



Postcolonial Perspective of the Identity Dilemma, Immigration, Liminality, and Otherness in Leila Aboulela's *The Kindness Of Enemies*

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Abstract: This paper investigates the representation of the diaspora characters of the Egyptian-Sudanese-Scottish novelist Leila Aboulela in her novel *The Kindness of Enemies* (2015) who lives in Britain. She seeks to negotiate the issues of identity, hybridity, and culture through the novel's narrative. The paper discusses why Aboulela's main protagonists have been anguished by taking off their cultural identity. Why does Natasha legally change her name to Natasha Wilson? Why does Osama prefer being named Oz or Ossie? Additionally, the paper aims to examine how the characters' identities are reformed to produce themselves anew within their host cultures. Finally, it portrays the historical story of Imam Shamil as an example of contemporary fighters and opposition against extremists and rejecting acts that harm innocent people around the world. The article seeks to analyze how a number of the novel's protagonists, including Oz, Natasha, and Jamaleldin, first, have been taken from their Muslim identity and their Arabic culture. In addition, they have been completely impacted by the consequences of the "war on terror"; each character is in their own time and place. The article aims to analyze the evolution of the notions of immigrants, identity crisis, cultural hybridity, and resistance. These concepts were interrogated in her novel, which discusses building a bridge for peaceful coexistence between societies amid political and religious differences.

Keywords: immigrants, identity, cultural hybridity, discrimination, and resistance

2.1. Introduction

The Kindness of Enemies (2015) by Leila Aboulela believes that the deformed image of Muslim immigrants in Western countries leads to an environment of insecurity for Muslim migrants who continue suffering from violence and discrimination. The central theme that Aboulela highlights in the

novel is the struggle of finding and building one's own identity, in-betweenness, discrimination, violence, and hybridity. *The Kindness of Enemies* (2015) is doubtlessly regarded as the masterpiece of a prize-winning British-Sudanese author Leila Aboulela. The author has remarkably presented the features of post-colonial writing in her beautiful narrative. Aboulela, through the exploration of two notions, Jihad and Sufism, reveals historical perspectives on Islam in her novel in the past as well as the present. The post-9/11 novel set in Britain and Sudan, and the protagonist Natasha Wilson, is a researcher and history professor who was born in Sudan to a Sudanese father and a Russian mother in Khartoum. As M. Mezhoud (2019) note, "Sudanese African author Leila Aboulela's primary works focused on defending Islam and the Muslim community. Mostly deal with issues such as loss of identity, refugees, discrimination, etc"-(Mezhoud,1). Aboulela, born in Cairo in 1964, grew up in Khartoum with Egyptian and Sudanese parents who were both from British colonies. Aboulela was a young writer who knew the power of words to live in Scotland and settle with non-Muslims" (ibid). This writer presents a parallel story that takes place in Caucasian Georgia in the nineteenth century. Imam Shamil attempts to save his son Jamalleldin from Russian captivity. Shamil abducts the children, and the Georgian princess, Anna, seeks a prisoner exchange. Through the characters in this part, Aboulela shares her views on the political and social framework of the period. *The kindness of Enemies* (2015) breathes life and presents a significant analysis of Muslims living in the post-9/11 era and how it reflects on the protagonist in the novel. Furthermore, Aboulela examines the young Muslims of the second and third generations with great attention. Additionally, as a Sudanese writer, she thoroughly examined the integration problem through the characters she produces. Sudanese African author Leila Aboulela primarily focused on defending Islam and the Muslim identity.

3.2. Significance of the Study

The current study is significant because it examines many post-colonial concepts that have not been exclusively undertaken previously. The different concepts, such as loss of one's identity, in-betweenness, liminality, and resistance employed in the novel, will be analyzed in the paper, and the readers will have easy access to these concepts for understanding. In an attempt to find new homelands because of wars and ways to support their families, hundreds of thousands risked their lives to migrate to Western countries. The importance of this study depends on two primary elements: firstly, contextualizing these events. Secondly, the significance is to compare and contrast the main characters' final choices based on post-colonial theory and theorists.

4.3. Objectives and Scope of the Study

To examine the theme of identity diaspora, Muslim immigrants in *The Kindness of the Enemies* novel after the September 11 attacks. Also, investigate the concept of cultural hybridity and discrimination's impact on the protagonist Natasha as she navigates her Scottish and Muslim backgrounds. Finally, discuss how the novel's themes and concepts affect our understanding of immigrant challenges and identity complexities, such as liminality, shaping Natasha's identity and experiences in light of the cultural theorist Homi Bhabha's theories of ambivalence, liminality, in-betweenness, and displacement. The scope of the study will focus on examining issues of immigration crises, identity dilemmas, and liminality. Further, the study employs a qualitative research technique, and motifs through critical analysis and close reading. The study will also draw on important theoretical frameworks, especially postcolonial theory, to enhance its analysis and interpretation of the novel. I choose this novel because the concept of liminality and in-betweenness shapes Natasha's experiences and sense of identity in this novel. Furthermore, this novel represents tensions between cultural heritage and cultural assimilation in the context of immigration.

6.4. Theoretical Framework and Methodology

The study aims to improve knowledge of the novel's portrayals of the complexity of identity, diaspora, and cultural hybridity. Comparative literature will benefit the researcher as a general theoretical framework because I am working with two cultures: the colonized and the colonizer. The basis of this research is the postcolonial theories of Bhabha, and others. Postcolonial theory offers a framework for analyzing the complexity of the main ideas, such as colonialism, in-betweenness, liminality, third space, and cultural hybridity.

7.5. Literature Review

The term post-colonial has many different meanings and is not just the time after colonialism. According to Ashcraft, et. al., (2007) that "post-colonial" does not mean "post-independence," as we understand it" (Ashcraft, et. al., 117). Furthermore, "post-colonial purposes, this usually relates to a colony's achievement of complete self-government in accordance with the variety of colonialism practice" (Ashcraft, et. al., 116). Although colonial discourse had similarly constructed them as marginal, they by racial and religious as a sign of difference. New independent states emerged in the years following World War II. As the African republics in 1960, India and Pakistan were "granted" independence in 1947(ibid). Particularly, post-colonial discourse consists of responses and analyses of colonial cultural legacies—the post-colonial era,

which focuses on how colonizers colonized the country. Generally, that period began in the 1960s, when half of the world gained independence from conquerors. Additionally, Ashcraft, et. al., (2013) that theorists such as Gayatri Spivak drew attention to the dangers of post-colonialism in an interview. Spivak discussed the necessity of adopting strategic essentialism in her theory, admitting the use of essentialist formulations in numerous attempts to free people from the effects of colonial and neo-colonial oppression" (Ashcraft, et. al., 97). The term "post-colonial" refers to a wide range of viewpoints and concepts that illustrate what happened after decolonization and the effects of colonization on colonized nations. Postcolonial theory considers the effects of colonialism on colonized society and the interaction between colonizers and colonized, such as what occurred during the period before colonization, during colonization, and after colonization. For example, post-colonialism emphasizes how the West and America colonized other countries and how they are now oppressing third-world nations and other weak countries. As a theory, postcolonial plays an essential part in clarifying several hidden ideologies for readers.

It highlights a variety of injustices, political and economic positions, and the subjection of different communities through the colonial period. Edward W. Said book *Orientalism* (1978) shows how the West is Orientalizing the East. Orientalism as a key term is the project of European ideology and culture to reconstruct the Orient, to dominate and explore it. According to Said, Orientalism refers to strategies for expressing, governing, manifesting, integrating, and understanding the third world " (Said, 24). In a more general meaning, Orientalism is a style of thought based upon a metaphysical and epistemological conflict between "the Orient" and (usually) the Occident" (ibid.). Further, Ashcroft et. al. (2007) defines that the concept of colonial discourse theory was first introduced by Said's Orientalism, which investigated how colonialism operates as a way of power" (Ashcroft et. al., 37). Further, Ashcroft et. al. (2007) indicate that apart from Said, Homi Bhabha is the most well-known colonial discourse theorist. His analysis demonstrated that colonial interactions included certain decline contradictions, including hybridity, ambivalence, mimicry, and in-betweenness. (Ashcraft et. al., 38). Another important term is hybridity, which involves postcolonial theory, one of the most frequently employed and disputed words. The term "hybridity" is commonly employed to describe the emergence of new transcultural formations within the contact zone. Hybridization takes various types, including racial, political, and cultural(Ashcraft et.al,108). Most recently, Homi Bhabha's work on colonizer/colonized relationships has been associated with the term "hybridity," in the postcolonial era which combines two traditions, forming a double consciousness that tangled both colonizer and colonized. Further, it is the mixture of two different cultures. Bhabha (1994)

indicates that: “ the result of colonial power, its changeable ability, and its fixities during the process of domination are all indicated by hybridity, such as denying a pure original identity, race, and homeland” (Bhabha, 159). From the perspective of critic Bhabha, hybridity is used to copy or imitate the Western way of life, such as culture, behavior, and manner. Further, it is a mixture of two different cultures, colonized and colonizer. The relationship between colonizers and colonized is being investigated, and post-colonial theory holds a central position. In addition, the study of the domain illustrates various injustices brought about by colonizers and how the West has led to gender discrimination, identity diaspora, hybridity, in-betweenness, ambivalence, and abuses of immigrants. As a result, post-colonial literature is a response to and interaction with colonial heritage and the influence of colonialism on literary works.

8.6. Discussion

The novel is based on a plot of two parallel narratives; the first takes place in Scotland in 2010 and depicts the effects of the worldwide war on terror on the lives of Natasha, a history professor; her student Oz; and his mother, actress Malak Raja, who was born in Iraq. The novel depicts the political and social events that took place in the nineteenth century and nowadays. Through generations or personal memories, she skillfully manipulates time to produce a conflict between the past and present. From a Russian mother and Sudanese father, Aboulela links Natasha Hussein to a 21st-century Ph.D. research. . Natasha Wilson, who acts “as a bridge connecting us to the past,” is a Sudanese-Russian Scottish history professor at a Scottish university. Her research focuses on the life of Imam Shamil, a Sufi jihadist Caucasian leader from the nineteenth century the leader of the Caucasus war against the Russian Empire in the Caucasus. One of her students, Oz, and his mother, Malak Raja, is “perhaps the female equivalent of Yul Brynner or Ben Kingsley was doomed not to fare as well” (Aboulela,12). Natasha experiences identity conflict throughout the novel as a result of being caught between her father's Arab Muslim culture and her mother's Western culture. Natasha soon discovers that her student Oz's (real name Osama Raja) is descended from Imam Shamil and holds his legendary sword. As Natasha narrates Osama's mother “called him Ossie. His friends and teachers called him Oz. We were all eager to avoid his true name, Osama” (Aboulela, 4). Natasha, a Sudanese-Russian-Scottish immigrant, feels alienated and never fits in. She believes she has, “an unfortunate name; my surname. One that I nagged my mother and stepfather to change. It was good that I did that; had I waited for marriage, I would have waited in vain. ‘Imagine,’ I said, ‘arriving in London in the summer of 1990. We have a new student from Sudan. Her name is Natasha Hussein.’” From the safe distance of the future, I joined my classmates in laughing out loud” (Aboulela,5). Wholeheartedly, Natasha has developed into an aficionado scholar who strives to become a dedicated and successful researcher by working day

and night she strives to prove herself as “topical, relevant, and despite [her] research interest, inhabiting the present” (Aboulela, 6). To avoid the suspicions in Scotland, Oz decides to change his real name. However, his detention and arrest have confirmed that changing his name from Osama to Oz or Ossie is actually useless. Unlike Natasha or Jamaleldin, Oz never separates his British from his Muslim identity; he has never felt ashamed of his African ancestry or the fact that he descended from Imam Shamil, the well-known leader of the Sufi jihadists. For him, Islam and jihad are parts and parcels of his Muslim culture. Oz perceives jihad as “not something we should be ashamed of.” Islam and jihad as well as “the types of weapons used in jihad” (Aboulela, 12). The word "Allah" is engraved in gold on the magnificent curving sword which is placed on the wall. She wrote, "Allah was inscribed on the blade in gold" (Aboulela, 11). As a result, she agrees to her intelligent student's request to visit his house and inspect Imam Shamil's sword. Natasha spends one more night with Malak and Oz due to the snowstorm. She stayed at their home for two nights. Natasha then learned that Oz was messaging her with the email surname "SworedofShamil" and using phrases like "Weapons used for Jihad." Later, Oz was arrested and dragged from his mother's house by the authorities because of terrorist activities on the internet, the reason behind his detention. They took CDs, cell phones, and the sword of Imam Shamil too.

Aboulela shows how the protagonist, caught between two identities and isolation, unwelcome, seeks to escape from the loneliness of her identity conflict. Aboulela states, “only later did I recognize it as homesickness. A yearning for an identifiable place where I could belong” (Aboulela, 283). According to the author, Natasha seems uncomfortable and alone in her new home because of the differences in religion and culture. As a result of her displacement from her social surroundings, Natasha develops an unexpectedly modern and religious hybrid identity. Indian thinker and critic Homi Bhabha (1994) explains, “We must keep in mind that the “inter” is the boundary of translation and negotiation, the liminal space that bears the encumbrance of cultural meaning” (Bhabha, 56). The position of a person between two distinct cultures is known as cultural hybridity. This means that culture's hybridity is a form of in-betweenness. Additionally, Bhabha claims that: “A concept of international culture based on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity rather than the foreignness of the diversity of cultures may be made possible by the split space of speech” (ibid). According to Bhabha, cultural hybridity is a mixture of different cultural fragments, including features such as nationality, race, and religion. In Bhabha's work, cultural hybridity refers to the mixedness of cultural influences, subverting the notion of pure or authentic cultures. Bhabha asserts that cultural hierarchies are challenged by cultural hybridity: “A hybrid strategy or discourse provides a negotiation environment where power is unequal, however, may be vague and ambiguous. Such negotiation is neither assimilation nor

collaboration. It makes possible the emergence of an 'interstitial' agency that refuses the binary representation " (Bhabha, 34).

The point is that the term "hybridity" is derived from biology, where hybrids represent the blending of two genetic streams. Therefore, discussing hybridity in terms of race may seem logical. Homi Bhabha (1994) affirms that "Through the recurrence of discriminatory identity effects, hybridity is the revaluation of the colonial identity assumption. It highlights how all sites of discrimination and dominance must be displaced and deformed " (Bhabha,154). The protagonist of Aboulela's novel *Natasha*, appears negatively affected by her contradictory roots, leading to a sense of identity loss. Natasha, who is half Russian and half Sudanese, is caught between two different cultures and is struggling with identity conflicts. According to Bhabha, people are displaced every day. Liberation struggle life: "Like so many others of this sort, whose families are displaced throughout the exiled diaspora" (Bhabha, 19).

When Natasha immigrated to Europe at fourteen, she encountered unexpected incidents and diverse cultures. She feels insecure and considers herself divided identity, fragmented, and liminal. " I was a failed hybrid, made up of unalloyed selves. My Russian mother who regretted marrying my Sudanese father. My African father who came to hate his white wife. My atheist mother who blotted out my Muslim heritage. My Arab father who gave me up to Europe without fight. I was the freak" (Aboulela, 46). In this regard, Bhabha (1994) points out: "If immigrants efforts to "imitate" language result in a gap in how social space is portrayed, then language opacity is evident" (Bhabha, 238). From this point of view, Natasha's identity consists of two perspectives: one hand, a lack of unsteadiness and rootlessness, and the other, a difference in religion ,and culture. Furthermore, Bhabha claims that: "We find ourselves at a transitional point in time and space where complicated figures of identity and difference, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion" (Bhabha, 2). At all moments, Natasha was uncertain about where she belonged. She felt unable to admit or deny her African identity since she was caught between her childhood memories in Sudan and her present time in Scotland. She said: " Over the years I had tried to rid myself of such baggage but never fully succeeded. I understood my father's feelings of shame and, later, my own failed romantic attachments seemed like a punishment" (Aboulela, 76). The quote illustrates Natasha's concerns, in-betweenness, liminality, and identity conflict in Scotland despite her higher educational level still existing in confusion. Despite her cultural differences, Natasha feels fragmented, divided, and liminal, and she thinks she will never be able to adapt to a new culture. Colonialism has had a massive influence on individuals, societies, and world history. Most themes of postcolonial novels are associated with race, gender, ethnicity, and cultural hybridity. Bhabha went further, and argued that "[T]he figure is not the

colonialist self or the colonized Other, but rather the unsettling liminal space between colonial Otherness and the white man's artifice engraved on the Black man's body. Emerging of the liminal issue of colonial identity and its unpredictable changes" (Bhabha, 64). Natasha has had several liminal experiences throughout her life. As a Muslim immigrant who is Scottish-Sudanese, Natash handles several cultural identities and frequently feels divided between her home and host cultures. More importantly, Natasha's identity in the novel is shaped by the impact of liminality on her. Because of her cultural liminality, Natasha has a hybrid identity that combines elements of Islam, Sudanese, and Scottish culture. The Western world never seemed as home to Natasha. Instead, she felt inferior and humiliated about her origin, skin, and Muslim origin. She attempts to settle in with the British community and feels isolated, but feels like something is lacking in her life. Saman Abdulqadir Hussein Dizaya (2017) notes, "The world is currently engaged with a new wave of immigration and refugees, and people are moving all over the world and finding new places to call home. Western countries have turned into tents welcoming people from many nationalities and cultures" (Dizaya, 19). Natasha faces racism and discrimination, leading her to feel like "the Other" or an outsider. The idea behind it is that Muslim immigrants are easy targets for Western media and public opinion because of their identities, especially after the 9/11 events. Bhabha (1994) states, "At times, when he uses colonial racist language too quickly to identify the "Other" and personalize its existence"(Bhabha, 86).

The arrest of Oz worsens Natasha's feelings of identity loss, insecurity, and in-betweenness, leading her to wonder who is she. Probably to reclaim her identity, she returns to Khartoum for the first time in twenty years. Natasha believed, "I might still not have reached home or settled where I belonged, but I was confident that there was a home there, ahead of me" (Aboulela, 307). She gains spiritual relief and insight from her trip to Sudan and is also not alone; she merely travels around seeking safety and a place to call home. As a hybrid individual, Natasha seems to deploy assimilation as an acquiring culture for adaptation. Aboulela indicates that the West does not look at immigrants as citizens but looks at them as terrorists or as extremists, especially after the 9/11 attacks and the 7/7/2005 London bombings.

Because of Natasha's academic research on jihad and her Sudanese heritage, she also becomes suspicious and encounters a psychological dilemma. Natasha's journey becomes much more challenging when she travels to Sudan after the death of her father. Natasha went to the Oz room after the police had taken him; after arriving there, she fell asleep in his bed. She imagines herself as a half-human, half-creature hybrid while she sleeps, "It was the disproportion of the wolf's head to the child's body, the shock of the half-human, half-beast, the lack of fusion between the two" (Aboulela, 46-45). She describes herself as "completely different," which is extremely useful in

understanding immigrant psychology, and the mythological identity seems more natural. The author skillfully portrayed the common subconscious shared by these two immigrants. The author narrates the dream via Natasha's narration "From the top of my head all the way down in one straight swoop, I split in two, half-human and half-reptile. It was natural to be like a centaur or a sphinx; it was usual to have a full human head. But I had failed; I had morphed into something completely different" (Aboulela, 80). Natasha's struggle to define herself is reflected in her relationship with her mother. Her inability to get her mother's white color, which camouflaged her immigrant identity, became a phenomenon for which Natasha blamed her mother. So by depriving her mother's white skin, she could integrate into Western culture more easily. She states that, "For the first time since her death, I cried. I cried over the wasted time, conversations in which all I did was mock her accent and taste; time wasted in aching to be white like her and blaming her for the failure as if she were the one barring me from entry into a privileged world, as if she were begrudging me a gift she could give" (Aboulela, 169). In Aboulela's novel, Natasha's mother adopted skin color as a privileged racial symbol. In the eyes of the dominant white Westerners, immigrants are inferior. The most important indication of racial and cultural differences, such as differences between Muslim and African immigrants, was the color of their skin. For Bhabha (1994) notes, "The Negro enslaved by his superiority over the white man behaves with a neurotic orientation. These intercessions, indeed, cooperation's of political and psychic violence within ethical behavior, alienation, and identity" (Bhabha, 62).

Oz refers to Natasha's beliefs toward Muslim students in her novel by stating that, "A Muslim talks to them and they put on that wide-eyed tolerant look, quick little nods and inside they're congratulating themselves thinking, 'Look at me, I'm truly broad-minded, listening to all this shit and not batting an eyelid'" (Aboulela, 21). According to Bill Ashcroft et al., (2007) affirms that "The colonizer's imitation of the colonized culture, behavior, and principles by the colonized mocking with a confirmed 'menace' so that mimicry 'both resembles and menaces'" (Ashcroft et al., 125). Furthermore, "The Western adaptation process itself is a crucial part of the post-colonial presumption that all language use is a 'different' of one kind or another" (Ashcroft, et al., 4). Natasha loses the Arabic language abilities she acquired while living in Sudan. she notes that: "My childhood memory of the Arabic alphabet had become hazy and the letters were not easy to distinguish" (Aboulela, 11). Their conversation had been in Russian when her father visited her. As she immigrated to the West, Natasha's objectives for her identity diaspora permitted her to abandon her own home culture as much as possible. So in contrast to Islam and Arab culture, she embraces Western traditions. Edward Said has thoroughly discussed in his *Orientalism* (1978) argues the binary distinction of "the Oriental becomes more Oriental, the Westerner more

Western, and limits the human encounter between different cultures, traditions, and societies" generally illustrates knowledge based on such hard differences as "East" and "West" (Said, 46). Additionally, Edward Said (1977) added, "[They experience the Orient and influence the language, perception, and style of East-West encounters" (Said, 59). Said shows that a mirror reflects the power of the West, and its ambition for imperialism expanded along with the expansion of European colonialism. Said illustrates the imbalance between the West and the East by showing how the West is superior to the East. As evidenced by Natasha's character, immigrants might suffer identity loss as a result of humiliation, alienation, and perceived neglect by Western society. According to Said, rejecting the superior's hierarchical imposition on the inferior is the only way to defend the real identity. Moreover, Hall and Paul Du Gay (1996) states , "Although the concept of border crossing and identity diaspora are closely related, but it is frequently given a more diachronic characterization" (Hall,92). In that regard, Natasha is confused about her home and where she belongs. Bill Ashcroft et., al (2007) indicates that" Many people who have been colonized leave their own cultures, languages, and customs behind. Producing this "in-between" situation, or "white but not quite, "was oftentimes an intentional feature of colonial practice" (Ashcroft et al., 86). Furthermore, Bhabha (1994) points out: "This perception of liminality among migrants is almost as much a translational phenomenon as a transitional one; since the two cases are ambivalently enjoined in the "survival" of migrant life, there is no way to resolve them. They are caught in between a 'nativist'"(Bhabha, 321).In this regard, Aboulela says, "I came so that I would not be an outcast, so that I would, even in a small way, faintly, marginally, tentatively, belong" (Aboulela, 284). Additionally, Aboulela raised a question about the Muslim faith: "You've never lived in a Muslim country, have you? Culture and religion are so entwined that sometimes people can't tell the difference" (Aboulela, 48). According to the author Islam is more important to identity self-determination, than it is to culture or politics. In this perspective she declares: "So I wasn't brought up Muslim even though we lived in a Muslim country. But I was aware of Islam around me. You can't miss it in Sudan" (ibid). Even though religion and culture have become interconnected and merged, Natasha felt that her religious and cultural identities disappeared. "Those were the years when I had hope of fitting in. Then awkwardness became my home" (ibid).

As a result, Natasha suffers a cultural identity crisis on a psychological level because of her feeling of

The concept of identity rejection is one of the most essential ways of avoiding Islam and has become another facet of Islamophobia in Muslim communities. Natasha finds herself in a desperate condition but is willing to live in London. Further, Aboulela regularly examines religious

identity, such as faith and Islamophobia, as one of the central themes of her novel. Therefore, Natasha adopts approaches and methods that allow her to integrate into British society (the host culture) while separating herself from her culture and religion. Furthermore, Muslims in general and immigrants in particular have been severely affected by the events of the 9/11 and the London bombings on July 7, 2005. Palestinian-American critic Edward Said (1978) added that “September 11 attacks and the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya that proceeded. Britain, the United States, and their allies resume their illegal and imperial invasion and occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, causing political instability and more invasions that are terrible to think about” (Said, xii). Moreover, According to Ania Loomba (1998) emphasis, “Our world is more difficult than ever to imagine as simply 'postcolonial' in the wake of the events of September 11, 2001, the US invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, and the so-called global war on terror. It's more urgent that the issues of dominance and resistance brought up by anti-colonial movements and postcolonial studies all over the world are more important than ever” (Loomba, 213). Similarly, Ania Loomba's words, “After the September 11, 2001 attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center in the United States, the media dominated coverage of Islam by portraying Muslim immigrants as either violently conditioned or unable to integrate into Western societies” (Loomba, 217). According to Raymond Taras (2015) claims “A form of hostility towards Muslims called 'Islamophobia' was brought about by judging others based on the color of their skin or their race. Today, racism is more predominant than ever in Islamophobia and the discrimination of Muslim immigrants” (Taras, 417). Since the novel highlights the effect of the “war on terror” on Arab British Muslims, the paper throws light on the significance of names for those of Muslim heritage trying to assimilate into the British social system after the 7/7/2005 London bombings led to the rise of Islamophobia against Muslim immigrants. The point is that since the September 11 attacks, the West and the United States of America have shaped Islam through racism and Islamophobia. Muslim refugees became suspected “I remember and believing that all these conspiracy theories about 9/11 that it wasn't Muslims that did it. I argued with him then, I talked him out of it, or at least I thought I did” (Aboulela, 176). Leila Aboulela's journal, “The Kindness of Enemies (2015): An Acculturation Approach. (2019)” Points out: “The article discusses the importance of names for those of Muslim origins attempting to integrate into British society following the bombings in London on July 7, 2005, which led to the rise of Islamophobia” (Aboulela, 773). One could characterize the fear of Islam and Muslims as a result of the hostile relationship between Islam and the West as racism. However, we cannot attribute Islamophobia to racism and the West's orientalist viewpoint simply because it has become more complex in recent years. However, the Islamophobia that has emerged because of the politicization of religion and its ideas is more than

just an external fear of Islam, as Aboulela's novel frequently exposes. The Islamic community has been disturbed by its tendency toward radicalization and politics. Aboulela intelligently linked racism, Islamophobia, and the distorted image of Muslims refugees in her novel. Indian critic and theorist Bhabha (1994), referring to the sectarian and ethnic terrorist attacks on Bombay, claims, "Tragically, events of violent and terror attacks have left an impression on city that seemed to be actively engaged across and against these ethnic and religious divisions" (Bhabha, xxiv). The rejection of Muslims in the West after the 9/11 attacks has led to the protagonist's efforts to improve her positive adoption of foreign cultural strategies. By referring to her faculty's younger Muslim students, Natasha states, "Many of the young Muslims I taught throughout the years couldn't wait to bury their dark, badly dressed immigrant parents who never understood what was happening around them" (Aboulela, 14). In this regard, Natasha's mixed-race individual (half-Sudanese and half-Russian) states in the first few pages of her novel that she prefers the last name of her mother's second husband over that of her Sudanese father. As an example, she changed her Muslim name, "Dr. Hussein," to a Western one, "Wilson," as symbolic evidence of her rejection of her Muslim origins. She explains the reason for her preference: "Many Muslims in Britain wished that no one knew they were Muslim. They would change their names if they could and dissolve into the mainstream, for it was not enough for them" (ibid). Natasha attempt to change her identity by changing her last name from Hussein to Wilson leads us to Brubaker and Cooper (2000) analysis of diasporic identity, "It is a dispositional term that specifies what might be called "situated subjectivity": one's sense of who one is, of one's social location, and of how (given the first two) one is prepared to act" (Cooper, 17). In the novel, Natasha rejects her father's invitation to her graduation ceremony and feels ashamed when her father visits her preferring her stepfather Tony's presence. She added, "I was ashamed to be seen with him around the campus" (Aboulela, 276).

Young immigrants have to hide from their parents who are attempting to get rid of their cultural identity because they are obsessed with the Western community. One could characterize the fear of Islam and Muslims as a result of the hostile relationship between Islam and the West as racism. Furthermore, the two basic elements of resistance are seen through the following quoted lines of her novel *The Kindness of Enemies*. Aboulela skillfully employed the historical narrative of Imam

Shamil, who led the resistance against the Russian invasion of the Caucasus, as a metaphor to express her viewpoint on resistance. Aboulela made an effort to portray Muslims positively and to provide a good example of resistance. She presented in her novel a live image of Imam Shamil through his resistance against Russian occupation. In addition, the narrator proceeds by explaining the circumstances that led to the Russians kidnapping Shamil's son Jamaledin in Akhulgo during a violent battle. "Jamaledin was leaving Dagestan. He was no longer a hostage now, he was being kidnapped away from his father's territory. On to the misty unknown, to the city of the tsar himself, St Petersburg" (Aboulela,36). As Shamil starts looking for his son, Jamaledin is taken away from his homeland. He is tired of the accommodation of newness and openness. The place is entirely different in religion, race and culture. He gets into contact with the diversity and in-betweenness of a dominating culture. Bhabha(1994) argues: "The bearers of a hybrid identity are those who embrace the instability of revolutionary cultural change" (Bhabha, 55). During Natasha's travels to Scotland to further her studies on Shamil's resistance to the Tsarist invasion of his country, her mother died in Russia after marrying Tony, and her father suffered from kidney failure and lived in Sudan. It appears that she finds herself caught between two cultures, 'in-between,' and suffers from a sense of both conscious and unconscious identity loss. She feels desperate to get out of her current environment and indulges in the labyrinth of emptiness because she feels alone. She indicates that: "I put the leaflet away and for the first time felt the urge to escape. But where to? To go back to Malak and see the vacuum Oz left behind? To fly to Sudan and sit at my father's deathbed? Instead I went into town because I needed to be surrounded by people, by normal life" (Aboulela, 135). Imam Shamil strives for the freedom of the Caucasians from the Tsar invasion to live with the widespread trauma of the nineteenth century. He based his jihad on a legal stance that protects his country and population. Shamil represents a moderate perspective of Islam without discrimination, radicalism, and fundamentalist beliefs, as well as a shared language derived from cultures and religions. 'We worship the same God,' he told me, 'and when you are ready I will show you shorter, quicker, more direct routes to him" (Aboulela, 151). While the distorted images of Islam and jihad in colonial discourse cause misunderstandings and confuse the differences between Islam and the West, Aboulela's portrayal of Islam in the novel is neither inferior nor harmful. The images that Aboulela presents could promote a closer bond between them and pave the way for deeper understanding." go along with those who claim they're acting in the name of Islam and at the same time don't follow the principles of submission and restraint" (Aboulela,175). Through the lens of Homi K. Bhabha's theorization of concepts like "hybridity", "liminality", "ambivalence" and "in-betweenness" states, "The distinctions between the world and home are confounded, inexplicably, and the public and

private suddenly merge into a vision as divided as it is disoriented” (Bhabha, 13). Characters turned into strangers and alienated people due to the hybridization process the author states, “Here he was between one dress and the other, neither Russian nor Chechen, just naked and human” (Aboulela, 237). As I refer on the previous page of the article when Oz is taken into custody. Natasha appears in a solid position as a scholar, but the police take her laptop and mobile phone, making Natasha a suspect too. The moment she leaves Malak's house, she gets tortured by a variety of issues; a peculiar allegation of intimidation threatens her academic future, and a terrorism investigation calls into question her ethical principles. She indicates, “In the afternoon, the police came to the university and checked my desktop; they searched my office and asked me question after question. On the titles of my papers, Royal Support for Jihad and Jihad as Resistance; on my political opinions, on my other nationalities, and, of course, on Oz” (Aboulela, 166). Furthermore, Amerdeep Campbell (2019) claims, “No matter how wonderful her academic achievements have been, Natasha resorts back to her eradicated and decentered self who has been struggling to fit in. What the reader gets from Natasha’s efforts to wear the character of a Westerner is the certain lack of “assimilation” (Campbell, 62). Her apartment was looted; her distanced father in Sudan fell sick, and her stepmother sued her in court. Neither Natasha’s anglicized surname nor her academic accomplishments have assisted in securing the fragile space she has been seeking to inhabit. As she expresses it, “They sealed the entrance, and though my colleagues were restrained in their curiosity, I shrank. Every step climbed, every achievement, every recognition—all that hard work—had not taken me far enough, not truly redeemed me, not landed me on the safest shore” (ibid). Along the process of being investigated, that incident has triggered Natasha’s bygone sense of humiliation and marginalization. As she spells it clearly: “Natasha Wilson denoted a person who was smeared by suspicion, tainted by crime. I might as well have stayed Natasha Hussein! Even though my laptop and mobile phone were returned to me, even though no formal charges were ever leveled at me, still, it now took conscious effort to walk with my head held high” (Aboulela, 303). Thus, the only place where she experiences the spirit of belonging is when she is back in Sudan among her mother’s friend Grusha, her ex-boyfriend Yasha, and her brother Mikki. There, in her homeland, Natasha declares, I valued the sense of belonging they gave me, the certainty that I was not an isolated member of a species but simply one who had wandered far from the flock and still managed to survive, for better or for worse, in a different habitat” (ibid). With her biological heritage and Hussain's name back in Sudan, Natasha has felt comfortable and even proud of being called Natasha Hussein. For Jameleedin in the novel, Aboulela states that, “You began to believe in your own abilities and you said to yourself, what does that old man know about warfare, what does that dervish understand

besides mysticism? ” (Aboulela, 299). Hence, Jameleledin gave up on the circumstances and stopped to pray for Shamil's victory. Shamil blamed his conviction in this kind of failure on his lack of spiritual support and the right sense of spirituality. “Without spiritual support, nature took its course. Without blessings, without miracles, one and one made two and an object thrown up in the air fell down; a man could not see in the dark[...]the physical laws of the world govern supreme and those strong in numbers and ammunition sooner or later must defeat the weak” (ibid). Jamaleldin, who spends nearly his entire life with the Russians and finds more kindness in captivity than he could have ever expected. After he gets back to his Chechen tribe, he has been feeling “[L]ike a crab, he was edging backwards to them” (Aboulela ,219). He is floating between the Christian Russian culture, which he has grown to love and adapt to, and those vociferous feelings of longing for it, but he does not belong to his Muslim roots. He has been completely dislocated. Jamaleldin has been struggling with the feelings of exhilaration he experiences when he joins his tribe and the dejection he might feel after saying farewell to the people he grew up with. As Aboulela remarks, “He believes he was going backwards from affectation to a harsh mountain climate” (Interview with Daniel Musiitwa, 2011), spending fifteen years living among Russians to adapt Jamaleldin's identity and beliefs to the customs and cultural mindset of the Russian Empire. He has become disconnected from his roots through his behavior and thinking, as well as his assimilation into the culture around him. In fact, one can argue that Jamaleldin’s “sense of self” Bhabha's argument of identity as a: “Such an intervention properly put into question our perception of culture's historical identity as a unifying, homogenizing force that remains in the national tradition of the people and is certified by the original past” (Bhabha, 54). Yet, Jamaleldin's persona provides a symbol of more than just cultural acclimation but also its limits. When he asks for the Tsar's permission to marry his Russian mistress for political reasons, he is never allowed; however, he has a legal obligation to get married “ So Russian women are to your taste ... eh? Think of the future,’ he concluded with a flourish. ‘You will be my mouthpiece in the Caucasus” (Aboulela, 65). At the time Jamaledin was released and returned to his father, his identity crisis gradually increased. Before reaching his homeland, he took a little break at a mountain to change into the traditional Caucasian dress and remove his Russian clothes. He stands naked in the frozen snowy Caucasus for a moment, believing that he is neither of them “Here he was between one dress and the other, neither Russian nor Chechen, just naked and human”(Aboulela, 237). Nevertheless, he couldn't adopt the new Caucasus identity even after wearing those Chechenian clothes. This becomes evident after he returns to Chechnya, where he has never been comfortable with mountain life; his thinking has

never been attuned to the traditions of the Avars. He believes that "No living thing should walk backwards. It was unnatural and gloomy"

(Aboulela, 219). The Avars are thinking of war, while he is thinking of peace; finally, Jamaleldin dies and collapses from tuberculosis, both physically and spiritually.

9.7. Conclusion

Aboulela explores Natasha's identity dilemma, family displacement, identity diaspora, and resistance as a reflection of Islam's contemporary world. Natasha lived a liberal, secular life in Sudan, and she suffered from a sense of alienation and displacement. The author attempted to prove that Oz, Natasha, and Jamaleldin are diasporic characters caught 'in-between.' In their attempts to adapt, they pretend to be brave and resourceful, as though their depth of awareness and character provides some comfort for their outsider status. To become familiar with Western culture and overcome that sense of un-belonging or alienation, all took the "voyage in." Dispersed and confused between two names, two cultures, and two identities, each has been tortured by representations of who they are and what they have become. Oz, Natasha, and Jamaleldin have all struggled to create and maintain a balance between their Arab Muslim and Western identities, which has caused them to become alienated from their true selves, as they have been fully aware of their being part and parcel of both cultures. Through Natasha's journey, Aboulela sheds light on the experiences of diasporic communities and highlights the effect on Arab British Muslim immigrants. The novel also skillfully examines the fragility of human relationships, the power of kindness and empathy, and the long-lasting effects of past events on people's lives.

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