diplomacy).

The war in Syria caused a flood of refugees and brought to the world another ethnic diaspora. People fled to neighboring countries just to save themselves and the number increased to the extent that the number of people outside Syria became three times higher than those who are living inside (UNHCR). Although people from the Middle East are scattered all over the world and the numbers are increasing, the Syrian case is considered as the source of the largest number of the refugees. These refugees are suffering from miserable life conditions and risking their lives in dead boats just to save themselves and their families from the war. Interestingly, being a refugee denotes someone who is forced to leave his/her homeland because of the war or any kinds of violence to another country for safety. The refugee may stay there temporarily, and

he/she has to keep his identity or any document that help to define his/her refugee status, and to not consider him/her as illegal entrant and this allows him/her to stay safe in that territory (UNHCR).

Those refugees have contributed to the formation of diaspora population. Implicitly, diaspora is a large umbrella that holds a several number of terms, and it brings to the mind different ideas like displacement, homelessness, hybridity, memory and identity. It became one of the most debated affairs and terms of today. Anh Hua says:

Diaspora theorizing opens up the discursive or semiotic space for a discussion of many ideas: identification and affiliation, homing desire and homeland nostalgia, exile and displacement, the reinvention of cultural traditions in the New World Order, and the construction of hybrid identities, as well as cultural and linguistic practices, the building of communities and communal boundaries, cultural memory and trauma, the politics of return, and the possibility of imagining geographical and cultural belonging beyond and within the nation-state formation. (191)

Such concerns are becoming more relevant by the day; the reason why they have been often addressed in Diaspora studies and Postcolonial writings. Indeed, great works by great figures have been produced in light of the above mentioned issues; To name a few: *The Wretched of The Earth* by Fantz Fanon (1961), *Imagined Communities: Reflections on The Origin and Spread of Nationalism* by Benedict Anderson (1993), *Imaginary Homelands* by Salman Rushdie (1981-1991), *The Empire Writes Back* by Bill Ashroft (1989), and *Out of Place: A Memoir* by Edward W. Said (1999). Those seminal works often cite issues that are problematic to several people like immigrants. Those issues can be hybridity, identity, homelessness, and displacement.

Yet, Home is not only a physical place; it has a very deep meaning. It is that warming place where the human being belongs, the place that holds his/her identity. It is also an emotional place where the sensitive moments are shared and a lot of stories are told and as it was described by Sarup in his book *Identity, Culture and the Post Modern World* (1996), “Home is where the heart is” (2). He is saying that it does not matter where you are since a piece of what you feel as home will be always in your heart. Furthermore, what home means is more than to be described by words and a lot of terms are related to the term home when it is mentioned as migrants, refugee, displaced and exiles as well. Those people can really feel and understand what home means since they suffer from homelessness.

Homelessness is defined as “the situation of an individual, family, or community without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect means and the ability of acquiring it”(Canadian Observatory on Homelessness).Here, homelessness means being unsafe and unstable when the person does not have any place to stay in. It is a higher experience of sufferance that impacted men, women and even children in different ways. Homeless people find themselves obliged to fight for their lives, where having no safe place means they are living in danger and they may do some bad things to feed themselves like stealing and so on. There are various reasons as to why a person can find himself/herself homeless such as unemployment, poverty, economic and political crises, in addition to wars and national insecurity issues.

The focus here is on the homelessness that is caused by wars; more specifically, it is about the Syrians’ new state of homelessness. This last was caused by the economic instability and the civil conflict that created the worst humanitarian crisis of our time since the beginning of the war in 2011. Syrian homelessness became one of the most debated issues today where at least 300,000 people left their homes and are facing new challenges to save their lives and most or half

of them are children. People are suffering and they were forced to leave their homeland putting themselves in the hands of the smugglers to cross the Mediterranean knocking the doors of the west where they find themselves without a roof or a place to live, in addition to losing the sense of belonging and identity.

Indeed, one of the many challenges resulting out of homelessness and displacement is the formation of an unstable or fluid sense of identity. In his article “Home and Identity”, Madan Sarup explains that a migrant is “a person who has crossed the border. He or she seeks a place to make a better life. The newly arrived have to learn the new language and culture. They have to cope not only with the pain of separation, but often with the resentments of a hostile population” (90). According to Sarup, migrants should adapt and have the ability to accept and learn the language of the hosting country. They have to face the new challenges to accept a new life, and the hardest thing is accepting their new identity where they do not have any other choice.

The Syrian civil war is the epitome of homelessness and displacement as the number of displaced persons continues to grow with the never-ending war. In regard to this, displacement is defined by Ben-Yosep as “moving from one home to another, between countries, cultures and languages is not only a matter of ‘physical displacement but of interior experience’ as well. Different places create different experiences which in turn create different memories. And memory plays a significant role in the construction of identity” (118). This experience of moving people from their home to different countries and cultures will inevitably result in some sort of cultural hybridization. Displaced people were forced to leave their homelands, cultures, languages and traditions for the sake of a new and safe life. Some scholars described the Syrian crisis as the war that never ends, and the number of the displaced people is increasing every day. Most of them witnessed violence, the loss of jobs, and loss of hope for a better future (see

appendix). Children have been injured and killed by heavy weapons which dangerously affected their educational opportunities; they found themselves suddenly displaced kids all over unknown places. Displaced people tell horrible stories about their harsh lives in which they do not have any source of food or water or even how to protect themselves and families from cold during the winter days.

One of the prominent voices regarding the issue of displacement is Edward William Said. He is a Christian Palestinian academic, political activist, and a literary critic. He has been ranked among the most influential thinkers of the twentieth century, and he also examined literature in the light of social and cultural politics and spent much of his energy to defend the Palestinian people and their aspirations. Said resided to many countries but he did not call any of them home and had always felt out of place. He was born in Jerusalem and he spent much of his childhood in Cairo, Egypt or Beirut, Lebanon, then he moved to America where he earned his master's and PhD degrees at Harvard University, then spent the rest of his career there becoming a professor of English and comparative literature (World Biography).

As time passed Edward was so far from the political situation of Palestine until he became a member of The Palestinian National Council in 1977 when his political and national consciousness awakened; he entered the world of writing and wrote his first book about the situation of the Middle East *The Question of Palestine* in 1979 and was sent by Yasser Arafat to negotiate on the Palestinian's behalf with U.S in 1988. Said's journey with the Palestinian National Council ended in 1991, but his defense of the Palestinian situation did not end since they were fighting for their right to gain back their usurped land when they became unhomed and most of the Palestinians became refugees after 1948. Said knows clearly how it felt to be unhomed and the lack of intimacy and warmth that he experienced in every new place he was

living in (World Biography). In the same vein, Lois Tyson in *Critical Theory Today* clarifies that “unhomeliness is an emotional state unhomed people don’t feel at home even in their own home because they don’t feel at home in any culture and, therefore; don’t feel home at home in themselves” (18). The unhomed people make people suffer and it leads them lose their identity and even their native language as Said who did not know what he speaks first, Arabic or English, so he wrote his memoir *Out of Place* in 1999 that is considered as one of the most prominent works of diaspora studies.

Edward Said’s *Out of Place: A Memoir* similarly has played a vital role in diaspora studies. This book is about Said’s personal life who was born to a Palestinian father and Lebanese mother while he went to English schools in Cairo and received colonial education that shaped his identity and he lived as an exile. In *Reflections on Exile* (2000) Said argues that exiles are “cut off from their roots, their land, their past” (177). He rightly argues that an exile has no background or something that may define him/her. *Out of Place* helps to understand and explain the contradictions and paradoxes in Said’s life such as the struggle of identities, how he was driven out of Jerusalem by the Jewish with his family and how he became an exile. The memoir covered his life experiences spanning from 1935 to 1994 tackling his displacement, homeless and refugee subjects since he grew up as a refugee and an exile and his background is a series of displacements and expatriations. In one of his interviews with Imre Salusinszky, Said answers to a question about being a refugee; he states: “to describe me as a refugee is probably overstating it a bit” (127). Edward’s life was so complicated and full of paradoxes and *Out of Place* shaped his world; starting by the point of the language that shapes the person’s identity and Said had no idea about which language he speaks first “I have never known what language I spoke first, Arabic or

English, or which one was mine beyond any doubt”(4). Because both languages were spoken at his home and he did not know what his first language was, he developed a hybrid identity.

The life of refugees and exiles is always shaped by a complex background. Said’s complex background and the multiplicity of his identity that are described in his memoir as “a form both of freedom and of affliction” (12). He struggles to form a cultural identity or the sense of belonging to a single community: “I have retained this unsettled sense of many identities—mostly in conflict with each other—all of my life...” (5). The issue of identity made Said feel out of place when he could not define himself or to what place he belongs to and he discovered that being “out of place in nearly every way, gave me the incentive to find my territory, not socially but intellectually”(231). Throughout his life he did not feel the sense of belonging.

The current situation of the Syrian refugees who were forced to leave their homes and found themselves out of home, is similar to Edward Said’s feelings of displacement and feeling out of place wherever he is. They were displaced out of their nations and their community that shaped their identity. Edward Said has never once felt completely at home and after all he accepted this fact and being out of place becomes “a form of freedom [...] with so many dissonances in my life I have learned actually to prefer being not quite right and out of place”(295). Out of place is the story of Edward Said who had a constant feeling of being always out of place.

Another important figure in diaspora writings is Salman Rushdie, one of the most well-known British-Indian post-colonial writers and essayists, and one of the most controversial figures. He was born in India but continued his university studies in England. Most of Rushdie’s works are a mirror to his personal experiences and to some issues of the decade in both India and

Britain such as identity, migration, the power of literature, race, religion, and diaspora (World Biography). These concerns were brought together in his famous works *Imaginary Homelands*. It is a collection of essays based on his experiences, written between 1981 and 1992, and divided into six sections; each section covers an astonishing range of subjects. Michael Foot, a British labor leader and an observer for the book urges readers to:

Read every page of this book; better still, re-read them. The invocation means no hardship, since every true reader must surely be captivated by Rushdie's masterful invention and ease, the flow of wit and insight and passion. How literature of the highest order can serve the interests of our common humanity is freshly illustrated here: a defence of his past, a promise for the future, and a surrender to nobody or nothing whatever except his own all-powerful imagination. (Foot n.p)

Salman Rushdie is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and a distinguished writer in residence at New York University, and he is also a former president of Pen American Center. He was knighted in 2007 for services to literature. Rushdie established himself as one of the important writers in contemporary London. He was born in a religious family in Bombay and then he moved to England at fourteen to continue his education where the host country became his home. With the passage of time, his mind became open to new issues and cases which led him to lose his religion and assimilate to the new culture, traditions, language and even identity since he became an English citizen. Progressively, he went through several experiences that made him lose his faith and culture, in addition to his mother language (World Biography).

Since *Imaginary Homelands* is the one work that encompasses most of his experiences as an immigrant, exile, and a displaced person, it became one of the most acclaimed works of postcolonial criticism. He admits that “This book is an incomplete, personal view of the interregnum of 1980s, not all of whose symptoms it has to be said, were morbid” (1). It clearly says that all are his personal views that may be and may not be completely right. The book is intellectual and fluent, and Rushdie begins his essay with a photograph of the house where he lived his childhood in his room, and it was taken in 1946 before his birth to remind him of the past. He expresses that “The photograph had naturally been taken in black and white; and my memory, feeding on such images as this, had begun to see my childhood in the same way, monochromatically” (9-10). This picture inspired him to write *Midnight’s Children*, “It is probably not too romantic to say that that was when my novel *Midnight’s Children* was really born; when I realized how much I wanted to restore the past to myself, not in the faded grey of family-album snapshots, but whole, in Cinema Scope and glorious Technicolor” (9-10).

Just one picture from the past inspired him to write even when he was so far from his country. He states that:

It may be that writers in position exiles or emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss. The physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will in short create fiction, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homeland, India in mind. (10)

Here, Rushdie is saying that migrant writers lost the touch to describe the physical places especially those who did not visit their homelands for a long time, and in case their literary work

is about their mother country, they are facing such a dilemma and they try to create such fictional and imaginary places to substitute the lost homeland. This in turn has an impact on readers who may have shared the same experiences.

Rushdie's novel *Midnight's Children* (1981) portrays the importance of the past and memories for exiled individuals. In this work he discusses the fallibility and fragmentation of memory through the protagonist Saleem who is portrayed as an unreliable narrator with a fallible memory "This is why I made my narrator, Saleem, suspect in his narrator; his mistakes are the mistakes of the fallible memory compounded by quirks of character of and of circumstance and his vision is fragmentary" (10). This kind of unreliable memory and nostalgia for the past are what most exile writers suffer from and wish to restore. Rushdie was trying to portray them in his work and it is considered as one of the reasons that inspired him to write this masterpiece. He realizes that because he is one of those immigrant writers who are not welcomed anymore in their homelands, he did not belong to that place anymore. He further states that "It may be argued that the past is a country from which we have all emigrated, that its loss is part of our common humanity" (12). The sense of loss is subsequently an experience that all exiles share. Exile, displaced, and emigrated writers find themselves already torn between two worlds without a stable identity as the case of Rushdie.

*Imaginary Homelands* is a diaspora work that draws attention to the feeling of belonging to nowhere, the feeling of instability, the loss of identity, in addition to the issue of nationalism. As all migrants, exiles, and even displaced writers, Rushdie shares the same sense of the loss of belonging, being without fixed identity, not accepted in one's homeland and even in the hosted country; also Rushdie's broken mirror in the novel is not just an image as it is described by him:

The broken mirror may actually be as valuable as the one which is supposedly unflawed [...], and it was precisely the partial nature of these memories, their fragmentation, that made them so evocative for me. The shards of memory acquired greater status, greater resonance, because they were remains; fragmentation made trivial things seem like symbols, and the mundane acquired numinous qualities. There is an obvious parallel here with archeology. The broken pots of antiquity, from which the past can sometimes, but always provisionally, be reconstructed, are exciting to discover, even if they are pieces of the most quotidian objects. (11-2)

This broken mirror is a voice of the broken self, a voice that speaks to and about Rushdie himself who is stuck inside without a stable identity or the feeling of belonging to a place. His sense of fragmented identity hunted him inside it can be seen through his words.

Rushdie's desire for a stable sense of identity, belonging, and nostalgia for the homeland India are things he cannot reclaim. This actually applies to most writers who left their homelands or were forced to leave when the feeling of nostalgia started to rise and they cannot claim; "[...] human beings do not perceive things whole; we are not gods but wounded creatures, cracked lenses, capable only of fractured perceptions. Partial beings, in all the senses of that phrase" (12-3). Such writers end up between two languages, traditions, no fixed identity and even cultures, in addition to losing the sense of nationalism. He explains that "Sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times, that we fall between two stools[...]"(9-21). He concludes his work by an answer to a question that was raised before by saying "I never had reader in mind. I have ideas, people, events, shapes, and I write for those things, and hope the completed work will be interest of others" (Rushdie 20). Two years after Rushdie's work, Benedict Anderson began a

debate on nationalism in his famous work *Imagined Communities: Reflections on The Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983).

Furthermore, a literary work is a transformation of emotions, feelings and experiences that the author went through and conveys through his writing. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on The Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983) by Benedict Anderson, a Chinese-born Irish political scientist and historian, is considered as one of the most important studies on nationalism and belonging. Anderson presented nationalism as a way of imagining that creates community. The nation “is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep horizontal comradeship” (9). Through his extraordinary style of writing and the concepts that he discussed in his work he entered the global politics. By 2006 the book was translated into twenty-nine languages and hundred-thousand copies were sold worldwide. Benedict was born in China and he is the son of an English mother and Irish father; he inherited his name from his mother and his citizenship from his father, this made Anderson tighten between two identities (Britannica).

*Imagined Communities* discusses the main factors that contribute to the creation of feelings of nationalism in the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century Europe that still applies to today’s communities and nations, and it led to the creation of nations as the title defined it. Another different critique to Anderson by Eric J. Hobsbawm, in his book *Nations and Nationalisms Since 1780* (1990), he distinguishes between nationalism and nation and states that “Nationalism comes before nations. Nations do not make states and nationalisms but the other way round” (10). Anderson begins his book by three ideas about nationalism, where he explains that the last notion of nationalism is a modern phenomenon. He thinks of nationalism as universal and it is powerful and because it is described as imagined does not make it less powerful and “ultimately, it is this fraternity that

makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings” (7). People may die for the sake of nationalism and describing it as imagined does not mean that it is less powerful.

Those three paradoxes are combined together in this work with reference to the title. Anderson asserts that a community is “imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (6). He makes it clear that any community beyond face-to-face interaction has to be imagined “all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these)” (6). Moreover, what distinguishes nationalism is the style of imagination “In an anthropological spirit, then, I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign”(5-6). He describes the nation as a cultural construct with historical, political and economic background and nations are communities with members even if they are so far.

The word nationalism is so powerful; people may die for their nations and there is nothing noble than their nationality. Anderson’s discussion of the conflicts between China and Vietnam highlights people’s readiness to die for the sake of nationalism. Ideological differences, alliances, economic and political issues, hold little value when one’s nation is in risk. Such reactions to the threats against one’s nation inspired Anderson to delve into the differences between nationalism and other ideological agendas such as Marxism. He says: “China, Vietnam, and Cambodia are not in the least unique”(165). And he continues “...But nothing can be usefully done to limit or prevent such wars unless we abandon fictions like “Marxists as such are not nationalists,” or “nationalism is the pathology of modern developmental history,” and, instead, do our slow best to learn the real, and imagined, experience of the past”(165). Particularly the relationship between

Marxism and nationalism being a subject of debate, in this Anderson claims that Marxist thought had not ignored nationalism but rather “nationalism has proved an uncomfortable anomaly for Marxist theory and, precisely for that reason, has largely been elided, rather than confronted” (3). *Imagined Communities* was an effort to reconcile the theories of Marxism and nationalism.

Nationalism can be seen as a product of European societies. According to Anderson “polemical intent ... to de-Europeanize the theoretical study of nationalism” (209). It is hard to not see the overt challenge to the prevailing Eurocentric view of nationalism as a product of European societies, whether English or French. Starting in Western Europe (Scotland, Catalonia), the economic growth, scientific discoveries, communication revolutions and mechanical reproduction of printed matter dissolved this and replaced it. This helped people who had a trouble in understanding themselves as a part of the nation; they gave “a new fixity to language” and they made out of dialects which were closer to the print languages privileged “languages of power”(44-5). as a result, there were limited communities or nations and every nation had borders and sovereignties “It is imagined as sovereign because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm ... nations dream of being free ... The gage and emblem of this freedom is the sovereign state” (7). Anderson claims that the concept of the nation developed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century to replace monarchial and religious orders in addition to that every nation had borders and sovereignties.

Actually, the idea of nationalism that was presented by Anderson on his book helps to understand the Syrian crisis, refugees and nationalism for them. The Syrian crisis had a huge impact on the citizens ‘lives and they became scattered around the world. Since they left their country they lost the sense of belonging to a place they had been part of once where they grew up

and lived the most of their lives, communicating by their mother language and practicing their religion, their traditions and everything that implements feelings of nationalism to them. The Syrian refugees became so far from their country and they experienced new type of nationalism as Anderson mentions” It may well be that we are faced here with a new type of nationalist: the ‘long-distance nationalist’ [...]” (13). As Anderson assesses, the wars that lead people to leave their homes and countries created this long- distance nationalism. In general, *Imagined Communities* brought to the forefront the very link between the public and the intimate between the nation and the citizen in depth.

As a conclusion, this chapter explores the Arab spring in general and the Syrian crisis and the refugees in specific. Thus, the Syrian case is exceptional since it had been considered as the bloodiest civil war ever and the current situation in Syria is still chaotic where the conflict may not end. With the use of some literary works that has a relation to the topic by famous authors and critics as Edward Said, Salman Rushdie and Benedict Anderson who share some ideas helped leading the path to the analysis of Lefteri Christy’s novel *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* that is used as a case study in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER TWO:

### Homeland, Displacement, and Homelessness in Christy Lefteri's

#### *The Beekeeper of Aleppo.*

Literary works are usually related to their context. They highlight the socio-historical, cultural and political codes of the time of their production. In fact, those works are brought into life because of social and political forces. Christy Lefteri, an English author was born in 1980 in London, and she is the daughter of two Cypriot refugees who moved to London in 1974 during the Turkish invasion. She completed her English studies and Masters in Creative writing at Brunel University then become a lecturer in creative writing at the same University (Hachette Australia).

Her passion for writing pushed her to create her first work *A Watermelon a Fish and a Bible* that was published in 2010, and then in 2019 she writes *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*. Writers do not write from nothing, but they write from their experiences, and Lefteri uses her experience as a volunteer in refugee centers to create her last book that is based on real events of war victims. The writer refers to the events of the Syrian civil war in her novel *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* which make it named one of the best books of the year (Penguin Random House).

## 1. Christy Lefteri and *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*

Christy's family had an immense influence on her literary work. She grew up in the shadow of her parents' traumas as the war affected them badly. Then she decided to do something that may change her life and others lives as well. In the summer of 2016, she went to Athens where she joined a refugee center for women and children, and she started doing some helpful activities such as cleaning and making some tea for more than 100 displaced people. After two months she went back to Britain and started thinking about the next move. Several ideas were brought up into her mind and she began thinking about the story of her novel. She decided to make it about a Syrian couple who escaped from the country because of the war and then she started taking Arabic courses preparing herself for the next journey to Greece again (Pollak n.p).

Christy met Ibrahim a Syrian refugee when she was taking Arabic courses. Ibrahim was bringing a map with him every week they meet and he was helping her by describing his city Aleppo and by every single detail she was portraying the image in her mind ("*Lefteri*" 00:09-10:46-49). Lefteri went back to Athens in 2017 to the Hope Center where she volunteered before, but this time they started giving some different activities. She started teaching English and spending more time with the Syrian women and their children and by night she used to sit with them and listen to their stories with the help of one of her friends who used to translate to her (Pollak n.p).

Their stories helped her to link the events with each other. First she created Afra; the main female character in the novel, while the main female character Nuri was created in UK when she went back (Pollak n.p). Furthermore, she decided to make Afra's husband Nuri a beekeeper and

what inspired her was articles written by Dr. Ryad Alsous (“*Lefteri*” 00:11:38-59). He is an academic at Damascus University who had set the first beekeeping program. He helped her to understand the world of the beekeeping by being close to the bees for the first time. She recognized how Dr. Alsous holds a deep love and appreciation to the bees as Nuri the beekeeper in her novel (Pollak n.p).

*The Beekeeper of Aleppo* is a story about losing the sense of belonging and safety. The story of Afra and Nuri starts in 2015, when they were living a simple happy life in Aleppo-Syria with their little son Sami. Afra is a painter, and her husband Nuri is a beekeeper; he was introduced to beekeeping by Mustafa, his cousin, then Nuri started taking care of the bees in the countryside and Mustafa used to join him during the summer days where he has no work. As time passed things in Syria started getting worse. Mustafa sent his wife Dahab and his daughter Aya to England then the unthinkable happened when his son Firas died and a week after Sami also passed away. Afra became blind, and here began the painful journey ever when Mustafa left Syria before them then Nuri and Afra left later. Their first trip was towards Turkey, Greece and then to the unknown future in England. They found themselves refugees, displaced and even without identity, they became traumatized and the war created a wide gap between them.

*The Beekeeper of Aleppo* is more than a story of two refugees. Christy has given a deep description to many issues that the displaced people really experience during their death trips. Furthermore, displacement, trauma, homelessness, cultural shock, nostalgia and memory were excellent motivations behind the birth of *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*. Besides, *Lefteri* represents faithfully the previous issues and that makes her novel a good case study. Therefore, this chapter scrutinizes the different aspects of the issues that are presented in this novel such as displacement

and homelessness which provides the readers with a real sense of portraying the tragic story of Syrian refugees.

## 2. Displacement and Homelessness

Leftri Christy remarkably portrays displacement and homelessness simultaneously with trauma in her novel *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*. Her characters have experienced a deep feeling of personal estrangement, rootlessness and loss after the war broke out. Houses have been destroyed and Aleppo is no more beautiful as it used to be. There were no more safe places to live in. Nuri, his wife Afra and Mustafa's family found themselves forced to leave with nothing but little hope to reach the UK safely.

Before the conflict reached Aleppo, Nuri and Afra lived their normal daily life with their cousin Mustafa. They enjoy the simplicity of life and the gorgeous nature of Syria as well. They know that "things will get bad" (16), and Mustafa starts to feel the worst as if he had already become scared of losing everything, but they still struggled to cope with the horrific situation in Syria. Nuri says: "life was close to normal for us to forget about our doubts or at least to keep them locked away somewhere in the darkness of our minds while we made plans for the future" (*Beekeeper* 17). While the conflict is turning on, bringing unrest and fear to their minds, they start to think about leaving Aleppo; Mustafa convinces his wife and daughter to leave Syria before him. He makes the arrangements for them and talks to a friend who is already staying in England with his son. He was not able to leave Aleppo because of the bees. He says to Nuri: "the bees are family to us" (18); this was the case until he has got his first shock which is the loss of the apiaries after vandals destroyed the hives. Nuri says, "I will never forget the silence, that deep, never-ending silence" (18). As Mustafa was preparing for leaving, Firas was lost and then

Nuri found him dead beside the river; Nuri and Afra have lost their son Sami a week after as well but they were not ready to leave. The image of home started to change, the comfortable home turns to such fearful, scattered and damaged place, and the feeling of security has been threatened.

Under the circumstances of war people are obliged to leave. Displacement in Lefteri's novel is undertaken to look for safety. It is manifested as one way of many ways to cope with the resulted situation of war. However, it was not easy for the characters to deal with the traumas that often accompanied such journeys to the unknown. Trauma is manifested throughout the novel. Christy's description of the sense of loss, darkness, uncertainty and confusion make it clear how traumatized the characters are, they were extremely distressed. From the beginning of the novel, we come to know that the characters are strongly affected by the forced displacement both physically and psychologically. In one night, they found themselves lost in the dilemma of nothingness. The first source of trauma was marked by the sudden death of Firas, Sami, and the loss of the beehives.

For Nuri, war cost him a lot. He was lost more than any other character; especially after the death of his son the darkness spread more inside his world. He has been terrified by the violence and the horrible things he saw in broken Aleppo, a river full of rubbish, dogs eating human corpses in the fields where roses used to be and burned villages. He says: "I am glad Afra can't see" (5), he wishes to forget all what he saw. He wishes he could get rid of his dark thoughts. He says, "I wished I could take it all away, what I saw, I wanted to take it all away" (39). He wants to leave but Afra would not accept to leave behind all their things and the memories of her dead son. In order to appease his wife's distress and pain, Nuri goes out every day to look for gifts that may make her happy. Nuri describes what he found outside the walls of

their home, “I’d find odd bits, broken or unbroken pieces of people lives: a child shoe, a dog’s collar, a mobile phone, a glove, a key” (35). As he still tries to convince her to leave Aleppo with him, he still faces violence such as the two soldiers he met in the checkpoint who ordered him to join them or they would kill him.

Besides Nuri’s losses, it was hard for him to comprehend the sufferance of his wife. Witnessing someone you love fades away slowly, losing everything you own and feeling afraid and despaired are the cruelest things anyone may face. Therefore, Nuri thinks of putting an end to her pain. He says, “I asked myself if I should break her neck, put her out of her misery, give her the peace she wanted” (46). Even though the war affected their relationship, they still fought for each other, they try to fill the gap and reduce the distance between them. They struggle to make sense of what is happening around them, trying to give meaning to their broken relation. Afra’s blindness affects him more than anything else. He does not fully realize what it means to be blind until the time when they were in a boat towards Greece, he looks out into the darkness and cannot differentiate between the sky and the sea and says, “is this what Afra saw every day! This absence of form” (106).

As they move in their painful journey Nuri feels hopeless and weak; he starts to develop a sense of despair. In addition to the loss of his son, he and Afra face violence which threatened their lives and even when he reached the Turkish borders with her and other people, he was afraid of what he left behind. Even when leaving, he thinks of the way taking him back home; He says, “I saw the opening between the trees, the path that could take me back the way I come” (67). His pain did not end there; he was haunted by his traumas and his mind recalls the events he faced in Aleppo after the war broke out. In regards to how trauma affects people, Caruth explains that: “trauma is not locatable in the simple, violent original event in an individual’s past,

but rather in the way its very unassimilated nature - the way it was precisely not known in the first instance - returns to hunt the survivor later on" (Caruth 4). And this is what happens to Nuri as the symptoms of trauma do not manifest in him at the time of the traumatic incidents.

In fact, many episodes of trauma manifestations happen to Nuri after he leaves Syria. While he prepares for the asylum interview with Lucy Fisher, he imagines war planes in the sky, he says "I rush to the window: bombs are falling, planes are circling. The light is too strong, I shield my eyes. The sound is too loud, I cover my ears" (160), and then he feels a hand on his shoulder, Lucy Fisher asks him if he is ok, "look, Mr. Ibrahim. Look carefully. They are birds" she says. Nuri says "I look again and I see seagulls. Lucy Fisher is right. There are no planes circling, only a passenger plane far away, appearing through a wisp of clouds and above us only seagulls" (162). And again, the same episode has been repeated; even if he is safe in Athens, he thinks that the camera is a gun. In addition to his traumas and nightmares, he witnesses other people's traumas, sleepwalking women, crying children, the rounded wounds in the other young black women whom he met in Athens; "the place where people die slowly, inside. One by one, people die" (175), she told him that this place is like hell, "you cannot leave this place. Do you know that?" she said. Her words make him think about Mohammed and bring unrest to his mind, he always thinks about him in an attempt to forget about the loss of his son.

Nuri could endure no more with traumas and he falls apart; he did not deny the fact that he is tired and lost especially after the accident of his wife at the B&B apartment; he confesses "I wished that there was someone to guide me, to tell me what to do and which way to go, but I felt completely alone" (44). Late in the novel, we find out that he was troubled by Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, negative thoughts, fear, despair and nightmares which are the common symptoms he suffers from. Nevertheless, he managed to hide his weaknesses and fear; he

concentrates his hope on Afra's smile because he needs something to hold on to, just as he was supported by Mustafa's letters. Afra was also affected by the traumatic experience of war and displacement. She becomes blind as she was affected psychologically. Nuri describes her before the war: She cried like a child, laughed like a bells ringing, and her smile was the most beautiful I've ever seen. She could argue for hours without ever pausing. Afra loved, she hated; and she inhaled the world like it was a rose. All this was why I loved her more than my life. (20)

The beauty of Afra's soul is clear in her husband's description. Yet, it has been scarred by war. Her life becomes full of silence and she seems to be losing interest in everything. Nuri says "there was a time when she wanted to know, when she would ask me what I saw. Now she doesn't want to know anything at all" (55). Afra has a deep feeling of emptiness even when she is far from Aleppo, and Nuri states at the beginning of the novel that "it's like her soul is evaporating" (4). The beautiful woman changes into another one; although she was physically alive, she was spiritually dead. Making bread for her dead son is a clear evidence of the negative effect of war on her. Nuri told her over and over that Sami is no more with them in hell, "he is somewhere else" (40). She used to sit the same way in her bed. The stressful events she went through overwhelm her ability to cope with pain and change. After they made it to Turkey with her husband and even if she is far from destruction and dust, she did not want to be a part of new society. Nuri asks her to go for a walk in Istanbul on the seafront to see the boy who made sandcastles, but she refuses and she responds "I don't want to be out in this world" (55); she prefers to stay safe in her darkness. Her suffering has not ended; she was molested in the B&B apartment by Mr. Fotokis, which is another reason that forced her to stay away from her husband. As she lost even the ability to cry, Nuri says when he saw a woman crying over her

child “seeing the mother’s tears and the ease with which they fell, I realized that Afra had not cried about Sami” (193).

The third character who was affected by the traumatic experience of displacement and homelessness is Mustafa. Aleppo means a lot to him, he was full of life, a fighter like the bees he owns, and he was passionate for more knowledge. Creating recipes for his beautiful daughter Aya was his favorite work despite the fact that she is only 13, he was determined to be her teacher. But after he lost his son and the apiaries of bees and Aya’s paradise was burned, it was easier for him to leave in an attempt to see his wife and daughter. He clearly understands that Aleppo is no more the place they used to live in; it becomes like hell for him. He says to his friend: “leave this place, Nuri. It is no longer home. Aleppo is now like the dead body of loved one, it has no life, no soul, it is full of routing blood” (35). Mustafa’s trauma is also a result of his past experience of losing his mother and unborn brother at a young age - what makes him overprotective of thing in his life.

Along the journey, Nuri, Afra and Mustafa met other people who suffer from the trauma of displacement too. Angiliki, the Somalian woman also was tortured by war and experienced the negative effect of loss. She lost her baby, and the wounds in her arms were clear evidence about her sufferance. Baram whom Nuri met in Greece also lost his girlfriend. Both of them did not speak before until Nuri asked them about their sad stories. On the other hand, Mustafa met a girl who lost her voice when he was in a camp in Serbia; for a moment he forgot about his pain and thinks “what words are trapped inside her” (84).

Again, when speaking about forced displacement and homelessness, many issues like depression, anxiety, fear and hopelessness emerge to the surface. The characters experience and

continue to face horrific situations and violence. In their way to seek safety, they face danger and uncertainty. After their departure from Aleppo, everything has changed; there was no good direction to go. Those refugees deal with their traumas differently; otherwise, they shared the same feeling of fear. Nuri fears darkness and silence, he fears the fact that he is dead inside, and then he has no chance to survive. Likewise, Afra was scared of what has been left for her, she was “scared of everything” (76). On the other hand, Mustafa is afraid of loneliness, darkness and silence. He told his friend Nuri in his letter that he could not control his thoughts, he says, “ I wish I could escape my mind, that I could be free of this world and everything I have known and seen in the last few years” (82). Additionally, he was afraid of thinking about the end of his journey, especially when it did not go as it was planned and why he did not leave Syria with his wife and daughter. He thinks that if he had left before, his son would be alive. At last, he found himself in a camp in Serbia where there is so much silence full of chaos and madness. Yet, he did not give up and kept struggling till the moment he reached his wife and daughter.

The transition from steadiness and stability to being displaced and homeless persons affects the characters negatively. Displacement causes a complete transformation in the characters’ lives and psychology as well. Throughout the novel, all the characters perceive themselves as weak and hopeless, unable to resettle in a new environment and new cultures.

### 3. Resettlement, Loss, and culture Shock.

Christy Lefteri gives a glimpse on lives of the Syrians before and during the war. The hardships, the inhumanity, oppression, trauma, culture shock, hybridity and fragmented identities are real effects and challenges that the characters of the novel face; Thus, those effects impacted the characters psychologically and physically. When both Nuri and Afra went through difficult times and instead of finding a safe place and reaching England, they lost themselves in the darkness. Afra recognizes that her husband is totally lost “You are lost in the darkness, Nuri,” she says. ‘It is a fact. You’ve got completely lost somewhere in the dark” (146). On the other hand, Nuri sees that his wife was the one who is lost “I look at her eyes, so full of fear and questions and longing, and I had thought it was her who was lost, that Afra was the one stuck in the dark places of her mind” (146).

The painful journey of Afra and Nuri made them completely lost. Afra, after the death of Sami and becoming blind, was like a body without a soul “I am dead. I am turn black inside” (106). Even if she was not talking but her eyes were saying everything “sadness and memories, love and loss, blooming from her eyes” (166). On the other hand, Nuri was always trying to stay beside his wife as a strong husband, but in fact he was lost more than Afra. She tells him once “You’re lost in a different world. You’re not here at all. I don’t know you anymore” (156). Nuri and Afra were lost from the beginning of the journey before leaving Aleppo; the horrible things Nuri had seen in Syria made him lose hope and plunged him into darkness. Again, while Afra was trying to understand what her husband is suffering from, he tells her, “Your mind’s playing tricks on you. It’s all that darkness” (24). Nuri was stuck with his dark ideas and thoughts and he could not get rid of it and to not make his wife worry he told her that.

It is hard when someone becomes unable to stay in his homeland and find himself suddenly lost in strange place with a lot of lost people. After Afra and Nuri made it to Istanbul, they met a little boy named Mohamed about seven or eight years old, he was as Sami but was lost in his little world “[...] the little boy, about seven or eight, sitting cross-legged on the floor, rolling a marble. There was something odd about him, as if he was far away, lost in his own world. He seemed to be there alone” (47). The war made everyone lost, and Nuri was seeing the fear of loss and loneliness that were caused by the war in Mohamed’s eyes.

This little boy was following Nuri everywhere as if he found it safe beside him. Moreover, Nuri was the only one who made him feel safe; “[...]I think I made him feel safe”(47). During the trip on the boat, Afra, Nuri, and Mohamed were together, Nuri was not only holding their hands but their fear also. Suddenly, Mohammed fell into the water and he got lost in the dark sea, Nuri discovered lately that the boy was lost “[...] Mohammed was not on the boat. I scanned the water, the black waves, as far as I could see, and then, without thinking I jumped in”(62). The dark sea was about to take Mohammed but a man found him. The sense of loss could not stay away from Nuri until Mohammed was lost again but this time he was lost forever and Nuri was unable to find him “[...] I knew that we had to go, but I didn’t want to leave without Mohammed. What if the boy returned and wondered where I was? I knew he was coming back, he must be[...].” (87). Nuri could not find Mohamed when he woke up one morning, he was looking for him everywhere but the boy was lost forever.

Afra and Nuri were not the only ones who were lost. Mustafa’s wife Dahab was lost also. When Mustafa reached his wife and his daughter to England, he saw how much his wife is in pain and suffering from loss. Dahab was trying to stay strong for her only remaining daughter until the moment Mustafa arrived after a horrible journey. She gets lost in her dark world and

wants to take a break from this unmerciful world. Mustafa recognized that “[...] Dahab is very unhappy, Nuri. She was trying to stay strong for Aya, but since I arrived here she has been lying down all the day with the lights switched off, holding on to a photograph of Firas. Sometimes she cries, but most of the time she is silent. She will not talk about him[...]” (82). Dahab’s pain was more than to be described in words and getting lost in the darkness was the only cure for her loss.

Mustafa on the other hand was trying to stay strong but the things around him were so painful. After seeing the beehives he was working on with Nuri for years burned, “Mustafa sat down on the ground in the middle of the field with his legs crossed and his eyes closed”(14). A three generations of bees were all gone “Mustafa would hardly talk during this time, his mind completely preoccupied, imagining one thing or another”(15). Sometimes the pain of loss cannot be handled and that is what happened to Mustafa. He lost also his son Firas and it was the hurtful pain ever “When Mustafa saw Firas, he asked us to lay him down on the table, and then he closed his boy’s eyes and stood for alone time, unmoving, holding his hand[...] where Mustafa was holding on to his hand. For a while there was no sound, not a bomb or a bird or a breath” (15). It was a heavy moment for Mustafa that lead him to leave the country directly.

The sufferance of those Syrian refugees did not end when they left Syria; it was actually the beginning of another journey of pain and suffering. Afra and Nuri were strangers in multiple places, which left them with a cultural shock. This last term was coined by by Kalervo Oberg, a Canadian anthropologist; he defines cultural shock as “the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse” (142). According to him, people usually do not care about the importance of the things they use in their daily life, such as the language, norms and customs. After refugees or immigrants leave their homeland, they really recognize the importance of those things, which causes confusion and anxiety.

Afra and Nuri were newcomers to new places, so they unconsciously went through culture shock. They arrived to Istanbul and Nuri was seeing the differences between his city and Istanbul; he starts to recognize the unseeing details that were not observed before “[...]there was a sense of quiet here that was unfamiliar to me; in Syria, silence held danger, it could be shattered at any moment by a shell bomb or the sound of gunfire or the heavy footsteps of the soldiers[...].” (45). For Nuri seeing the life that is still moving and everything is going well in Istanbul was something so strange.

At first, Nuri was astonished about the things that he was seeing in Istanbul. Nuri was trying to discover things and he started seeing the differences between the two “As we walked, I became aware of other things too, like the cats which reminded me of Aleppo; how they woke up from their sleepy state and waited all day in the shadows for food[...].”(48). He starts discovering new things about Turkey, food, cars, cats, dogs and even the buildings “There were raw burgers in glass display cases and in the storefront windows women in traditional dress made hand-rolled crepes” (48). In England, it was hard and difficult for Afra and Nuri to accept the new norms, they were just rejecting and displaying hostility towards the new environment. Nuri narrates, “I make my way to the convenience store; the Arabic music reaches me as I walk along the street. Although I’m not familiar with the song that is playing, the music transports me home, its tones and rhythms, the sound of my language surrounding me and soothing me as I enter the little shop”(55). Nuri was going to one of the shops in England, everything around him was English but an Arabic song was playing from one of the shops of a foreign citizen that might be an Arabic man who rejects the culture of the host country.

During his walks in Britain, Nuri discovers some of the British manners that were a little bit weird for him. For instance, queuing in a shop was a foreign thing to him as the following exchange demonstrates,

“Excuse me,” a voice says behind me. I turn around and see that the woman is frowning...

“Yes?” I say.

“Would you mind kindly moving out of my light, please? Thank you.” She’s thanked me for moving before I’ve even moved. It’s difficult getting used to British manners- I can understand the Moroccan man confusion. Apparently, queuing is important here. People actually form a single line in a shop. It’s advisable to take your place in the queue and not try to push your way to the front, as this usually pisses people off!

(65).

The behavior of the British woman and people in such situations was weird to Nuri. Facing new manners was something unacceptable, and it raised the feeling of confusion to Nuri “But I don’t like their queues, their order, their neat little gardens and neat little porches and their bay windows that glow at night with the flickering of their TVs”(65). He was not satisfied, and he did not like the culture of that society that was new for him, so he could not get used to it.

Nuri met a lot of people from different nationalities. There was Hazim from Morocco and another one called Diomande from Gabon. Those people were obliged to assimilate and live as the citizens of Britain, they face the challenges of this new place to culturally adapt and assimilate. Hazim was trying to use English in every chance “the Moroccan man spots me standing in the doorway. ‘Geezer!’ he says in English, his eyes alight. ‘Come sit, play. I make you tea’ (102). The man was trying to speak English since the language is considered as one of

the biggest challenges that the refugees may face, but Nuri learned it before “I was tired of being locked up in the shop, and my father was eager for me to learn as much as possible, to serve the customers, to speak English well, so even when the shop was quiet I would be sitting there with an English grammar book on my lap because, to my father, that was the way forward” (94-5). The language was not a big problem to Nuri since he was able to speak it.

The assimilation and cultural adaptation of the refugees are impacted by the trauma and the results of displacement. The concepts of assimilation and acculturation are complex. According to Young Kim, acculturation is “an interactive and continuous process that evolves in and through the communication of an immigrant with the new sociocultural environment. The acquired communication competence, in turn, reflects the degree of that immigrant’s acculturation” (380). Immigrants or refugees need to melt into the new culture and to assimilate with this new environment in order to cope with change. Robert Park and Ernest Burgess defines assimilation as “a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons and groups, and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life” (735). It can be seen with Mustafa who made it to England before Afra and Nuri and was trying to assimilate to this new country; he met new people and that helped him recover. Mustafa says, “...I attended a dinner held for refugees and there I met a man and woman [...]. The man is a local beekeeper. I told them both that I had an idea to teach beekeeping to refugees and jobseekers. They were both very impressed! They are helping me to set it up with some local funding” (135). Difficulties of assimilation and cultural adaptation did not stop Mustafa from moving forward, “I have just given the third of my weekly workshops to volunteers” (146). The beekeeping was and still is Mustafa’s best job and he did not give up on that “At the moment I have six hives to demonstrate

beekeeping and the project is growing week by week “(146). He starts the beekeeping again in hope that everything is going to be good one day.

The various cultural identities that were presented in the novel show that the characters are caught between different cultures which would eventually bring about hybrid identities. In fact, the term hybridity occupies a central place in postcolonial studies; it is defined by Ankie M. M. Hoogvelt in his book *Globalization and The Postcolonial World* (1997) as “a kind of superior cultural intelligence owing to the advantage of in-betweenness, the straddling of two cultures and the consequent ability to negotiate the difference” (158). Hoogvelt describes hybridity as a new form of hybrid identity that emerges from culture and this is particularly so in Homi Bhabha’s discussion of hybridity. According to Bhabha, an Indian English scholar, critic and professor at Harvard University, in his book *The Location of Culture* (1994), hybridity “breaks down the symmetry and duality of self /other, inside/outside” (165). Bhabha has developed his concept of hybridity which emerges in the context where the colonial governing authority undertakes to translate the identity of the other.

In fact, hybridity finds a significant place in *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*. Nuri and Afra are caught between two cultures which endows them with a dual identity or what is known as the “third space”; this space is intrinsically critical of essentialist positions of identity and a conceptualization of “original or originary culture.” Jonathan Rutherford, a British professor of cultural studies at the University of Middlesex, identifies the significance of the process of hybridity, in his book *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference* (1990), for not being “able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the ‘Third Space’, which enables other positions to emerge”(211). The third space is the kernel hybrid position. In his collection of essays *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha claims there is a space “in-

between the designations of identity and that this interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy” (4). The third space opens the door to new forms of cultural meanings and calling for the establishment of culture and identity and this makes the notion of hybridity so important that it is positioned within this third space.

Along the way, the influence of the new culture on Afra and Nuri signifies who they become. With reference to Edward W. Said’s *Out of Place: A Memoir* (1999); Said lived the location in-between two languages and cultures (English and Arabic). He writes this extraordinary story of exile and a memoir of his early years in Palestine, Lebanon and Egypt when he explores his feelings of displacement. Living the life of exile and immigrant has shaped Said’s identity “To me, nothing more painful and paradoxically sought after characterizes my life than the many displacements from countries, cities, abodes, languages, environments that have kept me in motion in all these years” (217). Said was born and lived in Jerusalem, Cairo, Lebanon and United States and it was hard to identify his identity, just as Nuri and Afra who cannot identify with one single place since they went to a lot of places, and in each place, they were forming their new identity.

*The Beekeeper of Aleppo* and *Out of Place* shed light on a common point that is cultural identity. The journey of Nuri, Afra and Said is not the same; Nuri and Afra were forced to leave their country and they became refugees while Said became an exile and the three of them have no chance to see their homelands again and all of them faced new cultures, norms, values and languages that formed their identities. The language is a part of the identity; Said did not remember which language he spoke first either English or Arabic, he says:

The two have always been together in my life, one resonating in the other sometimes ironically, sometimes nostalgically, most often correcting, and commenting on, the other. Each can seem like my absolutely first language, but neither is. I trace this primal instability back to my mother whom I remember speaking to me both English and Arabic, although she always wrote to me in English, once a week, all her life, as did I, all of hers. (4)

Said has lived in multi-cultural and multilingual environments since he was born. Thus, it put him between two languages that form his cultural identity, and it highlights the close relationship between him and his mother.

Said's background explains his feelings of unsettlement. He states, "I have retained this unsettled sense of many identities, mostly in conflict with each other, all of my life... I wish we could have been all-Arab, or all-European and American, or all-Orthodox Christian, or all-Muslim, or all-Egyptian..." (5). Said's American citizenship and Christian background add more conflicting values to his life in Palestine, Cairo and Lebanon "what are you?"; 'But Said is an Arab name'; 'You're an American without an American name and you've never been in America'; 'You don't look American!...' (5). Said's name reflects the conflicting affiliations of his identity, and he qualifies his name as "foolishly English name yoked forcibly to the unmistakably Arabic family name Said" (3). The same thing applies to Nuri and Afra who could not recognize themselves once because of their background and their journey. Nuri tells his friend, "Mustafa, I believe I am unwell. Since I got here my mind is broken" (146). The displacement causes confusion to Nuri and Afra just like Said, which is also the reason behind their identity crisis.

Being an exile or refugee makes the person feel marginalized. Therefore, the characters in *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* were in places they do not belong, as well in Said's memoir when his

life was between Palestine, Cairo, Lebanon and the United States. In one occasion Said enters Victoria College (Cairo) in 1949 when he returned to multi-cultural environment and suffered from marginality because he was an Arab and he was forbidden to speak Arabic (184). In *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* the characters also face marginality by others. An example of that is Baram who met Nuri and because he was Kurdish the Turkish army caught him with thirty one other persons “[...] Because we are Kurdish” (139). That is to say, people were suffering from marginality, oppression and injustice just because of their nationality and their origins.

In Said’s memoir, he assesses his situation of his existence when he tries to find a place to belong to, on the other hand in *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* the characters were trying also to find place to belong to after being homeless and displaced. Said felt out of place as Afra and Nuri “This war snatched it away from us ... It’s left us without our home [...]” (*The Beekeeper* 83). They were scattered without place to belong to “But there was no home for [them]” (124). Said on the other hand did not know where to belong and being in between made him feel that he is out of place without a home to belong to or to go back to.

#### **4. Lost Homelands: Belonging and Affiliation**

Humans are deeply dependent on their group members. They are in need to be accepted, to be a part of something and to belong to somewhere where they can feel the perfect copy of themselves. Belonging “evokes an emotional attachment to homeland” (Segone et al n.p). Home usually stands for place where there is no need to explain oneself for others. The notion of home is pointing to the place of origin (Segone et al n.p). Under this notion, Lefteri’s characters develop their sense of belonging. They can only attach themselves to one place which is Aleppo and only there they really feel home, secure and in comfort; It is the perfect home for them. No

matter how destructed, distant and broken the place we call home, it is important for us to define ourselves. Aleppo was like paradise to them.

Albeit, the events which took place in Syria threatened the sense of safety and the image of home is triggered by the loss of loved ones. After Nuri, Afra and Mustafa left Syria and their routines and everyday life behind, their journey towards an uncertain future starts to give them a place they call home again. One of the most difficult challenges that face them is how to cope with every destination they reach and how to fit in the host society. Regardless, the characters still try to preserve their identities from their nation of origin.

The sense of belonging in *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* is depicted as “fragile” because of its incomplete nature. The characters do not have the ability to cope with new spaces, as if it does not include them and nothing there gives meaning to their existence. The characters feel like outsiders, and the presence of a gap between them and the host culture is ever so ominous. Even if they try their best to find their positions in the host society, they fail eventually. They were lost between two worlds, yet they belonged to neither. The novel clarifies that the Syrian refugees face “homing conflict” since they do not lose touch with their place of origin and do not have the ability to fit in the host countries. Afra says when her husband asks her for a walk in Istanbul “I don’t want to be out in this world” (55). She did not want to know anything despite the fact that she used to ask Nuri about every single detail in Syria. At every situation they confront, their minds go back to a situation they lived in Aleppo. Nuri refers to the whole world outside Aleppo as “strange”. They were aware of the fact that they will have no home outside Syria. Nuri says “But there was no home for us” (123). They focus on their losses more than trying to live again and this shows how attached they are to their homeland despite the distance.

Indeed, belonging paves the way to discuss the feeling of homing desire and longing for prior times in Aleppo. The novel gives a clear presentation about longing for home and being

attached to homeland. Lefteri's description of love and pride in home is expressed all throughout the novel. Her characters perceive home as a precious object even after their departure from Aleppo. They still describe it as "a magical land out of a story" (59), where everything was in its place. The pain and home sickness are clear since they constantly have no ability to snatch themselves from the past; for them, home is where the heart lies.

In the absence of a homeland, Nostalgia and memory become the tools that confirm to the characters where they belong. Nostalgic sentiments and memories are common among refugees. In *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*, the remembrance of the past may have the tendency to protect rootless people from the sense of fear and estrangement. Belonging is a central aspect in the definition of who we are or think we are as it is common indicator that one's life is meaningful; however, Lefteri's characters are lost. Losing their home means the loss of self. Boym asserts that nostalgia is "longing for home that no longer exists or has never existed" (Boym xiii). The characters construct a bridge of memories to take them home. They use nostalgic memories as defense mechanism against reality, to avoid thinking about their misery and situation of non-belongingness. Throughout the novel, Nuri, Afra and Mustafa remember their good times in Aleppo, together as one family and the bees "those little warriors" (12), as Afra describes them. Yet the image of home which the characters have in their minds is fragmented. The question of home is crucial, but it is clear that refugees and dislocated people have only a half beautiful image of their native lands. By referring to the novel, we come to find out that the characters perceive home negatively because losing home was also equaled by the loss of loved ones and precious things they once owned. In addition to the loss of physical place, they all share the feeling of being disoriented and they all search for belonging and familiarity.

The sense of belonging is also confirmed by familial relations and friendships because home is not only a human intimacy to a place but also related to members who make it home.

Nuri has been always supported by his friend Mustafa even before they left Aleppo since they worked together; Mustafa was the one who introduces Nuri to the world of bees. Even when things get worse and Mustafa leaves Afra and Nuri behind him, his encouragement does not stop. They were like brothers; he keeps sending letters for him. On the other hand, Nuri and Afra were fighting for one another. Even though war affects the couple's relationship, they always try for each other, helping each other to go through the hardships. It's true that Afra is blind, however the one who could not see is Nuri; he does not realize that Afra was always there for him. She was aware of the fact that he is lost more than her. Once, when they were living in Aleppo, she woke him up because he was crying; Nuri says "she looked into my eyes, as if she could see me. In that moment, I could see her too, the woman inside, the woman I'd lost. She was there with me, her soul open and present and clear as night. For those few seconds I was no longer afraid of the journey, of the road ahead" (66). A person is nothing with the ones whom he loves and surroundings. Elias told Nuri "when you belong to someone and they are gone, who are you?" (45). He did not forget about his daughter and wife because belonging is not only the attachment but people as well.

The absence of home generates a rich ground for Diasporas and homeless people to construct imaginary homelands. At one point, Nuri wishes for his gorgeous wife a different world to live in, he says "if I could give her a key that opened a door into another world, then I would wish for her to see again. But it would have to be very different from this one" (5). Indeed, life was cruel to him to the extent that he wishes to be part of a beautiful picture where there are no bombs and war and only beauty and light. Nuri describes the picture of the painting he saw in the museum saying, "I wished I didn't have to move here, that I could become a part of the painting and sit forever on the rock of the harbor and watch the sea" (166). In the novel the characters imagine Aleppo as it was before war, as if it has never been touched and destroyed. Nuri's son

wishes for a solid world before his death too “there will be no bombs there” he said, “and the houses won’t break like these do” (48).

The notion of imaginary homelands is raised in the novel by the consideration of the feeling of dislocation and estrangement. The characters have no home to return to; after their departure, they belong nowhere as Nuri says “where was home now? And what was it?” (123). Usually the loss of home is linked to the loss of identity. In displacement, the characters are no more Syrians, they lose the sense of being home and the sense of safety as well.

## **5. Narratives of Homeland: Nostalgia and Memory**

Syrian refugees were forcibly displaced and scattered during the war, but their memories and flashbacks bring back everything to their minds. The clouds of nostalgia were surrounding the characters of the novel. The concept of nostalgia is derived from the Greek words *nosto*, meaning return to one’s native land, and *algos*, meaning pain or suffering and it is of course the overarching theme of Homer’s *Odyssey* (Burton). Furthermore, the idea of nostalgia existed long before when the themes run strongly through Homer’s *Odyssey* approximately three millennia ago. Homer’s epic poem revolves around the adventure of Odysseus, a king of Ithaca who wanders ten years trying to get home after the Trojan War (Britannica). Odysseus confides to Calypso “Full well I acknowledge Prudent Penelope cannot compare with your stature of beauty, for she is only a mortal, and you are immortal and ageless. Nevertheless, it is she whom I daily desire and pine for. Therefore, I long for my home and to see the day of returning” (78-9). The story of Odysseus has been mentioned in the presented novel when a woman was asking Nuri about that king:

‘Do you know why Odysseus makes his journey?’ the woman said now, nudging me, and I wished she would be quiet....

‘He went from Ithaca to Calypso to god knows where-all of this journey, to find what?’...

‘I don’t know,’ I said to her.

‘To find his home again,’ she said. (107)

The woman reminds Nuri that even if the person goes so far from his homeland, he/she may come back to find his home when nostalgia warms up his heart.

The term nostalgia was coined by the Swiss physician Johannes Hofer, in his medical dissertation *Dissertation Medica de Nostalgia* (1988). Hofer regards nostalgia as “a cerebral disease” (387), caused by “the quite continuous vibration of animal spirits through those fibers of the middle brain in which impressed traces of ideas of the Fatherland still cling” (384). Another physician Johan Jakob Scheuchzer, a Swiss scholar, proposed that nostalgia was caused due to “a sharp differential in atmospheric pressure causing excessive body pressurization, which in turn drove blood from the heart to the brain, thereby producing the observed affliction of sentiment” (2). Scheuchzer applied this for the high incidence of nostalgia among Swiss mercenaries who left their homelands to fight on the European plains.

Definitions of nostalgia developed, and it was no longer viewed as a neurological disorder. *The New Oxford Dictionary of English* (1998) defines nostalgia as, “a sentimental longing or wistful affection for the past” (1266). Today nostalgia is regarded as an emotion of wistful longing for the past and it is related to a place or a time when the individual once had been. Svetlana Boym, The Curt Hugo Reisinger Professor of Slavic and Comparative Literature at Harvard University, argues in her book *The Future of Nostalgia* (2001) that:

Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one's own fantasy. Nostalgic love can only survive in a long-distance relationship. A cinematic image of nostalgia is a double exposure, or a superimposition of two images – of home and abroad, of past and present, of dream and everyday life. (9)

Boym goes on to explain the feeling of nostalgia and, she argues that the nostalgic home is actually a home that no longer exists. It can be seen in Lefteri's novel when the characters yearn for their old lives and homelands. Nostalgia according to Jill Bradbury, a professor of psychology at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa, is the hurtful and painful longing for a lost home and a yearning to return (343). Nostalgia can be described as the longing for belonging too (343). Thus, nostalgia is a fundamental human experience.

*The Beekeeper of Aleppo* represents the different experiences of the refugees outside their homelands. Nuri always remembers his old life and sometimes wishes to go back there again when the memories were blossoming in his mind “And then memories blossomed, like dreams, so rich in colour” (28). Nuri cannot forget his life before the war in Syria and everything was in his mind “Life before war. Afra in a green dress, holding Sami by the hand; he'd just started to walk and was waddling beside her, pointing up as a plane crossed the cool blue sky” (28). Those people are yearning for the past and nostalgia is poisoning them as Mustafa when he was remembering his son and Nuri's son, “[...] and I remember Firas and Sami. Our sons have gone to where the bees are, Nuri, to where the followers and the bees are” (50). Everything reminds Mustafa of his old life.

On the one hand, Nuri was on the same boat as Mustafa. Flashbacks and memories were playing tricks on his mind, “... I think of the field in Aleppo before the fire, when the bees hovered above the land like clouds, humming their song. I can see Mustafa taking a comb out of a hive, inspecting it closely, dipping a finger into the honey, tasting it. That was our paradise at

the edge of the desert and the edge of the city” (55). Flashbacks depicted the experience of Nuri by recalling the memories “... And the memory came back to me of Mustafa’s father’s house in the mountains. The house was surrounded by pines and fir trees and it was dark and cool inside[...].” (82). Nuri reminisces about every single detail about his old life when memories are the narratives “Dear Mustafa, You have always been like a brother for me. I remember the days when I visited your father’s house in the mountains, I remember the photographs of your mother, and your grandfather...what a man he was!” (82).

Memories have a deep relationship with nostalgia, but it differs from one to another as Batcho says, “One can remember without being nostalgic, but one cannot be nostalgic without remembering” (362). According to him, nostalgia can be seen as an emotional power that differentiates certain memories and it must serve some different psychological function compared to that of ordinary memories. Moreover, the nostalgic memories in the novel are the results of displacement and homelessness and the characters’ narratives gave the details about their old lives, especially their painful experiences that provide a unique perspective to their life events. Nuri’s life became inextricably linked with his past and the moments he was living were linked to the past events in one way or another; he says, “[...] I remembered my mother and father’s old house in Aleppo, how as a child I had been afraid to fall asleep until I could hear my mother’s reassuring footsteps on the landing outside my door[...].”(The Beekeeper 95). This was when Nuri and Afra made it to Athens and there were some families around them with their kids, where memories and flashbacks met in the mind of Nuri.

The sentimental yearning for the past led the characters to become the narratives of their lost homelands. Nuri was remembering his cousin Mustafa and narrating those memories by re-living them “This always reminded me of how I had met Mustafa. After his mother, my aunt, had died, the families lost touch and at least fifteen years passed without communication. Mustafa’s

father lived a solitary life in the mountains, while my mother and father were city people [...]” (95-6). Nostalgia does not only remind Nuri and others of the past, but it makes them also connected and motivates them to connect with each other. It is obvious that Nuri feels nostalgic for his homeland and he recalls “There, to my left, was the Queiq River; to my right a grey street with a narenj tree; ahead the famous Baron Hotel; over there was the Umayyad Mosque of Aleppo in the Al-Jalloum district of the ancient city ...“(99). Nuri’s nostalgia for his homeland is shown mostly in every chapter throughout the novel; as if he was reminding himself that he belongs somewhere “...over that way the walls of the citadel, and here were crumbling buildings; and there was a broken archway in the al-Madina Souq, and over there a street in the western neighborhood, the Baby al-Faraj Clock Tower[...] and the images faded away”(99).With displacement, memories follow along.

In fact, the past can never be restored but it can be transformed in the process of remembering. What overwhelms the sense of belonging to Nuri and other characters are the nostalgic memories that play a key role in the novel, they increase the sense of belonging that appears through the chapters of the novel. This sense is not only for the homelands but sometimes it is related to belonging to people, as in the novel “When you belong to someone and they are gone, who are you?” (45). Longing, memories, and nostalgia are linked to the thirst of the refugees for their homelands and the place they belong to. Christy uses the story of Odysseus narrated by Angeliki in order to contrast it with Nuri’s story. While Odysseus is on a journey back to home, Nuri had lost his home and there was no chance to find it again, “where was home now? And what was it?” (123). For war refugees, going back home is a dream that might never come true.

Nostalgia and memories are connected in the sense that when remembering the events of the past, the person feels nostalgic. Sometimes, memories are pushing the characters to move

forward; Nuri was reading Mustafa's emails and remembering their old days "I thought of Mustafa's email. I remembered my response. I will find a way" (136). Because of Mustafa, Nuri gains the courage to move forward to find a better future in England. He further says, "I am here because of Mustafa, I escaped Athens because of the hope and the will he gave me..."(146). Yet, nostalgic memories are like a double-edged sword, they may push the characters to move forward and may hinder, disrupt and defuse their lives. Nuri was stuck in his past "He is reacting in all the ways that I couldn't" (168). Mustafa was trying to forget what happened when he met Nuri and Afra and he was trying to show them how his life has changed, but Nuri could not do the same "...he tells us about the workshop groups and his students and about beekeepers' association"(168). Nuri and Mustafa's reactions to the new environment differed greatly and this signifies too that the nostalgic memories have different impacts on both of them. Mustafa did not let the past hinder him from living, while Nuri was stuck in the past.

Christy Lefteri denounces the terrifying refugee stories around the world focusing on the Syrian ones. This emotional and compassionate novel tests the triumph of the human spirit by presenting the heartbreaking story of Nuri and Afra's journey towards England when their homeland becomes unrecognizable. *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* is one amongst the stories that highlight the desire for life and the fear of losing the chance to live it. It represents how being scared, traumatized and lost can become a permanent state of mind among refugees as it shows the effects of the trauma and loss on the refugees who suffer in complex ways. To conclude, Christy's novel offers the readers insights on the horrible refugee stories that they may read about in the news, and it demonstrates its significance to the world.

## Conclusion

The existence of a homeland plays a crucial role in every individual's life. Not only does it constitute a part of one's identity, but it also encompasses national and cultural feelings of belonging in addition to safety, freedom, and stability. In the absence of a homeland, one is homeless and, thus, incomplete. Sadly, today there are multiple catastrophes that are making more and more people homeless. The atrocities and the bombarding news of civil wars in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>th</sup> Centuries shed the light on "Diaspora" from a new angle due to the increased number of refugees and displaced people all around the world. Depending on home environment, location and cultural heritage, the refugees' situation becomes complicated where their lives, safety, and identity are always at risk. Accordingly, this work has focused on homelessness and displacement of Syrian refugees who were forced to leave their homeland in search for safety and better life conditions by analyzing Christy Lefteri's novel *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*.

The first chapter of this research provided a theoretical framework to the emergence of new waves of refugees and people in Diaspora. First, it introduced the outbreak of the Syrian Civil war as part of a larger framework which is the "Arab Spring." In light of this, the chapter explained key facts about The Arab Spring and the continuous revolutions in several Arab countries in general and the origins of the Syrian Civil war in specific. It highlighted also how the never-ending war in Syria produced the largest number of refugees and a significant humanitarian crisis. Syrian refugees had to go through multiple displacements to seek asylum and reach safer shores and lands.

Moreover, the first chapter discussed important concepts in the field of Diaspora studies. It dealt with Diaspora as a worldwide phenomenon, in addition to exploring its roots and

development. As an inseparable part of Diaspora, homelessness and displacement are common denominators in all refugee situations and, this displacement leads to the construction of fluid identities in the light of the Syrian war. The chapter has introduced the works and concepts of significant figures such as: Edward Said, Salman Rushdie and Benedict Anderson that have made great contributions to Postcolonial and Diaspora studies. The works of those influential thinkers discuss different issues that are of high relevance to our research. Edward Said' memoir *Out of Place* explains the contradictions in Said' life, his fragmented identity, and constant feelings of displacement. On the other hand, *Imaginary Homelands* by Salman Rushdie highlights how exiles, migrants and displaced people start to lose touch with their home of origins and face the dilemma of creating imaginary homelands to substitute the lost homeland. Additionally, Benedict Anderson's work *Imagined Communities: Reflections on The Origin and Spread of Nationalism* which represented nationalism as a way of imagining that creates community and helps in understanding the sense of nationalism and feelings of belonging among Syrians.

The second chapter was devoted to the analysis of Lefteri Christy' *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*. It begins with a brief presentation of the author, the inspiration behind her work, and her relationship and connection with the refugees during her work as volunteer in Unicef refugee camps. Also, it provided a summary of the selected novel in addition to the significance of this novel in particular in relation to our subject matter. It focused on highlighting the nature of homelessness and displacement as a negative result of war and its traumatic effects. The writer succeeds in describing the horrific lives of refugees and their situation of statelessness in addition to the way they cope with the new situations in every destination they reach. The theme of

displacement is analyzed simultaneously with trauma due to the negative effects of war and the confusion it caused.

The next part of the second chapter dealt with many themes which stand under the umbrella of homelessness and displacement such as: Loss, culture shock and the difficulties of diasporic resettlement, in addition to problems of assimilation and hybridity. It discussed the theme of belonging, and throughout the discussion it was clear that the characters are lost between two worlds while belonging to none. We come to find out that when individuals are victims of forced displacement, their feelings of belongingness are as weak as is the hope of going back home. The last point that has been discussed in this work is related to memory and nostalgia while the characters are providing narratives of their lost homeland. These concepts have been represented as mechanisms to ensure survival and as means to transport the characters home. It also gives particular attention to the way in which those previous concepts are interrelated.

*The Beekeeper of Aleppo* looks at the reality of millions of Syrians; those who see hope behind borders and family struggles, losses, fears, traumas and hopes as well. The writer wants to draw attention to the sufferance of refugees and displaced people who were and are still affected by the continuous series of political tensions and conflicts. She provides a heartbreaking depiction of the trauma of displacement of Syrian and people and their daily struggle to survive, assimilate, and fit into contexts that are far removed from their homelands on all levels. Thus, Lefteri Christy was able to convey an important message about the sufferance of refugees and displaced persons.

## Appendix

### **A Formal Interview with a Syrian Refugee:**

A dramatic flood of refugees from the Middle East spread around the world especially from Syria, where people have been forced to leave their homes looking for safety through deadly journeys. On this basis, this interview offers a glimpse into real events of a Syrian refugee who grew up in Syria and then fled with his family after the civil war broke out. Through this interview we are going to be closer to the homeless people and see how they are risking their lives on the way to Europe looking for safety and a better life.

**Interviewer: Hello Mr. Tarik, thanks for agreeing to share with us your story! Before we go into our interview, let us know more about you.**

**Mr. Tarik:** My name is Tarik Al-Fares, I am 25 years old. I am a Syrian citizen from Homs. I'm working and studying in Germany, specializing in architecture in the field of wood.

Thanks God this is the last year. I speak 3 languages, Arabic, English and German, and if the Algerian dialect could be calculated as a language, I also master it very well because I lived in Algeria 4 years.

**Interviewer: First of all, how was your life in Syria before the crisis?**

**Mr. Tarik:** My life was somehow normal: going to school, playing football, swimming and memorizing Quran. It was a good life at the family level, but on the political level and the system of government in Syria it was never good, I did not feel a sense of belonging to Syria because of the nature of life and society.

Syria was a beautiful country before the war and it had enormous human potential in all fields, but Kamel is well known for the corruption of Arab regimes and their condition with their people. There is no need to delve into this.

**Interviewer: How did the civil war affect your life?**

**Mr. Tarik:** In the early days of this revolution, yes, there was and there is still people's revolution against this corrupt regime. Yes, I was one of the first people to participate in this popular movement, especially since my city is called the capital of the Syrian revolution.

I went out in many demonstrations, but the Syrian regime's slogan was "Assad or we burn the country," and as you see now this slogan has been applied with the help of several countries like Russia, Iran, the Israeli entity, America and Turkey and for many countries this pushes you to laugh and cry at the same time.

I was 16 years old, I lived with my mother and little sister of 7 years, and my little brother, 14 years, and we lived in a place where the majority was with the Syrian regime and against the people's revolution and because of the many sects in Syria as you know. My father at that time was working in Algeria.

Just as the information of the Syrian regime, or let's say the mafia ruling in Syria, the majority of which are from the Alawite sect and you have 80% of the population are Sunni Muslims.

Fear for our lives was from those who wanted to suppress this revolution.

We were besieged for a week at home, unable to get out due to the ongoing war in the street. Then we had the opportunity to escape and it was the last time we saw our house, it was the childhood home.

We went to live at my grandfather's house, which was in a place where the majority of the Sunni Muslim community lived.

I was participating in many demonstrations against the regime, and of course the mother's fear for her children especially that my father was so far, was the main reason that pushed her to press my father in order to start the steps of moving to live in Algeria.

The date for travel came, which was a year after the start of the Syrian revolution, we are today in the ninth year of Syrian suffering.

Yes, war, insecurity and lack of the necessities of life there are enough reasons to make a mother want to save her children.

Algeria is the country that I felt I belonged to. This is the effect of war on me, but of course it is difficult to explain in all its details what happened and is happening in Syria.

I am against any oppression or tyranny of any Arab people who seek towards their freedom and strive to live in dignity free from corruption

**Interviewer: How does life as a refugee look like?**

**Mr. Tarik:** The word refugee, which I do not feel represents me I prefer the word immigrant in the land of God.

**Interviewer: What was the hardest thing about leaving Syria?**

**Mr. Tarik:** The most difficult thing about leaving my homeland, is that I'm not going to be there anymore and I cannot see my home where I grew up, my school, my friends and all the places and people that I used to see and meet. It was so hard for me to say goodbye forever.

**Interviewer: Can you describe your journey to Europe? And how did you escape?**

**Mr. Tarik:** My trip to Europe was in the summer of 2015, and as a start to any adventure for me it starts quickly without warning.

I traveled from Algiers to the Algerian-Moroccan border and entered the Moroccan territory illegally. Of course there, in Morocco, I headed to the city of Nador, which is adjacent to the Spanish city of Melilla in Morocco and of course the way to enter is by illegitimate ways, the adventures are always like that. I lived in Melilla for about three months, and then I went to Spain at Malacca City then I went to the city of Almeria then to Madrid and of course, the ease in my narration of events does not mean that it was easy on the ground at the time.

Of course, I used to spend two days or more in every city despite the suffering, but I felt like someone was coming for tourism, travel and enjoyment. Then I went to France, then Belgium then to Germany.

The adventure from Algeria to Germany lasted about 4 and a half months.

**Interviewer: How long have you been in Germany?**

**Mr. Tarik:** I have 5 years here in Germany.

**Interviewer: Why did you choose Germany? And how are people treating you there?**

**Mr. Tarik:** I chose Germany because I love football and I support it, and Germany is a country of law that defies definition.

Yes, in Germany there is something I like about people. They are respectful and the way of treating depends on your morals and your upbringing. Germany is a state of law where all people

are under the law, and here in Germany I have to respect the country and its inhabitants and give a good image of Islam. I appreciate what Germany did for the refugees in comparison with other countries that did nothing or countries that were the cause of the Syrian crisis and war.

**Interviewer: Have you ever faced discrimination?**

**Mr. Tarik:** Yes, I faced some racist situations, but all societies have bad people and good people

But this racism is not mentioned before the racism in my country, Syria, which amounts to a death sentence.

**Interviewer: What were the challenges that faced you after leaving Syria and becoming homeless?**

**Mr. Tarik:** Major challenges, most notably how I complete my studies, I needed to start work and integrating into society and learning its language Seeking knowledge of all kinds. These things are difficulties before I begin to achieve them and then they become goals when I go on to achieve them. I was not homeless all of this was on my own expense.

**Interviewer: if the war ends in Syria, would you go back there?**

**Mr. Tarik:** To return to settling in Syria one day, I do not think so, and I do not want to go as a visitor, I have a constant need for travel.

I want stability in Algeria, Inshallah.

**Interviewer: one last question, what are your hopes for Syria and homeless people around the world?**

**Mr. Tarik:** Yes, like any human being, I hope that this suffering will end for people, that the purpose of life will be understood, that the human value will be understood, and that criminals will be held accountable.

Thank you Yousra for choosing me for this interview, and I wish you success in your studies and life.

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## الملخص

تعتبر حركات اللاجئين والنزوح والشتات الحديث من الظواهر الرئيسية التي يتعين على العالم التعامل معها في فترة التوترات والحروب التي تحدث في يومنا هذا. لذلك، فإن التشرد والتهجير في رواية كريستي ليفتيري النحال في حلب هي الاهتمامات الرئيسية لهذه الرسالة التي نستكشف فيها ما يواجهه اللاجئون في رحلتهم للوصول إلى مناطق آمنة أو لطلب اللجوء. تسلط الرواية المختارة الضوء أيضًا على طبيعة وواقع اللاجئين بعد اندلاع الحرب السورية وتقدم وصفًا صادقًا لتأثيرات الحرب والنزوح على نفسياتهم وحياتهم، حيث تتناول هذه الدراسة السياق التاريخي للحرب السورية وأصولها، و توضح العديد من المصطلحات التي تندرج تحت مظلة التهجير، من إعادة التوطين، الضياع، الذاكرة، الحنين والانتماء. لهذا السبب، يتناول الفصل الأول الخلفية التاريخية للحرب السورية بالإضافة إلى الربيع العربي، علاوة على ذلك، فإنه يتناول مفهوم الشتات بالإشارة إلى بعض النصوص الرئيسية في دراسات الشتات. يحلل الفصل الثاني الرواية في ضوء الأفكار المهمة لدراسات الشتات وما بعد الاستعمار من أجل إبراز النضالات اليومية للاجئين السوريين وحنينهم إلى أوطانهم المفقودة.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الربيع العربي، الحرب السورية، النزوح، التشرد، الحنين، الوطن الأم، كريستي ليفتيري.