Intersectional Feminism and Psychological Trauma in *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*

DISSERTATION

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled in **Intersectional Feminism and Psychological trauma in *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*** is a record of the studies carried out by **Anjana Varma V.**, at the Department of English, T.K.M. College of Arts and Science, Kollam under the guidance of **Muhammed Roshan B.** and submitted to the University of Kerala in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts in English Language and Literature.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation entitled **Intersectional Feminism and Psychological Trauma in *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*** submitted to the University of Kerala in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree of Master of Arts in English Language and Literature is the original record of studies and research carried out by me during 2024-2026 under the guidance of **Muhammed Roshan B.**, Assistant Professor of English, T.K.M. College of Arts and Science, Kollam and it has not formed the basis for the award of any degree, title or recognition.



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Anjana Varma V.

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Preface

In the context of civil war, women and marginalized groups often face multiple forms of violence and inequality that cannot be understood through gender alone. Civil war intensifies existing social divisions, making certain groups more vulnerable to displacement, sexual violence, poverty and social exclusion. Psychological trauma is one of the most devastating consequences of civil war. Survivors may experience anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), grief, guilt and emotional numbness after witnessing violence, losing loved ones or being forced to flee their homes. Women, children, refugees and ethnic minorities often bear a disproportionate burden of these traumatic experiences.

This project, titled "Intersectional Feminism and psychological trauma in *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*" explores through the experience of displaced refugee status, economic background and gender interact to shape both the severity of trauma and access to recovery. This project examines how complex relationship between war, identity and mental health through the lens of intersectional feminism. Armed conflicts affect people in different ways and these experiences are often shaped by factors such as gender, class, ethnicity, age and social status. The concept of intersectionality helps us understand how these overlapping identities influence the forms of violence, discrimination and hardship faced by individuals during times of war. The study focusses on the novel and how its characters explore loss, resilience, identity and hope while lasting effects of psychological trauma on survivors.

Chapter One

Introduction

War has a catastrophic effect on the health and well-being of nations. Studies have shown that conflict situations cause more mortalities and disability than any major disease. War destroys communities and families and often disrupts the development of the social and economic fabric of nations. The effect of war includes long-term physical and psychological harm to children, women and adults as well as in material human capital. The Beekeeper of Aleppo by Christy Lefteri is a profoundly moving novel detailing the harrowing journey of Nuri, a beekeeper and his wife, Afra, as they flee from the Syrian civil war for a new life in Britain. This study focuses on violence against refugee women and trauma, analysing through the theory of intersectionality and trauma theory. The characters in the novel are profoundly affected by the trauma of war and displacement, which, while deeply rooted in the emotional and thematic core of the story, also influences their development.

Christy Lefteri doesn't just write stories. She writes silences. The spaces between what is lost and what is found, between war-torn homes and foreign shores, between people we were and the people exile makes us become. With prose delicate as olive leaves and as unflinching as breaking news, Lefteri transforms the refugee crisis from headline to heartbeat. Christy Lefteri was born in 1980 to refugees who escaped Cyprus following the partition of 1974. Raised in London, she released her first novel, *A Watermelon, a Fish and a Bible*, in 2010, and her second, *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*, in 2019. The latter became a Sunday *Times* bestseller and the winner of the 2020 Aspen Words Literary Prize.

Her work has won praise from other writers who represent British diasporic experiences, including Daljit Nagra and Benjamin Zephaniah, who both view *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* as an urgent telling of the lives of refugees enduring the humanitarian crisis in the Mediterranean. Lefteri is currently a lecturer in Creative Writing at Brunel University. She has previously taught English as a second language and volunteered for UNICEF in Greece. Her active engagement with voluntary work, alongside the dedication of her first novel to her refugee mother and the second to her father, showcases the important ways in which personal, lived testimonies of trauma inform her fiction. Lefteri uses captivating prose to provide necessary insights into the desperate lives of refugees in the Mediterranean. Her novels present implicit links between the experiences of displacement in Syria today and in neighbouring Cyprus a mere four decades earlier, stressing that we need to learn the lessons of the past to improve the present.

A Watermelon, a Fish and a Bible is very loosely inspired by the lives of Lefteri's refugee parents. Meanwhile, *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* conveys the story of a married couple who have been forced to leave Syria, based on real accounts the author heard as a UNICEF volunteer. The novel and 'the stories of these children, these families' (Afterword, *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*) were compelled by her desperation to represent the widespread suffering she encountered, and to overcome her own parents' inability to talk about being refugees: 'It was like a rumbling we could feel growing up. What stops people from talking about their traumas?' There are important resonances between Lefteri's sympathy for Syrian 'children' and 'families' and her own 'growing up' in a family in which the traumas of displacement have never gone away. This explains Lefteri's motivation to create realistic depictions of exile to demonstrate its painful consequences for families then and now, in the twentieth and twenty-first

centuries. She attended Southgate School. She went on to graduate with a Bachelor of Arts in English, a Master of Arts and a PhD in Creative Writing, all from Brunel University London. She then studied Psychoanalysis.

Lefteri's debut novel, *A Watermelon, a Fish and a Bible,* was published via Quercus in April 2009. The novel is told from the perspectives of three different characters amidst the Turkish invasion of Cyprus. *A Watermelon, a Fish and a Bible* were longlisted for the 2010 Edinburgh First Book Award and the 2012 Dublin Literary Award. For six years, Lefteri worked as a psychotherapist at a central London hospital. In response to the Syrian civil war and refugee crisis, Lefteri felt compelled to help and volunteered at the Hope Centre in Athens for two summers. Inspired by her time in Athens, combined with her own parents' experiences, Lefteri returned to writing. In a six-way auction in 2018, Zaffre (a Bonnier Books imprint) acquired the rights to publish Lefteri's second novel, *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*, in May 2019.

The novel follows the journey of two Syrian refugees named Nuri and Afra. The titular beekeeper, Mustafa, is based on Ryad Alsous, an academic at the University of York and formerly at Damascus University. With over a million copies sold internationally as of 2023, *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* became *The Sunday Times'* third bestselling fiction paperback of 2020, made the Richard & Judy Book Club list, won the 2020 Aspen Words Literary Prize, and was runner-up for the Dayton Literary Peace Prize in the fiction category. In addition, the audiobook version, narrated by Art Malik, was shortlisted for a British Book Award. In 2020, Manilla Press (another Bonnier Books imprint) acquired the rights to publish Lefteri's third novel, *Songbirds*, in July 2021.

The novel is centred around the disappearance of a Sri Lankan domestic worker named Nisha, based on a real-life case of five migrant women and two children disappearing from Cyprus. *Songbirds* made *The Sunday Times* top 100 bestseller list of 2022. Lefteri reunited with Manilla Press for her fourth novel, *The Book of Fire* , in August 2023. With the backdrop of

forest wildfires on a Greek island, the novel deals with a family's trauma. Lefteri had witnessed the 2018 Attica wildfires firsthand. *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* was adapted for stage by Nesrin Alrefaai and Matthew Spangler. Directed by Miranda Cromwell and starring Roxy Faridany and Alfred Clay as Afra and Nuri respectively, the play had its world premiere in February 2023 at the Nottingham Playhouse. The production subsequently went on a UK and Ireland tour. Christy Lefteri's "The Beekeeper of Aleppo" won the third annual Aspen Words Literary Prize on Thursday in a virtual ceremony and celebration.

The prize proceedings, scheduled to take place at the Morgan Library in Manhattan, moved online due to public health restrictions from the novel coronavirus pandemic. Lefteri, whose novel was inspired by her work in refugee camps, spoke in her acceptance speech of literature as an engine for hope and empathy in both the refugee crisis and the ongoing public health crisis Literature fills the distance, she said from home in London. It is a bridge. It connects people everywhere. We can reach people across oceans and borders and time. And though we cannot physically extend a hand through the pages of a book, we can express that we understand. It deepens our empathy. The novel about Syrian refugees seeking asylum in Great Britain deals with the personal struggles and trauma of an artist and a beekeeper caught in the ongoing global refugee crisis.

Lefteri follows past winners Tayari Jones, last year for "An American Marriage," and the inaugural winner Mohsin Hamid in 2018 for "Exit West. Lefteri is expected to take part in a virtual conversation about the book during the summer-long community read of "The Beekeeper of Aleppo" this summer, as the traditional venue for the winner's public talk – the Aspen Summer Words literary conference and festival has cancelled its in-person events. The $35,000 attached to the prize ranks it among the more lucrative American publishing awards for fiction. It was endowed by an anonymous donor to Aspen Words and is to be given annually in perpetuity. The prize trophy itself, made from Corian and walnut in the shape of a book, was designed and made at Anderson Ranch by sculptor Michael Lorsung. Lefteri is also the author of the novel "A Watermelon, a Fish and a Bible." The child of Cypriot refugees, Lefteri grew

up in London, where she now lectures at Brunel University. "The Beekeeper of Aleppo" was born out of her time working as a volunteer at a UNICEF-supported refugee centre for women and children in Athens in 2016 and 2017. Lefteri detailed the life-altering experience in her Zoom interview with Santiago on Thursday.

The novel explores the harrowing experience of Nuri Ibrahim and Afra Ibrahim. Nuri is a beekeeper, and his wife Afra is an artist. They live happily in the beautiful Syrian city of Aleppo until the unthinkable happens and they are forced to flee. But what Afra has seen was so terrible, and she has gone blind. She lost her child, Sami, in front of her eyes. They embark on a perilous journey through Turkey and Greece towards an uncertain future in Britain. Mustafa, Nuri's cousin and business partner, moves to Yorkshire, England, to start a new apiary, serving as a beacon of hope for Nuri. Dahab, Mustafa's wife and their children, Aya and Firas. Hazim, a fellow refugee at the B&B in England who supports Nuri and Afra. Angeliki, a Somali refugee in Athens who befriends Afra. Diomande, a young refugee from Côte d'Ivoire. Mr Fotakis is a smuggler in Athens. Lefteri's depiction of Nuri and Afra captures the experience of dealing with the psychological and emotional consequences of displacement through trauma theory, particularly through the representation of trauma, formation of identity, and characterisation.

The word refugee is evocative, powerful, even images of a fleeing population struggling with their belongings, desperately crossing borders, images of refugee camps, with women trudging with water or children waiting to be fed and images of injured people. Emotions aside, refugees are entitled to international protection, which guarantees basic human rights. Those who migrated for purely economic reasons are not refugees. Individuals who have committed crimes against peace or war crimes are not recognised as refugees. A refugee is a person who has fled his or her country owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of

his or her nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avoid himself or herself the protection of that country.

People become refugees either on an individual basis or as part of a mass exodus, because of political, religious, military and other problems in their home country. Among refugees, persons who have fled their country because of their lives' safety or freedom have been threatened by generalised violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violence of human rights or other circumstances which have seriously disrupted public order. The reason that leads to the refugee crisis are war, persecution, climate change, violation of human rights, financial hardships, hunger and gender or sexual orientation. Various forms of persecution can lead to a refugee crisis.

The Syrian refugee crisis began in March 2011 as a result of a violent government crackdown on public demonstrations in support of teenagers who were arrested for anti-government graffiti in the southern town of Daraa. The arrests sparked public demonstrations throughout Syria, which were violently suppressed by government security forces. The conflict quickly escalated, and the country descended into a civil war that forced millions of Syrian families to flee their homes. The migration from Syria was not a single event, but a sustained exodus driven by several overlapping factors.

The widespread use of barrel bombs, chemical weapons and aerial bombardments in urban centres like Aleppo and homes made daily life untenable. The emergence of groups like ISIS introduced a new layer of persecution, specifically targeting religious minorities and imposing brutal social codes, driving even more people to flee. Beyond the physical danger, the destruction of schools, hospitals, and the electrical grid meant that even in quiet zones, families could no longer sustain a

basic quality of life. The migration resulting from the Syrian conflict followed a tiered structure, moving from local to international levels. Millions initially fled to safer villages or government-controlled coastal areas within Syria, living in makeshift camps or abandoned buildings.

The vast majority of Syrian refugees crossed land borders into neighbouring nations. Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan took millions, placing an incredible strain on their domestic resources and infrastructure. By 2015, the lack of long-term prospects in regional camps led hundreds of thousands to attempt the dangerous journey across the Mediterranean Sea to Greece, then northward through the Balkans toward Germany and Sweden. The Syrian migration crisis acted as a stress test for international law and Western political stability. The Syrian civil war serves as a stark reminder that migration is rarely a choice but a desperate response to the total failure of state protection. The resulting diaspora has permanently altered the demographics of the Middle East and Europe, highlighting the need for more robust, compassionate, and coordinated international frameworks to manage the inevitable movement of people in the face of modern warfare.

Intersectionality is a crucial concept in modern feminist theory that helps us understand how different forms of oppression overlap and shape women's lived experience. The term was coined by Kimberlee Crenshaw in 1989 to explain how race and gender discrimination interests, particularly in the lives of black women. Today, intersectionality has become a powerful analytical tool to examine the complex realities faced by women across the globe. At its core, intersectionality recognises that women are not a homogeneous group. Factors such as race, class, religion, sexuality, disability, language barriers and legal insecurity compound her gender-based struggle.

Psychological trauma is an emotional response caused by severe distressing events, such as bodily injury, sexual violence or other threats to the life of the subject or their loved ones; watching television news may be extremely distressing and can produce an involuntary and possibly overwhelming physiological stress response, but does not always produce trauma. The effect of forced migration goes beyond the immediate loss of home and community they deeply affects the mental well-being of those involved. Forced migrants often grapple with complex psychological issues, including trauma from violent experiences, chronic anxiety about an uncertain future, and depression stemming from the loss of their social networks and community. These psychological challenges often compound the difficulties of resettlement, making it harder for individuals to adapt to new environments and circumstances. The experience of violent events such as war or persecution can lead to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This condition manifests in symptoms like flashbacks and nightmares, affecting daily functioning and quality of life. The uncertainty that comes with forced migration often leads to constant worry about safety and the future. This chronic anxiety can spiral into depression, making the process of adaptation and resettlement even more challenging.

The loss of community and social networks can result in feelings of isolation and loneliness. This emotional toll can exacerbate existing mental health conditions and create new ones, hindering the ability to rebuild one's life in a new setting. The Syrian war has caused a severe, long-lasting mental health crisis with over 55% of refugees and up to 44% of residents experiencing PTSD, high rates of depression, anxiety and severe emotional distress. Children and adolescents are disproportionately affected, with 36% suffering from trauma-related disorders.

A study reported a 55.5% prevalence of PTSD among Syrian refugees, with higher rates among those directly exposed to armed conflict. Research on children shows that 35.1% to 36% struggle with PTSD symptoms, often worsened by losing family members or witnessing violence. Beyond PTSD, there are high levels of depression, anxiety and complex PTSD. A 2021 study indicated that 44% of participants living in Syria were likely suffering from a severe mental health disorder. While men, especially those in combat zones, often show higher PTSD rates, women frequently report higher rates of depression and somatization.60.5% of children in certain studies showed signs of at least one psychological disorder. Symptoms include extreme anxiety, nightmares, bedwetting and aggressive behaviour. Thus, the study analyses how intersectional feminism and trauma are discovered through the novel.

There were other studies on this novel. In 2025, Moufida Zaidi and Raghad Salama studied the social alienation and displacement of refugees in the novel The Beekeeper of Aleppo. Another study was conducted by Muhammad Salman in 2025 on Neoliberal humanitarianism and post-colonial displacement. Also, in 2024, Balaji and Pavithra, two Associate Professors, conducted a study titled, "Beyond the silence: A story of loss and hope – A study on Christy Lefteri's The Beekeeper of Aleppo". And it explores the themes of resilience, hope and the human cost of conflict. This study is based on the trauma theory and intersectionality towards refugee women.

The study uses a qualitative and descriptive method. It studies intersectionality towards refugee women based on and psychological trauma in the novel *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* by Christy Lefteri. Analysing characters and their experience in different situation. There were number of studies related to this work, but most of them were only focused on the postcolonial displacement.

The present research is organised into four chapters: Chapter 1: Introduction, Chapter 2: Intersectional Feminism, Chapter 3: Psychological Trauma, and Chapter 4: Conclusion. The study examines the selected novel through the theoretical frameworks of intersectional feminism and psychological trauma, with particular emphasis on violence against women and the traumatic experiences of refugees. However, the scope of the research is limited to these specific concerns and does not encompass other significant dimensions of refugee experiences, such as socio-economic challenges, political displacement, legal status, cultural assimilation, or identity formation. These limitations provide opportunities for future researchers to explore the broader complexities of refugee narratives from diverse theoretical and interdisciplinary perspectives.

Chapter Two

Analysing Intersectional Feminism in *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*

The term Intersectional Feminism was coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. She described intersectionality as: "A prism for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other." "All inequality is not equal," she says. "We tend to talk about race inequality as separate from inequality based on gender, class, sexuality or immigrant status. What's often missing is how some people are subject to all of these, and the experience is not just the sum of its parts." Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality provides a significant theoretical framework for analysing Christy Lefteri's *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*.

Set against the backdrop of the Syrian Civil War and the ensuing refugee crisis, the novel extends beyond portraying the physical journey of displacement to examine the interconnected effects of gender, trauma, class, nationality, and mental health on the lives of its characters, particularly women. Through characters such as Afra and the women encountered along the refugee route, Lefteri presents an intersectional feminist perspective that highlights both the vulnerabilities and the resilience of women navigating multiple and overlapping systems of oppression.

Feminism is a social, political and intellectual movement that advocates for the equality of all genders. At its core, feminism seeks to dismantle systems of oppression that have historically marginalised women and denied them equal rights, opportunities and representation. While often misunderstood as a movement that privileges women over men, feminism in reality strives for justice, equality and the recognition of shared humanity. Over time, feminism has evolved into a complex and inclusive discourse that addresses not only gender inequality but also the intersections of race, class, sexuality

and culture. The origins of feminism can be traced back to the late 18th and early 19th centuries, often referred to as the first wave of feminism. Early thinkers such as Mary Wollstonecraft argued for women's education and rational independence, laying the groundwork for later movements.

The first wave primarily focused on legal issues, particularly women's right to vote, culminating in significant milestones such as suffrage movements in countries like the United States and the United Kingdom. However, this phase largely represented the concerns of middle and upper-class white women, often excluding women of colour and working- class women. The "second wave" of feminism emerged in the mid-20th century, expanding the movement's focus to issues such as workplace discrimination, reproductive rights and domestic violence.

Influential writers like Simone de Beauvoir, through her seminal work The Second Sex, challenged the idea that women are naturally inferior and instead argued that gender is socially constructed. Similarly, Betty Friedan highlighted the dissatisfaction of suburban housewives in her book The Feminine Mystique, sparking widespread debate about women's roles in society. This wave brought attention to the deeply embedded cultural norms that perpetuated inequality. The third wave of feminism, beginning in the 1990s, sought to address the limitations of earlier feminist movements by embracing diversity and intersectionality.

Intersectionality, introduced by Kimberle Crenshaw, emphasized that women experience oppression in varying degrees depending on factors such as class and sexuality. For instance, the struggle faced by a Black woman or a refugee woman differ significantly from those of a privileged white woman. Writers like bell hooks criticized

mainstream feminism for ignoring these differences and advocating for a more inclusive approach that addresses all forms of systemic inequality.

In the 21st century, feminism continues to evolve in what is often described as the fourth wave. This phase is characterised by the use of digital platforms to raise awareness about issues such as sexual harassment, body shaming and gender-based violence. Movements like Me Too have amplified voices that were previously silenced, demonstrating the power of collective action in challenging injustice. Contemporary feminism also places a strong emphasis on LGBTQ+ rights, recognising that gender is not binary and that equality must extend beyond traditional definitions.

Intersectional feminism offers a powerful lens through which to read The Beekeeper of Aleppo by Christy Lefteri. The novel, set against the backdrop of the Syrian civil war and the refugee crisis, does more than narrate the physical journey of displacement; it illuminates how gender, trauma, class, nationality, and mental health intersect to shape the lived experiences of its characters, particularly women. Through figures like Afra and the women encountered along the refugee route, Lefteri foregrounds an intersectional feminist perspective that reveals both vulnerability and resilience under layered systems of oppression. At its core, intersectional feminism, first articulated by Kimberli Crenshaw, emphasises that women's experiences cannot be understood in isolation from other identity markers such as race, class, and geopolitical context.

In *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*, Afra embodies this intersectionality. As a Syrian woman, a mother who has lost her child, and later a refugee navigating foreign lands, her suffering is not singular but cumulative. Her initial trauma, the loss of her son Sami, renders her emotionally paralysed, symbolised by her blindness. This blindness can be

read not only as psychological trauma but also as a metaphor for how systems fail to "see" refugee women as complex individuals with layered needs.

Afra's silence and withdrawal contrast sharply with traditional feminist narratives that celebrate vocal resistance. Lefteri instead presents a more nuanced portrayal: Afra's coping mechanisms are shaped by grief, displacement, and cultural expectations of womanhood. Her condition challenges Western-centric feminist ideals that often equate empowerment with outward assertiveness. Intersectional feminism allows us to interpret Afra's quiet endurance as a valid, context-specific form of survival rather than passivity.

The novel also highlights how war and migration disproportionately affect women. As Nuri and Afra travel from Syria through Turkey and into Europe, they encounter numerous women whose bodies and identities become sites of exploitation. The threat of sexual violence, trafficking, and dependency underscores how refugee women occupy a particularly precarious position. Their gender intersects with their status as displaced persons, amplifying their vulnerability. Lefteri does not sensationalise these experiences but presents them as an everyday reality, thereby critiquing global systems that fail to protect marginalised women.

Importantly, Lefteri also portrays solidarity among women as a form of resistance. Characters such as Angeliki in Greece provide care and support that transcend national and cultural boundaries. These moments of compassion suggest an alternative feminist ethic—one grounded not in ideology alone but in empathetic action. Intersectional feminism here becomes not just an analytical tool but a lived practice of care across differences. Nuri's perspective as a male narrator further enriches the intersectional reading. His initial inability to fully understand Afra's trauma reflects

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broader societal patterns where women's suffering is often misunderstood or minimised.

However, as the narrative progresses, Nuri becomes more attuned to Afra's internal world, signalling the possibility of allyship. Intersectional feminism does not exclude men but calls for their participation in recognising and dismantling layered inequalities. Mental health is another critical axis of intersection in the novel. Both Nuri and Afra suffer from severe psychological trauma, yet their experiences are gendered. Afra's blindness and silence are interpreted differently by others, often infantilising her or rendering her invisible. This reflects how mental health issues in women, especially those from non-Western backgrounds, are frequently misread or dismissed.

Lefteri's portrayal challenges readers to consider how cultural stigma, gender norms, and refugee status intersect to shape mental health narratives. Furthermore, the novel critiques the bureaucratic systems that process refugees. Women like Afra are often reduced to case numbers, their stories flattened into administrative categories. Intersectional feminism exposes how these systems fail to account for the specific needs of women, particularly those who have experienced gender-based violence or loss. Lefteri, drawing from her experience working in refugee camps, brings authenticity to these depictions, emphasising the gap between policy and lived reality.

The migration journey is frequently more dangerous than the conditions refugees flee from. Refugee women are exposed to multiple forms. Refugee women are exposed to multiple forms of exploitation during transit. Human trafficking and smuggling networks, sexual exploitation in exchange for safe passage, abuse by border officials or security forces, detention in unsafe and overcrowded facilities are widely celebrated during civil war. In this novel, the beekeeper of Aleppo the characters Afra

and Angeliki are the reflection of how women suffer during war and migration. Reaching the host country does not necessarily end the cycle of violence. Instead, violence takes new forms, often less visible but equally harmful.

The contemporary refugee crisis has drawn global attention to the immense suffering caused by war, displacement and migration. Contagion of violence against refugee women in The Beekeeper of Aleppo by Christy Lefteri can be understood as the way violence spreads across spaces, systems and relationships affecting women continuously during war, migration and displacement. The novel does not represent violence as a single event but as a chain reaction that follows refugee women everywhere. Through characters like Afra and women encountered during the journey, Lefteri illustrates how violence evolves from physical destruction to psychological trauma, becoming an enduring and pervasive force in the lives of refugee women.

The contagion of violence begins with the Syrian civil war, which serves as the foundation of all subsequent suffering in the novel. Women are particularly vulnerable in war zones, where violence is both direct and indirect. Afra, the wife of Nuri, suffers a bombing. This physical injury symbolises not only bodily harm but also the emotional and psychological devastation caused by war. The destruction of home and family creates long-term emotional suffering. The refugee routes are unsafe, especially for women who depend on smugglers and strangers. Systems of migration often reduce refugees to identities rather than humans, increasing their vulnerability.

Afra, the wife of Nuri Ibrahim, one of the leading characters of the novel. From the beginning to the end, Afra has gone through variant trauma due to war and migration. She is a mother who lost her child in front of her eyes. She became blind.

Her husband never fails to take care of her until the most disrespectful and horrific experience happens to her. When Nuri left for a delivery job, a Greek smuggler based in Athens, who aids Nuri and Afra in their escape to England, came to their house and abused Afra. But she couldn't react against it cause the smuggler threatened her that if she raised her voice, he would kill her. The man seduced her without any fear; this shows the power and dominance of people who often took advantage of the pathetic condition of powerless people. Afra and Nuri could not help but resist such violence. The only thing they wanted was to reach safety from the war zone. The impact of war and loss provokes them to tolerate injustice.

Syrian refugee women face a high risk of gender-based violence and sexual harassment in host countries like Jordan and Turkey. Economic hardship and displacement exacerbate these vulnerabilities, with many women experiencing abuse due to patriarchal structures and rising stress, often leading to mental health issues. Here, Afra had already been in trauma of losing her son, and the abuse made her more like an object without any resistance. As refugees flee, violence spreads into their journey. Refugee routes are unsafe, especially for women who depend on smugglers and strangers. Systems of migration often reduce refugees to identities rather than humans, increasing their vulnerability.

Women face specific risks such as abuse, coercion and neglect. A young mother unable to feed her baby highlights how displacement intensifies bodily and maternal suffering. This shows how violence mutates from physical war into structural and gender- based violence. The novel shows how violence becomes routine and normalised. Incidents like trafficking and abuse occur in the background, making them seem ordinary. Even in refugee shelters, there are signs of people being harmed, suggesting no safe space exists. This normalisation is what makes violence

contagious. It spreads silently and becomes accepted. Violence is not only physical but deeply psychological. Afra's blindness is also symbolic of trauma and emotional withdrawal. She becomes silent and disconnected, reflecting how violence affects identity and communication. The novel emphasises that refugee women carry internalised violence, which continues even after reaching safety.

Angeliki (often spelt Angelika) is a relatively minor character in The Beekeeper of Aleppo, but she plays an important role in illustrating intersectionality in a quieter, more relational way. Through her, Christy Lefteri shows that intersectionality is not only about oppression—it is also about how different social positions shape one's capacity to offer care, solidarity, and resistance. She is a Somali refugee in Athens meet in a refugee camp. Angeliki is a Greek woman who works with refugees, and her identity sits at the intersection of nationality, gender, class position, and professional role. Unlike Afra, she is not displaced, but she is still part of a society strained by economic crisis and overwhelmed by the influx of refugees. This places her in a complex position: she is both relatively privileged as a citizen, as someone with institutional access and constrained as a woman working within under-resourced humanitarian systems in Greece.

Refugee camps and migration routes are often characterised by overcrowding, lack of security and insufficient resources. Women in such environments are particularly vulnerable, as there are limited mechanisms to prevent or respond to gender-based violence. As a refugee, she exists within systems that fail to provide adequate protection or care. Refugee camps and migration routes are often characterised by overcrowding, lack of security and insufficient resources. Women in such environments are particularly vulnerable, as there are limited mechanisms to

prevent or respond to gender-based violence. Angeliki's situation reflects this systemic failure. She is left to navigate her pregnancy without support, protection or dignity. This form of violence is less visible but equally damaging. It operates through neglect, indifference and institutional inadequacy. By portraying Angeliki's vulnerability, the novel critiques the global systems that allow such a condition to persist.

One of the most striking aspects of Angeliki's character is the lack of narrative depth given to her story. She appears briefly and then disappears from the narrative, leaving her story. She appears briefly and then disappears from the narrative choice is highly significant. Angeliki's limited presence reflects the invisibility of refugee women's experiences. Their stories remain incomplete, fragmented or absent from public discourse. This silence is not accidental; it is a form of violence in itself. By denying women the opportunity to tell their stories, society perpetuates their marginalisation. Lefteri's portrayal of Angeliki thus serves as a meta-commentary on how women's suffering is often overlooked or erased. Angeliki's character is central to understanding the idea of the contagion of violence in the novel.

Her experience demonstrates how violence spreads across different stages of the refugee journey. It begins in the instability caused by war. It continues during migration through exploitation and abuse. It is reinforced by systemic neglect and social stigma. Angeliki does not experience violence in a single, isolated incident; rather, she exists within a network of conditions that perpetuate harm. Her character shows how violence is continuous, evolving and interconnected. Although she is an individual character, she represents a much larger reality. She stands for the women whose countless refugee women whose experience of violence remains unrecorded and unrecognised. Her story is not meant to be complete; instead, it is meant to be

representative. Through her, Lefteri invites readers to consider the broader implications of displacement and gendered nature of suffering. Angeliki becomes a symbol of collective trauma, embodying the experience of women across different contexts and cultures.

Another key aspect of Angeliki's intersectionality is her role as a mediator between systems and individuals. She represents institutions—aid networks, refugee processing systems, but she also humanises them. Where bureaucratic structures tend to flatten refugee experiences, Angeliki listens to personal stories, acknowledging trauma in ways that systems often fail to do. This dual position highlights how institutional power and personal empathy can intersect within a single individual. Her relationship with Afra is especially important. Angeliki's patience and attentiveness allow Afra to begin reconnecting with the world. Through an intersectional lens, this interaction is not just about kindness; it is about recognising how Afra's trauma is shaped by multiple factors: war, motherhood, displacement, and gendered expectations—and responding in a way that respects that complexity.

Angeliki does not impose a one-size-fits-all solution but meets Afra where she is, which is a key principle of intersectional practice. At the same time, Lefteri does not idealise Angeliki. Her ability to help is limited by systemic constraints, lack of resources, bureaucratic hurdles, and the sheer scale of the refugee crisis. This limitation reinforces an important intersectional insight: individual goodwill cannot fully overcome structural inequality. Angeliki's character thus subtly critiques global systems that rely on underfunded, often feminised labour to manage humanitarian crises. In sum, Angeliki reflects intersectionality by embodying a position where privilege, limitation, gender, and ethical responsibility intersect. She shows that

intersectional feminism is not only about analysing suffering but also about understanding how people situated differently can respond to it. Through her, Christy Lefteri suggests that meaningful solidarity requires recognising complexity both in others' lives and in one's own position within larger systems of power.

The concept of intersectionality, developed by Kimberle Crenshaw, has become a foundational framework in contemporary gender and migration studies. It enables a deeper understanding of how multiple axes of identity, such as gender, race, class, ethnicity, religion and legal status, interact to shape the lived experience of individuals. For immigrant women, intersectionality is not merely a theoretical lens but a lived reality, where overlapping structures of power and oppression create unique forms of marginalisation. Intersectionality challenges the idea that oppression can be understood through a single category, such as gender or race. Instead, it argues that systems of power, patriarchy, racism, capitalism and xenophobia are interconnected and mutually reinforcing.

For immigrant women, this means that their experience cannot be fully understood by isolating their identity as women or as migrants. Rather, it is the intersection of these identities that produces distinct challenges. For instance, while all women may face gender discrimination, immigrant women may experience it differently due to language barriers, racial prejudice and precarious legal status. Similarly, while all immigrants may encounter xenophobia, women immigrants often face additional vulnerabilities linked to patriarchal norms and gendered expectations.

In many cases, immigrant women are particularly vulnerable as their legal invisibility makes it difficult to seek redress. Moreover, economic dependency often reinforces other forms of oppression. For example, women who rely on employers or

spouses for financial stability may be less likely to report abuse or assert their rights. Thus, economic marginalisation is not an isolated issue but one that intersects with legal and gender-based vulnerabilities. Legal status plays a crucial role in shaping the experience of immigrant women. Immigration laws often intersect with gender in ways that reinforce dependency and vulnerability. In many countries, women's residency status is tied to their spouse or employer, limiting their autonomy and increasing the risk of exploitation.

Immigrant women frequently face barriers in accessing justice due to unfamiliarity with legal systems, language difficulties and fear of deportation. Even when legal protections exist, they may be inaccessible in practice. Law enforcement agencies may fail to respond adequately to complaints from immigrant women, especially if they lack documentation. Intersectionality highlights how institutional systems can perpetuate inequality. Seemingly neutral policies may have discriminatory effects when applied to individuals with intersecting identities. For instance, strict immigration women from reporting domestic violence, thereby perpetuating cycles of abuse. Immigrant women are at heightened risk of gender-based violence, including domestic abuse, sexual exploitation, trafficking and harassment. Intersectionality reveals that this vulnerability is not solely due to gender but is compounded by migration-related factors such as isolation, economic dependency and legal insecurity. Cultural stigma and social norms may further silence victims, preventing them from seeking help.

Afra and Angeliki represent the most profound depiction of intersectionality in the novel. As a Syrian woman, Angeliki is positioned at the intersection of gendered vulnerability and war-induced displacement. Afra's blindness, developed as a

psychological response to trauma, symbolises not only personal loss but also the overwhelming impact of violence and grief. Afra's suffering cannot be reduced to a single cause. She is a woman in a patriarchal society, where emotional expression and trauma may be suppressed. A refugee fleeing war, exposed to loss, instability and danger. Also, a mother who has lost her child is intensifying her psychological collapse. A disabled individual, whose blindness further marginalised her during migration. These intersecting identities compound her vulnerability. Her blindness, for instance, makes the journey across borders even more perilous, increasing her dependence on others, especially her husband Nuri. This dependency reflects how gender and disability intersect to limit agency. At the same time, Afra's trauma is deeply gendered.

Women in war zones often experience violence differently through loss of family, threats of sexual violence and emotional burdens of caregiving. Her silence and withdrawal can be interpreted as a response to both personal grief and the broader systemic violence inflicted upon women in conflict zones. Afra's character also challenges simplistic victim narratives. While she appears passive, her internal world reflects resilience and survival. Intersectionality helps us see that her condition is not weakness but a complex response to multiple layers of suffering. Angeliki's character reflects another dimension of intersectionality.

Angeliki represents women within migration systems who navigate survival in morally complex ways. Their contrast highlights how intersectionality is not uniform. Instead, it produces diverse experiences based on the specific combination of identities and circumstances. Both characters reveal the nature of migration and suffering, the impact of structural inequalities on women's choices and agency and the absence of adequate support systems for vulnerable women. Through Afra and

Angeliki, Christy Lefteri emphasises that the refugee crisis is not just a political issue but a deeply human one. Intersectionality allows readers to understand that the character's struggles are not isolated incidents but the result of interconnected systems of power.

The novel resists portraying immigrant victims. Instead, it presents them as complex individuals shaped by multiple forces: violence, love, loss, survival and resilience. This aligns with the goal to amplify marginalised voices and reveal hidden structures of inequality. Afra fails to punish her rapist because Afra and Nuri need his help to flee to England. Nuri observes while they speak with the rapist, Afra was sitting on the sofa and wished she would do something, but she was just sitting there as if she had died inside and only her body was alive. This may also be interpreted as placing an insensitive burden on women who have been raped to respond without support. The change Nuri observes in Afra emphasises that her passiveness results from the traumatic act of violence as a survivor. Rapist exploit the vulnerability of characters' situations.

In the novel, violence against women is portrayed as a devastating consequence of war and forced displacement. Women, including the character Afra and Angeliki, face severe trauma, sexual abuse and the loss of family. The novel highlights their heightened vulnerability compared to men during migration and their struggle for survival. The novel includes a depiction of sexual violence and abuse against women during their journey through countries like Turkey and Greece. Women are depicted as frequently becoming victims of individuals and gangs who prey on refugees, making their journey dangerous. War disproportionately impacts women, with 676 million living near conflict zones as of 2025. They face extreme risks, including an 87% rise in conflict-related sexual violence, displacement and loss of livelihood.

Despite being targeted, women demonstrate resilience as active peacebuilders and providers, yet remain largely excluded from formal peace negotiations. Rape and gender-based violence are increasingly used as tools of war, with up to 30% of women in some conflict zones experiencing it. Over 90% of current war casualties are civilians, with women and children making up the majority. Women represent a significant portion of displaced populations, facing increased risks of exploitation and loss of or destruction to their homes and livelihoods. Conflicts severely restrict access to maternal healthcare, leading to higher rates of unwanted pregnancies and infections.

Women often manage family survival, navigating food shortages and dangers to provide for their communities. Throughout history, women have served as soldiers, messengers and intelligence agents, such as in the Italian resistance movement or as combatants in the Soviet army during WWII. Despite their involvement in grassroots peace movements, women are frequently left out of high-level peace negotiations. After conflicts, women often face pressure to return to traditional gender roles, and their contributions are frequently erased from historical narratives. The novel is not a depiction of a fictional story; instead, it reflects the reality of people, especially women. The Syrian war is among the worst humanitarian crises in recent history, affecting education, the economy, healthcare, and mental displacement. However, the specific impact on Syrian women has not been systematically examined. The novel emphasises how war affects women.

The Syrian civil war, which began in 2011, has led to one of the largest humanitarian crises in modern history. Millions of Syrians have been displaced, and among them, women constitute one of the most vulnerable groups. Syrian refugee women face a complex web of challenges that arise from war, forced migration and

resettlement in foreign lands. These issues are not only physical but also social, economic and psychological in nature, deeply affecting their lives and identities. Gender based violence is one of the pressing issues. During conflict and migration, women are exposed to various forms of violence, including harassment, exploitation and assault.

The breakdown of law and order during war makes women easy targets. Even in refugee camps or host countries. Inadequate protection systems leave them vulnerable. Fear of stigma and lack of legal support often prevent women from reporting such incidents, further perpetuating the cycle of abuse. Women are more attacked than men. One of the most widely documented intersectional issues is the rise of early and forced marriages among Syrian refugee communities. Reports from UNICF highlight that families, driven by extreme poverty and insecurity, often marry off their young daughters as a survival strategy. In refugee camps in Jordan, such as Zaatari, cases have been recorded where girls as young as fourteen were forced into marriages, which are often justified by families as a means of protection against sexual violence or as a way to reduce economic burden. However, the reality is far more troubling. Many of these girls are deprived of education, exposed to domestic abuse and forced into early motherhood. This issue illustrates the intersection of gender, age, economic hardship and displacement, where the vulnerability of young girls is intensified by the conditions of refugee life.

Sexual exploitation is another reality. Investigations conducted by Amnesty International and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees have uncovered cases in countries like Lebanon where refugee women, particularly widows or those heading households, are coerced into exchanging sexual favours for necessities such as food, rent or protection. In some documented instances, landlords

exploited women's desperation by demanding sexual relationships in return for allowing them to remain in rented shelters.

These women often remain silent due to fear of eviction, deportation or social stigma. Here, the intersection of gender, refugee status, economic dependency and lack of legal protection creates a situation in which exploitation becomes normalised and difficult to challenge. Through Afra and Angeliki, Lefteri symbolize the refugee women and how it annihilates their lives. Whenever any kind of destruction or issue arises, women are the ones who suffer the most. The struggle for existence is much more than men. We can also analyse it through the theory of Simone de Beauvoir in the second sex (1949), which argues that "one is not born a woman, but becomes one," highlighting how society constructs womanhood as the "other".

Simone de Beauvoir's theoretical perspective becomes highly relevant in this novel, *The Beekeeper of Aleppo,* which portrays the suffering, resilience and transformation of refugee women within the context of war and displacement. At the centre of the novel, Afra, whose character vividly reflects Beauvoir's ideas about woman as the other. Before the war, Afra was an artist with a strong sense of identity. However, the outbreak of the Syrian war reduces her position within both family and society. After the traumatic loss of her son, she withdraws into silence and psychological blindness. Her identity becomes defined by suffering, motherhood and dependency.

In Beauvoir's terms, Afra is pushed into a passive role where she is no longer recognised as an independent subject but as someone whose existence revolves around others, especially her husband Nuri. This reflects how patriarchal and crises reinforce the idea of the woman as "the other," depriving her of agency. Beauvoir's theory also

emphasises how social conditions shape women's experiences, rather than biology alone. In the novel, the war acts as a powerful force that restructures gender roles. Women like Afra and Angeliki are not only victims of violence but also of social expectations. For instance, refugee women are often expected to endure suffering silently, maintain family stability and sacrifice their personal desires. This aligns with Beauvoir's argument that femininity is imposed by society through roles and expectations of pain and anger.

The character of Angeliki further illustrates Beauvoir's ideas about female vulnerability within patriarchal and crisis structures. Angeliki, who works in refugee support systems, reveals how women are often exposed to exploitation and violence during displacement. Refugee women face sexual harassment, abuse and systemic neglect. Beauvoir's argument that women are historically oppressed and treated as objects becomes evident in these conditions controlled by external forces. Angeliki's interactions with refugees highlight the broader structural inequalities that limit women's autonomy and safety. Furthermore, the refugee experience itself adds another layer to Beauvoir's theory. Syrian refugee women are not only marginalised as women but also as displaced individuals. Their lack of legal status, economic independence and social support intensified their oppression. This aligns with Beauvoir's broader existentialist view that human freedom is always shaped and often limited by external conditions. In the novel, displacement reinforces women's dependence on others, making it even harder for them to assert independence or identity.

Intersectionality emerged as a response to the limitations of single-axis frameworks that treated oppression as uniform. Crenshaw argued that systems of power such as patriarchy, racism and economic inequality interact in ways that produce distinct experiences for individuals positioned at their crossroads. For refugee women,

this means that their struggle cannot be reduced to gender alone or displacement alone; rather, these elements interact dynamically. In the novel, Angeliki face discrimination not only from the host society, but also within refugee communities. Similarly, a woman's legal status as an undocumented migrant intensifies her vulnerability to exploitation, particularly when combined with gender-based inequality, which becomes essential for understanding the lived realities of refugee women beyond generalised narratives of victimhood. One of the most visible dimensions of intersectionality is the combination of gender and refugee status. As women, refugees are already subjected to patriarchal norms that restrict their autonomy and expose them to violence. As displaced individuals, they face the loss of home, security and social networks.

According to UNHCR reports, emphasize that refugee women are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence and exploitation. Afra's traumatic experience of sexual violence and exploitation. Afra's traumatic experience of sexual assault reflects this harsh reality. Her suffering is not only personal but also structural, rooted in gendered power dynamics that intensify during war and displacement. Afra's blindness and emotional withdrawal symbolise the psychological impact of trauma. Real-world refugee women often suffer from PTSD, depression and anxiety, but are unable to express their pain due to stigma or lack of support. Afra's silence mirrors the condition of invisibility, where suffering remains unspoken yet deeply felt. Intersectionality also involves the loss of social roles and identity. Afra, once an artist, loses her sense of self after displacement and trauma. Similarly, many refugee women in reality struggle with identity fragmentation as they are uprooted from their cultural and social environments. Thus, Afra becomes a powerful literary representation of intersectional

oppression, embodying the combined effects of gender, violence, displacement and psychological trauma.

Angeliki, the Greek woman who supports refugees, offers a different but equally important perspective on intersectionality. Though not a refugee herself, her role reflects the interconnectedness of human experience within systems of displacement. In real-world humanitarian contexts, caregivers and aid workers often experience secondary trauma. Angeliki's compassion and emotional exhaustion reflect this phenomenon. She absorbs the pain of refugee women like Afra, demonstrating how trauma extends beyond direct victims. Angeliki's role also highlights the gendered expectation of caregiving; women are often positioned as emotional supporters, both in fiction and reality. This expectation can lead to emotional strain, particularly when combined with exposure to suffering.

Angeliki acts as a bridge between refugees and the host society, similar to community workers supported by UNHCR. Her presence emphasises the importance of empathy and human connection in addressing intersectional challenges. Both in reality and in the novel, refugee women face heightened risks of violence. Afra's experience aligns with UNHCR findings on the prevalence of sexual violence in conflict and displacement settings. Many refugee women are unable to voice their trauma due to stigma, fear or cultural barriers. Afra's silence symbolises this invisibility, while Angeliki represents the act of listening and acknowledging these hidden stories. The mental health struggle depicted in the novel closely mirrors real-world conditions. Afra's withdrawal and emotional numbness reflect common symptoms of trauma among refugee women. Both the novel and real-world reports emphasise the profound sense of loss experienced by refugee women not only of home but also of identity, relationships and stability.

The comparison between real-world intersectionality and the women characters in The Beekeeper of Aleppo reveals a striking alignment between fiction and reality. Through Afra and Angeliki, Christy Lefteri brings to life the complex, layered experiences described in UNHCR reports. Afra embodies the silent suffering and psychological fragmentation caused by intersecting forms of oppression, while Angeliki represents empathy, care and the emotional burden of witnessing trauma. Together, they illustrate that the struggles of refugee women are not isolated but deeply interconnected with broader social, cultural and political systems.

Intersectionality has become a crucial framework for understanding how women experience inequality in the contemporary world. For women today, especially those belonging to marginalised communities, intersectionality is not merely a theory but a lived reality that shapes their identities, opportunities and struggles in profound ways. At its core, intersectionality recognises that women are not a homogeneous group. A woman's experience is influenced not only by her gender but also by factors such as race, class, caste, religion, sexuality, disability and nationality. For instance, a middle-class urban woman may face gender discrimination in the workplace, but her struggle is significantly different from that of a rural woman from a marginalised caste who may face both gender-based violence and systemic social exclusion. In countries like India, caste plays a major role in shaping women's experiences, where Dalit and Adivasi women often encounter layered forms of oppression that combine patriarchy with caste-based discrimination.

One of the most visible manifestations of intersectionality is in the workplace. While women globally continue to fight for equal pay and representation, not all women face the same barriers. Women of colour, migrant women and women from lower socio-economic backgrounds often experience wage gaps, job insecurity and

limited career advancement opportunities in informal or precarious labour sectors, where legal protections are weak or intersect with gender, creating compounded disadvantages. Women from marginalised backgrounds are more vulnerable to various forms of violence, including domestic abuse, sexual exploitation and trafficking. Their access to justice is often limited due to social stigma, lack of legal awareness and systemic biases within law enforcement. For example, refugee women or undocumented migrants may hesitate to report abuse due to fear of deportation or discrimination. This illustrates how legal status and nationality intersect with gender to exacerbate vulnerability.

Modern wars have created massive refugee populations, where intersectionality becomes even more pronounced. Organisations like the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees have documented how refugee women face specific risks, including trafficking, sexual exploitation and lack of access to healthcare. As we can see in the novel, women's experiences in the Syrian civil war vary widely depending on class, religion and geographic location. From the ancient wars to modern conflicts, women have been victims, survivors and agents of change. Yet their realities are deeply shaped by intersecting identities and the structure of power. Ultimately, the story of women in wars is not just one of suffering but also of resilience and transformation shaped at every stage by the intersections of identity and power.

Chapter Three

Psychological Trauma of Refugees in *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*

War is one of the most devastating human experiences, not only because of its physical destruction but also because of its profound psychological impact. Beyond the visible ruins of cities and the loss of lives, war leaves deep emotional and mental scars on individuals and communities. Psychological trauma caused by war affects soldiers, civilians, refugees and especially vulnerable groups such as women and children. This trauma often persists long after the conflict has ended, shaping identities, relationships and entire societies. At its core, psychological trauma refers to the emotional and mental distress experienced after exposure to deeply disturbing events. In the context of war, such events include violence, displacement, loss of loved ones and constant fear of death. One of the most recognised conditions associated with war trauma is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

The novel *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* by Christy Lefteri offers one of the most powerful literary representations of psychological trauma in contemporary refugee narratives. Set against the backdrop of the Syrian Civil War, the novel explores how war fractures the human psyche, distorts memory and reshapes identity. Through the deeply personal experience of Nuri and Afra, Lefteri presents trauma not merely as an emotional response to violence, but as an ongoing psychological condition that affects perception, relationships and the ability to live meaningfully in the present. Psychological trauma can be understood as the lasting emotional and mental impact of overwhelming experiences that exceed an individual's capacity to cope. In war contexts, trauma becomes especially intense because it involves repeated exposure to violence, death, displacement and loss.

Lefteri's novel goes beyond depicting external destruction; it reveals the invisible wounds carried by survivors. The characters in *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* are not only fleeing a war-torn country but are also trying to escape the memories and psychological scars that haunt them. The novel draws attention to the fact that trauma is not always visible. It manifests in silence, confusion, withdrawal, hallucination and even physical symptoms. By presenting trauma through both Nuri and Afra, Lefteri illustrates its diverse and complex nature. Nuri's character provides a profound insight into the internal workings of trauma. Before the war, he led a simple, meaningful life as a beekeeper in Aleppo, living peacefully with his wife Afra and their son Sami.

However, the war shatters the stability, leaving him emotionally and psychologically broken. One of the most striking aspects of Nuri's trauma is his fragmented perception of reality. Nuri encounters the boy in a crowded, temporary shelter in Istanbul while waiting for a boat to Greece. Nuri looks after Mohammed throughout them across the sea. Muhammed is a seven-year-old boy whom Nuri first meets in Istanbul, waiting in a smuggler's apartment with numerous other refugees. Mohammed is wearing all black and has black hair and black eyes.

Although he does not look like Sami, the inquisitive child reminds Nuri of his lost son. On several occasions in the present, Nuri sees Muhammed in the English bed and breakfast where he and Afra are staying. While it is unclear whether Nuri is dreaming or hallucinating, flashbacks eventually make it clear that Muhammed is not actually in England because he disappeared when Nuri and Afra arrived in Greece. Flashing back to that time, Nuri's visions of Muhammed in the bed and breakfast are surreal, with the boy telling him to look for a key and leading him through mysterious doors that transport him back to Aleppo.

When Afra finally reveals to Nuri that she does not know who Mohammed is, he realises he unknowingly created the boy as a substitute for Sami. Mohammed's words and fears, and they allowed Nuri to confront his son's memory from a safe distance. Muhammed was only a hallucination of Nuri. Through the journey of its protagonist, Nuri and Afra, the novel presents a powerful depiction of trauma that aligns closely with the ideas of Sigmund Freud. Freud's trauma theory, particularly his concepts of repression, repetition compulsion and the unconscious mind, provides a useful framework to analyse the emotional and psychological struggles experienced by characters. The trauma theories of Sigmund Freud and Cathy Caruth provide a powerful framework to understand how trauma operates in the novel. While Freud emphasises repression, repetition and numerous returns of traumatic events, Caruth focuses on trauma as an unassimilated experience that resists direct narration and emerges belatedly through fragmentation and silence.

Trauma theory has emerged as a vital framework in understanding the complex aftermath of experiencing psychological trauma. It investigates the nature of trauma and the varied responses individuals have to traumatic events, guiding professionals in the mental health field toward effective treatment paradigms. Trauma can stem from a multitude of experiences, including but not limited to abuse, disasters, loss and violence. The effect of trauma manifests uniquely in each individual with responses including emotional, physical, cognitive and psychological symptoms which can range from mild to debilitating.

The word trauma is derived from the Greek word meaning wound. It was first used in English in the mid-seventeenth century in Medicine, which refers to bodily injury caused by an external agent. In its later usage, particularly in medical and psychiatric literature and in Freud's text, the term Trauma came to be associated with a

wound caused not upon the body but upon the mind. Sigmund Freud was one of the first to explore the field of psychology and psychoanalysis. His research on trauma started at the end of the 19th century when he discovered that a psychological trauma was at the basis of women's so-called hysteria. In his *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (1895), he explains the hysteria by suggesting that the women were sexually abused when they were young.

Trauma theory is an interdisciplinary field that examines how deeply distressing or disturbing experiences affect the human mind, memory, identity and behaviour. Trauma theory studies the nature of traumatic experience, the impact on memory and consciousness, the process of recovery or survival and the representation of trauma in narratives and literature. A key idea in trauma theory is that it is not always fully understood at the moment it occurs. Instead, it often returns later in indirect forms such as flashbacks, nightmares or fragmented memories. Sigmund Freud was one of the earliest thinkers to explore trauma scientifically. His theory is rooted in psychoanalysis.

Freud's innovative treatment of human actions, dreams and indeed of cultural artefacts as invariable possessing implicit symbolic significance has proven to be extraordinarily fruitful and has had many fields, including psychology, anthropology, semiotics and artistic creativity and appreciation. However, Freud's most important and frequently reiterated claim, that with psychoanalysis he had invented a successful science of the mind, remains the subject of much critical debate and controversy. According to Freud, the actual trauma then "consists of two scenes – the earlier (in childhood) having sexual content but no meaning, the later (in puberty) having no sexual content but sexual meaning. Freud concludes that the actual trauma is caused by the dialectic relation between the two events and the moment of latency between the two moments, when we remain unaware of trauma.

Freud's encounter with the repetitive dreams of the war – the beginning of the theory of trauma and of history, which has become so central to our contemporary thinking about history and memory, thus raises the urgent and unavoidable questions related to the war, death and the effect of witnessing death on life. His assessment gave rise to the need to analyse traumatic experiences and their effect on an individual. Cathy Caruth, one of the central figures who helped establish the boom in cultural trauma theory in the early 1990's, in her collection of essays named Trauma, Narrative and History (1996), says herself in its most general definition,

> Trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucination and other intrusive phenomena (Caruth,11).

Trauma consists not only of having survived without really being aware of it, which is a logical consequence of the inherent latency. It is through the flashbacks with the mystery of his or her own survival and the mystery of one's near-death experience. Freud's concept of trauma, especially as discussed in Beyond the Pleasure Principle, revolves around the idea that traumatic experience is not fully processed at the moment they occur. Instead, they are repressed into the unconscious and return later in repetitive and disruptive forms. In the novel, Nuri represses the horrifying realities of the Syrian war, including the death of his son Sami. Rather than confronting the pain directly, his mind buries it deep within his unconscious. This repression is evident in his fragmented memories and emotional numbness.

Freud believed that such repression is a defence mechanism used by the psyche to protect itself from unbearable pain. Nuri's inability to openly grieve reflects this

Freudian repression. He avoids speaking about Sami's death and distances himself emotionally from Afra. His trauma remains unprocessed, locked within his unconscious mind. Freud also introduced the idea of repetition compulsion, where a traumatised individual unconsciously relives the traumatic event. This is clearly visible in Nuri's recurring memories, dreams and hallucinations. He repeatedly revisits scenes of destruction and loss, unable to escape them.

The journey from Aleppo to Europe itself becomes a symbolic repetition of trauma, each border crossed, and each danger faced echoes the original violence of war. Instead of moving forward, Nuri is psychologically trapped in the past. Trauma can be manifest in various forms, each with distinct characteristics and implications for the individual's mental health and well-being. Understanding the specific types of trauma is crucial for effective treatment and support. Complex trauma is experienced in response to multiple, varied traumatic events, often of an interpersonal nature and within a particular period or context. It can lead to severe and long-lasting impacts on a person's ability to cope, as well as profound effects on their emotional well-being and relationships.

Judith Herman is one of the most influential figures in the field of trauma studies, particularly known for her groundbreaking work *Trauma and Recovery.* Her theory of trauma not only transformed psychological understanding but also brought attention to the social and political dimensions of suffering, especially in the lives of women and survivors of prolonged violence. A detailed exploration of her trauma theory reveals how trauma affects the human mind, identity and relationships and how recovery is a gradual and structured process. Judith Herman defines trauma as an overwhelming experience that shatters a person's sense of safety, control and connection to others. Unlike ordinary stressful events, traumatic experiences are

marked by a sense of helplessness and terror that exceeds the individual's capacity to cope.

Herman makes an important distinction between single-event trauma and prolonged or repeated trauma. While single-event trauma may result from accidents or natural disasters, prolonged trauma, often referred to as complex trauma, arises from sustained abuse, captivity, war or domestic violence. This distinction is crucial because repeated trauma has stronger and more pervasive effects on the individual's personality and worldview. The central part of Herman's theory is her identification of the core symptoms of trauma, which she categorises into three major groups: hyperarousal, intrusion and constriction. Herman's contribution becomes even more significant with her elaboration of what is now widely understood as complex PTSD.

Posttraumatic Stress disorder (PTSD) is a common reaction to traumatic events. Many people recover in the ensuing months, but in a significant subgroup, the symptoms persist, often for years. A cognitive model of persistence of PTSD is proposed. It is suggested that PTSD becomes persistent when individuals process the trauma in a way that leads to a sense of threat. The psychological trauma in this novel originates in the destruction of Aleppo, once a thriving cultural and economic centre. The war reduces the city to ruins, symbolising the collapse of both physical space and emotional security. For Nuri, a beekeeper and Afra, an artist, life before the war was structured, meaningful and rooted in relationships.

However, the violent death of their son Sami becomes the central traumatic event that shatters their world. This moment of loss is not just personal but symbolic of the countless civilian tragedies during the war. PTSD in this context emerges from cumulative trauma- bombings, displacement, fear and bereavement rather than a single

isolated event. Lefteri thus situates PTSD within a broader socio-political reality, showing how war systematically dismantles the human psyche. One of the most powerful literary techniques Lefteri employs to depict PTSD is the fragmentation of narrative.

The story is primarily told through Nuri's perspective, yet his narration is unreliable, nonlinear, and often disoriented. This mirrors the cognitive symptoms of PTSD, particularly disrupted memory processing, intrusive recollections and difficulty distinguishing past from present. Nuri frequently shifts between memories of Aleppo, imagined conversations with Mustafa and the harsh realities of the refugee journey. These transitions are abrupt and confusing, deliberately reflecting the inner chaos of a traumatised mind. The narrative itself becomes a representation of PTSD – fragmented, cyclical and unstable.

Nuri's character offers a profound exploration of PTSD, particularly through the lens of survivor's guilt and psychological dissociation. He is haunted by the belief that he failed to protect his son and family. This guilt manifests in several ways. Nuri frequently imagines that Mustafa, his cousin, is still alive and guiding him. These hallucinations are not merely delusions but coping mechanisms that allow him to avoid confronting unbearable truths. They reveal a mind attempting to reconstruct a tolerable version of reality. At various points, Nuri appears detached from his surroundings, as if observing his own life from a distance. This dissociation is a classic PTSD response, where the mind distances itself from trauma to avoid emotional overload.

Nuri's constant revisiting of Sami's death reflects the repetitive nature of traumatic memory. Muhammed is also an example of the impact of trauma. Unlike normal memory, which evolves and fades, traumatic memory remains vivid and

intrusive. It dominates his consciousness, preventing him from moving forward. Afra's response to trauma contrasts sharply with Nuri's but is equally significant. Her PTSD manifests through silence, withdrawal and psychosomatic blindness. After witnessing her son's death, Afra loses her sight not due to physical injury but as a psychological response to overwhelming trauma. Afra's inability to see reflects her refusal or inability to confront reality, which reflects how the war affects her mental health. Her blindness mirrors her internal emotional state, characterised by grief and despair.

As a woman and mother, Afra's suffering highlights how trauma can be compounded by emotional and social expectations. Her silence further intensified her isolation. Unlike Nuri, who attempts to process his trauma through thought and narration, Afra retreats completely inward. Her condition illustrates how PTSD can manifest physically, reinforcing the inseparability of mind and body. Lefteri uses recurring symbols to articulate what cannot be directly expressed. Bees represent order, harmony and purpose. The structured life of bees contrasts with the chaos of war, emphasising the depth of Nuri's loss. The refugees' movement through multiple countries is not just geographical but psychological.

Each stage of the journey reflects a stage in their trauma – fear, confusion, despair and eventually, tentative hope. The interplay between darkness and light, especially in relation to Afra's blindness and recovery. Light becomes a metaphor for healing, awareness and acceptance. The novel expands the concept of PTSD by situating it within the broader experience of forced migration. Refugees are not only survivors of war but also victims of exploitation by the traffickers, dehumanisation at borders and uncertainty and statelessness. These experiences compound their trauma, making recovery even more difficult. Lefteri highlights how PTSD is often prolonged and intensified in refugee contexts, where safety and stability remain elusive. PTSD

profoundly affects interpersonal relationships, particularly the bond between Nuri and Afra. Once united by love and shared purpose, they become emotionally estranged. Their inability to communicate reflects the isolating nature of trauma.

However, the novel also suggests that relationships can become spaces of healing. As Nuri begins to confront reality and Afra gradually reconnects wither surroundings, their relationship shows signs of renewal. This process is slow and fragile, emphasising that recovery from PTSD is neither immediate nor complete. Despite its heavy themes, the novel ultimately offers a message of hope. Arrival in the United Kingdom symbolises not just physical refuge but the beginning of psychological healing. Nuri's gradual acceptance of Mustafa's death marks a turning point, indicating a willingness to face reality. Afra's condition also begins to change, suggesting that healing is possible through care, patience and emotional connection. Lefteri does not present recovery as a cure but as an ongoing process, a rebuilding of identity and meaning after trauma.

Other characters mirror the effect of trauma. Angeliki, a Somalian refugee who is abused and disappears without any justice. She always says that her blood has been destroyed. Mustafa, a friend of Nuri, also flees from Aleppo. He always sends mails which motivates Nuri to survive each obstacle. Afra is another important character who deliberately reflects the trauma of war and migration. Mustafa, who represents hope and stability, appears as a psychological construct that helps Nuri cope with his fragmented reality. This aligns with Freud's idea that the unconscious mind expresses itself symbolically when confrontation is too painful.

Herman's theory of recovery, which consists of three stages: safety, remembrance, mourning and reconnection. It can also be traced in the narrative

structure of the novel. The first stage, safety, is only partially achieved by Nuri and Afra. Although they physically escape Syria, they continue to feel unsafe during their journey through multiple countries. This reflects Herman's idea that safety is not just physical but also psychological. The refugee experience, marked by uncertainty and vulnerability, delays their healing. The second stage, remembering and mourning, is central to Nuri's narrative. Much of the novel is structured around his attempt to recall and make sense of his past. His fragmented storytelling reflects the difficulty of processing trauma.

According to Herman, telling one's story is essential for recovery, and Nuri gradually begins to confront his memories, including his guilt and grief over Sami's death. Mourning is evident in the emotional weight carried by both characters, as the emotional weight carried by both characters, as they struggle to accept their losses. The final stage, reconnection, is suggested toward the end of the novel when Nuri and Afra begin to rebuild their lives in the UK. Their relationship, which had been strained by trauma, shows signs of healing. Nuri's renewed sense of purpose, symbolised by his connection to beekeeping and memories of Mustafa, reflects Herman's idea that recovery involves finding meaning and reconnecting with others. Afra also begins to re-engage with life, suggesting a gradual movement toward healing.

While Freud focuses on repression and repetition, Cathy Caruth emphasises trauma as an experience that is not fully understood at the moment it occurs. Trauma, according to Caruth, is characterised by belatedness, fragmentation and the impossibility of direct narration. Caruth argues that trauma is not experienced fully in the moment but returns later in indirect ways. In this novel, Nuri does not immediately process the loss of his son or the horrors of war. Only later, during his journey and after

reaching safety, does the weight of these experiences begin to surface. This delayed realisation is a key aspect of Caruth's theory.

Trauma remains "unclaimed" until it re-emerges through memory, dreams and emotional breakdowns. The narrative structure of the novel itself reflects Caruth's theory. The story is not told linearly or coherently; instead, it is fragmented, shifting between past and present, reality and imagination. The fragmentation mirrors the psychological state of the characters. Nuri's narration is unreliable, filled with gaps, distortions, and repetitions. The reader is often unsure what is real and what is imagined, an effect that replicates that disorientation nature of trauma.

Afra's trauma originates in the violent realities of war in Aleppo, where she witnessed the death of her son, Sami. This event becomes the central psychological wound that defines her character. Following this loss, Afra becomes blind, despite having no physical injury. The condition can be interpreted through Freud's concept of trauma as a repressed and overwhelming experience. Freud argues that when an event is too painful to process consciously, it is pushed into the unconscious mind. However, this resurfaces in indirect and symbolic forms. Afra's blindness is a clear manifestation of this process. It represents a refusal of the psyche to confront the unbearable reality she cannot see because seeing would mean reliving the horror of her son's death. Freud's notion of conversion hysteria is particularly relevant here.

Freud suggests that trauma is not fully experienced at the moment it occurs; instead, it returns later, often in fragmented and disturbing ways. Afra's condition reflects this delayed processing. Rather than immediately confronting her loss, she enters a state of psychological numbness. Her trauma unfolds gradually, influencing her behaviour and perception over time. This delay highlights the complexity of traumatic

memory; it is not a single moment but an ongoing psychological struggle. Afra's character also highlights the relational aspect of trauma. Her silence contrasts with Nuri's more fragmented but verbal expressions of pain. Together, they demonstrate different responses to trauma, reinforcing the idea that trauma is deeply personal yet universally disruptive. While Nuri struggles with guilt and hallucinations, Afra internalises her suffering, making her trauma less visible but equally profound. The strategic employment of flashbacks plays a pivotal role in the novel's effectiveness in delivering a sense of fragmentation. In addition, Afra's trauma is reflected in her fragmented perception of reality. She does not engage with the perception of reality.

PTSD is a psychiatric disorder that stems from going through or even learning about one or more traumatic events. Emotional numbness, difficulties with cognition and memory, dissociation, reduced or complete lack of pleasure for previously enjoyed things, and physical pain like headaches are symptoms of PTSD. In this novel, all the characters represent the impact of trauma. Every person had different stories and losses. Some are broken family and others are trying to reconnect with their family. Afra's character is not purely physical; it functions symbolically, withdrawn, and she loses her sight. Her blindness is not purely physical; it functions symbolically as a manifestation of repression. She refuses or is unable to see the traumatic reality she has endured.

In this novel, trauma is not only described directly but is powerfully conveyed through a network of symbols and metaphors. These literary devices allow the reader to understand the depth of psychological suffering experienced by refugees like Nuri and Afra, especially when trauma cannot be expressed in ordinary language. The novel uses recurring images, sensory disruptions and symbolic and the struggle for healing. One of the significant symbols in the novel is blindness, associated with Afra.

After experiencing the death of her son and sexual violence, Afra loses her sight. This blindness operates as a metaphor for trauma: it reflects both psychological repression and an inability to confront unbearable reality. She does not merely fail to see physically; she withdraws from the world emotionally and mentally. Her blindness symbolises how trauma can shut down perception, distancing the individual from both the external world and their own painful memories. It also reflects inner darkness and disorientation, a common effect of deep psychological shock.

Another central metaphor is beekeeping and bees, linked to Nuri and his past life in Syria. Bees symbolise order, harmony and community, everything that war has destroyed. The structured, cooperative life of bees contrasts sharply with the chaos and violence of conflict. For Nuri, memories of beekeeping represent a lost world of peace and stability. At the same time, bees can also symbolise fragility; just as bee colonies collapse under threat, human lives and societies are easily shattered by war. This metaphor emphasises both the beauty of what is lost and the vulnerability of human existence.

The journey itself across countries, borders and dangerous terrains acts as an extended metaphor for psychological trauma. On the surface, it is a physical migration, but symbolically it represented an internal journey through grief, fear and fragmented identity. The uncertainty, danger and unpredictability of the journey mirror the inner turmoil of the characters. Each border crossed can be seen as a stage in confronting or avoiding trauma, while the constant movement reflects their inability to settle mentally or emotionally. The motif of darkness symbolises confusion, fear, repression and the unknown aspects of trauma. Afra's blindness intensifies this imagery, placing her in a world of constant darkness. In contrast, moments of light, such as memories.

There are several powerful literary works, novels, poetry, memoirs and hybrid texts like *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*, which explores the psychological trauma of Syrian refugees, including displacement, memory, loss and identity crisis. *Sea Prayer* by Khaled Hosseini is a short, poetic narrative written as a father's letter to his son before fleeing Syria. Inspired by the tragic death of Alan Kurdi, it captures anticipatory trauma, fear and helplessness. It is focused on loss of home, burden, migration and memory as both comfort and pain. And it highlights how trauma begins before displacement and continues during the journey..

The increasing prevalence of wars and conflicts across the globe has led to a dramatic rise in migration and forced displacement, creating one of the most pressing humanitarian crises of the modern era. Conflicts such as the Syrian civil war, the war in Ukraine and violence in regions like Gaza have uprooted millions of individuals' psychological well-being. Refugees and migrants often encounter numerous barriers in host countries, including language difficulties, social stigma, lack of access to information and financial insecurity.

Despite experiencing severe emotional distress, many migrants do not seek psychological assistance due to these barriers, which further aggravates their mental health conditions. The migration process itself is characterised by a complex interplay of stressors that extend beyond the immediate impact of war. Exposure to violence, loss of family members and destruction of homes contribute to severe emotional and psychological disturbance. These experiences often result in long-term mental health issues, as migrants continue to grapple with the memories of trauma while simultaneously adapting to new environments.

Legal insecurity, particularly among undocumented migrants continue to grapple with the memories of trauma while simultaneously adapting to new environments. Legal insecurity, particularly among undocumented migrants, significantly intensifies stress levels, leading to heightened anxiety, depression and trauma-related disorders. Moreover, the cumulative effect of these stressors can give rise to chronic psychological conditions, including post-traumatic stress disorder. The concept of intergenerational trauma further illustrates how the psychological impact of war and displacement can be transmitted across generations, affecting not only those who directly experience the trauma but also their families and descendants.

Depression emerges as one of the most common psychological consequences among migrants exposed to war and trauma. The accumulation of traumatic experiences throughout the migration journey plays a crucial role in the development of depressive symptoms. Exposure to violence, prolonged stress and physical harm significantly increases vulnerability to depression. Additionally, migrants often face discrimination and social exclusion in host societies, which further exacerbates their mental health struggles.

Anxiety disorders represent another major psychological outcome associated with war and migration. Exposure to conflict-related stressors significantly increases the likelihood of developing anxiety symptoms, including excessive worry, fear, restlessness and physical manifestations such as increased heart rate and fatigue. These symptoms are often intensified by post-migration challenges, including discrimination, legal uncertainty and social isolation. Children are especially vulnerable to anxiety, as they may experience fear of separation from their families and uncertainty about their future. Anti-immigrant policies and hostile socio-political environments further exacerbate anxiety levels among migrant populations. Additionally, global crises such

as the COVID-19 pandemic have been shown to amplify disorders among migrants, highlighting the compounding nature of external stressors.

PTSD arises from direct exposure to life-threatening events, such as violence, displacement and loss. Migrants suffering from PTSD often experience intrusive memories, emotional numbness, hypervigilance and difficulty coping with everyday life. Forced displacement is a significant factor contributing to the development of PTSD, as it disrupts individuals' sense of safety and stability. Research indicates that certain factors, including repeated exposure to trauma, gender and socioeconomic status, increase the likelihood of developing PTSD. Women and individuals living in conflict situations has been associated with higher levels of PTSD among affected populations.

The long-term effects of PTSD are profound and far-reaching, impacting not only individual's mental health but also their overall functioning and quality of life. Untreated PTSD can lead to chronic psychological disorders, impairing social relationships and occupational performance. Environmental stressors, such as economic instability and ongoing discrimination, can further sustain and intensify PTSD symptoms over time. These findings highlight the necessity of early identification and intervention to prevent the progression of PTSD and to support the recovery of affected individuals.

The novel The Beekeeper of Aleppo reflects the psychological effect of war and trauma on migrants are complex and multifaceted, encompassing a range of mental health conditions, including depression, anxiety and PTSD. The profound impact of these psychological issues on migrants' lives underscores the urgent need for comprehensive and culturally sensitive interventions.

The Syrian civil war serves as the central historical context of the novel. Beginning in 2011, the conflict resulted in massive destruction of cities, loss of lives, and widespread fear among civilians. Aleppo, once a flourishing cultural and economic hub, became one of the most heavily bombed cities. This transformation from peace to chaos is crucial in understanding the trauma experienced by the character. In the novel, Nuri and Afra's life is shattered when their home is destroyed and their son is killed in a bombing. Such events reflect the real-life experiences of countless Syrian families who witnessed violence, death and displacement.

War creates conditions of constant fear and helplessness, where individuals are forced to live in survival mode. This prolonged exposure to danger leads to severer psychological consequences, including anxiety, depression, and emotional numbness. Historically, war has always been associated with psychological trauma. Earlier conflicts introduced term like "shell shock", while modern psychology identifies conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The novel reflects these realities through Nuri's hallucinations and fragmented memories, illustrating how trauma persists long after the physical danger has passed.

Another significant historical dimension of the novel is the global refugee crisis triggered by the Syrian war. Millions of Syrians were forced to flee their homes in search of safety, leading to one of the largest humanitarian crises in modern history. The journey undertaken by Nuri and Afra, from Syria to Turkey, Greece, and eventually the United Kingdom, mirrors the real routes taken by refugees. Migration, however, does not end trauma; rather, it transforms and intensifies it. Refugees face numerous hardships, including dangerous sea crossings, exploitation by smugglers, and uncertain legal status in foreign countries. These experiences create new layers of psychological distress. The loss of home, identity, and belonging further deepens emotional suffering.

The Syrian Civil War represents not only individual suffering but also collective trauma experienced by an entire nation. Communities are destroyed, cultural heritage is lost, and social structures collapse. This collective dimension of trauma is evident in the novel through the stories of other refugees encountered by Nuri and Afra. Historically, collective trauma has long-term effects on societies, influencing cultural identity and memory. The novel reflects this by portraying how war reshapes not only individual lives but also the collective consciousness of people. The shared experience of loss and displacement creates a sense of communal grief that transcends individual narrative. The structure of the novel itself reflects the historical experience of trauma.

The non-linear narrative, shifting perspective and gradual revelation of events mirror the way traumatic memories are processed. Trauma disrupts the normal flow of time, causing individuals to relive past experiences in fragmented ways. The narrative technique enhances the realism of the novel, allowing readers to experience the psychological confusion and emotional intensity faced by the characters. It is also reinforcing the historical authenticity of the story, as it aligns with a real psychological response to trauma.

The psychological trauma of refugees, as explored in *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* by Christy Lefteri, reveals the deep and lasting impact of war, displacement and loss on the human mind. The chapter demonstrates that trauma is not limited to physical destruction but extends into emotional, cognitive and psychological dimensions, often persisting long after. The novel powerfully illustrates how trauma disrupts memory, identity and relationships, manifesting in forms such as hallucinations, repression, silence and psychosomatic conditions.

The application of trauma theories by Sigmund Freud and Cathy Caruth provides a critical framework to understand these experiences. Freud's concepts of repression and repetition compulsion explain how traumatic memories are buried and later resurface in indirect forms, while Caruth emphasises the fragmented, delayed and often unspeakable nature of trauma. These theories are reflected in the narrative structure and character responses, reinforcing the idea that trauma cannot always be directly expressed or fully understood at the moment it occurs.

The novel also underscores the role of symbolism, such as blindness, bees and the journey itself, in representing the inner struggles of trauma when language fails. Ultimately, the study emphasises that trauma is both an individual and collective experience, deeply embedded in historical and socio-political contexts like the Syrian civil war. While the novel portrays immense suffering, it also offers a cautious sense of hope, suggesting that healing is possible through acceptance, human connection and time. Thus, literature plays a crucial role in humanising refugee experiences, transforming abstract statistics into powerful emotional narratives and fostering empathy and understanding in the global context.

The contemporary world is witnessing an unprecedented rise in forced displacement. By the end of 2022, more than 108 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide, reflecting a severe humanitarian crisis. Among them, approximately 35 million people live as refugees in host countries. One of the major contributors to this crisis is the Syrian civil war, which began in 2011 and forced millions of individuals to flee their homes. Most Syrian refugees sought safety in neighbouring countries such as Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. Turkey, in particular, hosts one of the largest refugee populations in the world, with around 3 million Syrians. Although Turkey has adopted

an open-door policy and granted temporary protection status to Syrian, it does not officially recognise them as refugees.

Nevertheless, for academic and analytic purposes, Syrians in Turkey are often referred to as refugees. This distinction highlights the complexity of legal, political and humanitarian frameworks surrounding forced migration. A crucial aspect of the refugee experience is its impact on mental health. Research identifies two major categories of risk factors affecting refugees: pre-migration trauma and post-traumatic events individuals experience before and during their displacement. These often include exposure to war, violence and life-threatening situations. Refugees may endure forced separation from family members, kidnapping, captivity, physical injuries or even witness the death of loved ones.

More than a decade of conflict in Syria has resulted in one of the world's largest and most protracted humanitarian and displacement crises. The psychological trauma experienced by Syrian refugees has evolved into a chronic and multi-layered condition, shaped not only by the violence and persecution endured before migration but also by the prolonged hardships encountered during displacement and resettlement. Recent studies indicate that trauma has shifted from an acute emergency response to a long-term structural concern, with many refugees continuing to experience persistent symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety years after displacement. Contemporary research further suggests that the cumulative impact of ongoing socio-economic challenges, uncertainty, and social exclusion often exacerbates psychological distress more profoundly than past traumatic events alone. These findings underscore the need to understand trauma as a continuous and evolving experience, providing an essential framework for analysing the psychological realities of refugee characters in *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*.

Chapter Four

Conclusion

This research has critically examined women's experiences in *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* through the theoretical frameworks of intersectionality proposed by Kimberlé Crenshaw and psychological trauma articulated by Judith Herman. The study demonstrates that trauma cannot be understood as merely an individual or isolated psychological condition; rather, it is profoundly shaped by the social, cultural, and political structures that influence both the experience of traumatic events and the possibilities of healing and recovery. By adopting an intersectional approach, this research has highlighted the complexity and diversity of women's lived experiences, revealing that no single narrative can fully represent the multifaceted nature of their suffering and resilience. Through the characters of Afra and Angeliki, the study illustrates how women endure both physical and psychological struggles, while simultaneously negotiating the intersecting forces of gender, displacement, violence, and trauma.

Judith Herman's foundational work underscores the importance of recognizing trauma as a response to overwhelming events that disrupt a person's sense of safety, autonomy, and identity. Her tripartite model of recovery, establishing safety, reconstructing the trauma narrative, and fostering reconnection, offers a structured yet flexible approach to healing. However, when this framework is applied to women from diverse and marginalised backgrounds, it becomes clear that these stages are not universally accessible or equally attainable. Nuri is a perfect example of the impact of trauma in the novel. Intersectionality reveals that factors such as socio-economic status, caste, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and cultural norms significantly influence both vulnerability to trauma and access to healing resources. For many women, systemic

inequalities create environments where trauma is not a singular event but a continuous condition shaped by structural violence and social exclusion.

Furthermore, this study highlights how patriarchal systems and power imbalances play a central role in perpetuating trauma against women. Gender-based violence, domestic abuse, sexual exploitation, and institutional neglect are not merely personal tragedies but manifestations of deeply rooted social hierarchies. When these experiences intersect with other forms of marginalisation, the resulting trauma is often compounded and rendered invisible. Women who belong to marginalised communities, such as Angeliki, may encounter disbelief, victim-blaming, or outright silencing, which not only intensifies their psychological distress but also obstructs pathways to recovery. In such contexts, Herman's emphasis on the restoration of voice and agency becomes particularly significant, as reclaiming one's narrative is both a therapeutic and political act.

Another crucial insight from this project is the role of cultural and societal contexts in shaping the meaning and expression of trauma reveals through the character of Angeliki. Psychological frameworks developed in Western contexts, including Herman's theory, provide valuable tools but must be adapted to reflect local realities from the novel. In many societies, including those with strong communal and familial structures, women's experiences of trauma are mediated by collective values, honour systems, and social expectations. These factors can either facilitate support and resilience or reinforce silence and stigma. Therefore, an intersectional application of trauma theory requires sensitivity to cultural nuances and an awareness of how global theories interact with local contexts.

Moreover, this study emphasizes that healing from trauma is not solely an individual responsibility but a collective and institutional obligation. Effective responses must extend beyond clinical interventions to include legal reforms, social support systems, educational initiatives, and community-based approaches. Intersectionality calls for inclusive policies that address the specific needs of diverse groups of women, ensuring that mental health services are accessible, equitable, and culturally competent. Without addressing the structural conditions that produce and sustain trauma, efforts at healing remain incomplete and insufficient. Importantly, this project also challenges the tendency to view women solely as victims of trauma. While acknowledging the profound impact of psychological suffering, it also recognizes women's resilience, resistance, and capacity for recovery. Herman's framework, when combined with an intersectional perspective, allows for a more nuanced understanding that includes both vulnerability and strength. Women's survival strategies, community networks, and acts of resistance are crucial components of the healing process and must be acknowledged as forms of agency rather than merely coping mechanisms.

In essence, the intersectional analysis of women's psychological trauma, grounded in Judith Herman's trauma theory, reveals the necessity of a multidimensional approach to both understanding and addressing trauma. It calls for a shift from individualized, decontextualised models toward frameworks that recognize the interplay between personal experiences and structural forces. Such an approach not only deepens academic inquiry but also has significant implications for practice, policy, and advocacy.

In conclusion, this study affirms that trauma is not merely a psychological condition but also a profoundly social and political phenomenon. Addressing women's

trauma, therefore, requires confronting the structural inequalities and systems of oppression that perpetuate violence, marginalisation, and displacement, while amplifying the voices of those who have historically been silenced and fostering conditions that enable healing and recovery. By integrating Kimberlé Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality with Judith Herman's theory of psychological trauma, this research contributes to a more comprehensive, empathetic, and socially just understanding of women's experiences. It underscores the importance of recognising the interconnected nature of gender, identity, and trauma, thereby advocating an approach that not only acknowledges women's suffering but also promotes resilience, empowerment, healing, and meaningful social transformation.

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