

T.C. İSTANBUL KÜLTÜR UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

**ROOTLESS TREES AND WINGLESS BEES: AN EXPLORATION OF
MIGRANT IDENTITY, HOME, NOSTALGIA AND TRAUMA IN *THE ISLAND
OF MISSING TREES* AND *THE BEEKEEPER OF ALEPPO***

Ümit CONTUK

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**Department: English Language and Literature
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PLAGIARISM

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

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ABSTRACT

Rootless Trees and Wingless Bees: An Exploration of Migrant Identity, Home, Nostalgia and Trauma in *The Island of Missing Trees* and *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*

Ümit Contuk

This study examines the interactions of identity, home, nostalgia, and trauma with the phenomenon of forced migration in Elif Shafak's *The Island of Missing Trees* (2021) and Christy Lefteri's *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* (2019). The issue of migration, which has always profoundly affected societies in history and which is still deeply felt today due to reasons such as proxy wars, civil unrest, the climate crisis, hunger, and poverty, has been approached from a holistic perspective by following the individual and inner journeys of the novel characters. The novels analyzed complement each other as they focus on different stages of the migration process. In this way, the analysis of the two novels has enabled the thesis to reveal commonalities in the areas analyzed while examining these differences simultaneously. As a result, this thesis concludes that migrant identities are fluid, changing, and multiple. It has been revealed that the concept of home, which is closely linked to identity, is one of the first casualties of migrants. It has been observed that the ambiguity in migrant identity is also valid for the concept of home. This thesis also discusses that home has a meaning that transcends physical materials such as walls and roofs and is a multi-layered concept that includes family members, family relationships, a sense of security, familiar objects, faces, sounds, and smells. It was also observed that nostalgia can have both a healing and a trapping effect on migrants. It has been recognized that the experience of migration, whether voluntary or forced, has various difficulties and that migrants carry these difficulties as a burden on their shoulders throughout their lives. As a result, the migrant has to cope with inner emptiness and incompleteness. In light of all this, it is emphasized that societies hosting refugees should also re-evaluate the issues discussed in this thesis with an introspective approach.

Key Words: Migration, Identity, Home, Nostalgia, Trauma, Migrant Experiences, *The Island of Missing Trees*, Elif Shafak, *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*, Christy Lefteri

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KISA ÖZET

Köksüz Ağaçlar ve Kanatsız Arılar: *Kayıp Ağaçlar Adası* ve *Halep Arıcısı*'nda Göçmen Kimliği, Yuva, Nostalji ve Travma Üzerine Bir İnceleme

Ümit Contuk

Bu çalışma Elif Shafak'ın *Kayıp Ağaçlar Adası* (2021) ve Christy Lefteri'nin *Halep Arıcısı* (2019) romanlarındaki kimlik, yuva, nostalji ve travmanın zorunlu göç olgusu ile karşılıklı etkileşimlerini incelemektedir. Tarihte toplumları hep derinden etkilemiş olan ve günümüzde de vesayet savaşları, sivil kargaşalar, iklim krizi, açlık ve yoksulluk gibi nedenlerle önemini şiddetli bir şekilde hissettiren göç meselesine roman karakterlerinin bireysel ve içsel yolculukları takip edilerek bütüncül bir bakış açısı ile yaklaşmıştır. İncelenen romanlar göç sürecinin farklı aşamalarına odaklandığı için birbirini tamamlar niteliktedir. Bu sayede, iki romanın analizi tezin incelediği alanlarda bir yandan ortak noktaların ortaya konulmasını diğer yandan da bu farklılıkların irdelenebilmesini sağlamıştır. Sonuç olarak, bu tez göçmen kimliklerinin akışkan, değişken ve çoklu bir yapıya sahip olduğu sonucuna ulaşmıştır. Kimlik ile yakından bağlantılı olan yuva kavramının ise göçmenlerin ilk kayıplarından biri olduğu ortaya konulmuştur. Göçmen kimliğindeki muğlaklığın yuva kavramı için de geçerli olduğu görülmüştür. Yuvanın duvar ve çatı gibi fiziksel materyalleri aşan bir anlamı olduğu, içerisine aile bireylerini, aile ilişkilerini, güvenlik hissini, tanıdık nesneleri, yüzleri, sesleri ve kokuları alan çok katmanlı bir kavram olduğu tartışılmıştır. Ayrıca nostalji kavramının göçmenler için hem iyileştirici hem de tutsak edici bir etkiye sahip olabileceği görülmüştür. İster gönüllü ister zorunlu olsun göç tecrübesinin çeşitli zorlukları olduğu; göçmenlerin bu zorlukları hayatları boyunca omuzlarında bir yük olarak taşıdıkları anlaşılmıştır. Bunun sonucunda göçmen içsel bir boşluk ve eksiklikle baş etmek durumunda kalmıştır. Bütün bunların ışığında, mültecileri misafir eden toplumların da iç gözlemsel bir yaklaşımla bu tezde tartışmaya açılan konuları tekrardan değerlendirmesi gerektiğine vurgu yapılmıştır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Göç, Kimlik, Yuva, Nostalji, Travma, Göçmen Tecrübeleri, *The Island of Missing Trees*, Elif Shafak, *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*, Christy Lefteri

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INTRODUCTION

A significant topic of our day, migration affects people and communities worldwide and raises substantial social, cultural, and political issues. The representation of migration and immigrant experiences has recently grown to be an affluent area of study in literature, with writers providing distinctive viewpoints on this complicated and often controversial subject. *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* (2019) by Christy Lefteri and *The Island of Missing Trees* (2021) by Elif Shafak, two contemporary novels that offer incisive and emotional depictions of the sufferings and difficulties experienced by migrants, are the subjects of this thesis, which examines the correlation between migration, identity, home, nostalgia, and trauma.

We are living in an era of migration. War, political tension, military conflicts, economic hardship, environmental deterioration, and individual preferences are a few of the many diverse causes of migration. Indeed, the outcomes of these various migratory motivations are also varied and intricate. Migration involves a wide range of experiences and circumstances, making it challenging to define and comprehend the concept. It is difficult to develop a thorough theory on the topic since so many variables, including origin, destination, age, gender, and others, are so important in identifying a particular migration experience. In both novels I examine, the reason for displacement is civil war. In this respect, there are many commonalities in the books, yet, as mentioned earlier, the different mechanisms of the migration process lead to unique experiences. As a result, the two novels also touch on various phases of this phenomenon.

The Island of Missing Trees (2021) starts its story with Ada, the daughter of immigrant parents. With flashbacks, the novel shifts its focus to the first-generation immigrants,

Ada's parents. The civil war that raged in Cyprus until the Turkish intervention in 1974 is the setting for *The Island*. This conflict was a result of decades of political and ethnic hostilities between the Greek and Turkish communities on the island and was fueled by broader regional and international interests. Many Cypriots were forced to abandon their homes in pursuit of safety and a better future because of the civil war, which had profound and far-reaching effects on the country's people. The issues addressed in *The Island* are greatly influenced by this milieu of violence and displacement. By way of character depictions and storylines, the novel reveals the psychological toll of the civil war and how it affected the lives of ordinary people. Themes of loss, displacement, resilience, and hope are interwoven throughout the narrative to illustrate how resilient humans are, even in the most demanding conditions.

The Beekeeper of Aleppo (2019), on the other hand, is set in a relatively contemporary context, depicting the story of Nuri, a prosperous beekeeper in Aleppo, his wife Afra, and their son, whose peaceful lives are disrupted by the civil war in Syria. They are forced to flee their home and embark on a perilous journey that takes them from Syria to Turkey and Greece before eventually settling in England, where Mustafa, Nuri's cousin and business partner in beekeeping, awaits them. The novel features two intertwined storylines. The first is the narration of Nuri's life before the war, his peaceful existence, the tragic events that occur after the war, and the difficulties as the family attempts to reach a place of safety. The second storyline follows them during their time in England, where they are kept in a hotel as asylum seekers while their application to become refugees is processed. Throughout the novel, we witness Nuri and Afra's psychological breakdown and identity loss as they struggle to adapt to their new life in England. Nuri's memory is also portrayed as fragmented, with only bits and pieces of recollection. The novel cleverly connects the past and present using shared words between the chapters, blurring the lines between timeframes.

The two novels being discussed are notable works of migrant writing, and their writers have some intriguing commonalities. Both authors have a strong connection to the migrant experience. They have had either personal or familial migration experiences, which

probably shaped the themes and viewpoints in their writing about migration. So, the experiences provided gave them the capability to write about the migrant experience in a nuanced and sincere manner because they have a thorough understanding of the difficulties and complexities involved. Elif Shafak, whose mother was a diplomat, has been a full-time migrant for most of her life. She was born in France, moved to Turkey and Spain, then back to Turkey, and later went to the USA for her post-doctoral studies before returning to Turkey again. Currently, she resides in the UK. In one of her interviews, she states that “it’s possible to have multiple, flowing belongings, instead of a singular, solid identity” (*Elif Shafak*). Her constant movement has made her question concepts such as identity and belonging since childhood. Through her novel, she explores these themes and tells the story of two lovers from different ethnic backgrounds, Kostas, a Greek Cypriot, and Defne, a Turkish Cypriot, amidst the chaos of the civil war in Cyprus.

Similarly, Christy Lefteri has a personal connection to the theme of displacement. Her parents fled the horrors of the civil war in Cyprus, and she was born in the UK in 1980. Growing up as the daughter of refugee parents, she became acutely aware of the plight of those seeking asylum. Lefteri volunteered for UNICEF in Greece, helping Syrian asylum seekers, and drew upon these experiences to write *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*. Thus, both authors' life experiences are intimately connected with the themes and subject matter they explore in their novels. They portray migration and displacement with nuanced and empathetic perspectives, highlighting the complexities of identity and belonging in a rapidly changing world. As the writers explore the complicated issues of migration and displacement, it is critical to consider how these notions are defined and interpreted in migration literature.

The concept of migration can be defined in various ways. Still, a commonly accepted definition describes it as the movement of individuals from their usual place of residence, either across international borders or within a state. Haas et al. note that “migratory mobility equals migration, involving the relocation of individuals across administrative borders” (23). Migration, in contrast to transient movements like touristic trips, has profound and enduring effects on the lives of those involved. If we consider the sending,

receiving, and transit countries along with the migrants, the number of people directly or indirectly affected by migration rises to a dazzling number (Bloch and Dona 2). Therefore, migration is a complex and multifaceted subject requiring an interdisciplinary approach to be fully understood. Various disciplines, such as history, demography, economics, sociology, anthropology, geography, and political and juridical studies, provide different perspectives on migration. However, studying migration solely within these fields may hinder the development of a comprehensive understanding of migration. As Bretell and Hollifield argue, an interdisciplinary dialogue is crucial to better understand migration and find effective solutions to its associated problems (XVI). By facilitating an interdisciplinary dialogue, researchers can develop a holistic view of migration, allowing them to examine the subject from multiple angles and provide more nuanced insights into the complexities of this phenomenon.

This dissertation focuses on forced migration, a distinct subcategory within the broader concept of migration. The experiences and psychological well-being of individuals in the context of forced migration will be the primary subjects of analysis. As scholars have noted, migration can profoundly impact individuals and their relationships. The novels I examine have stories of separation, reconciliation, and destruction. The characters may appear together physically, but they are often emotionally separated. By analyzing these narratives, my goal is to shed light on the irreparable wounds inflicted by forced migration, the loss of home, and the traumas that stem from these experiences. Additionally, this study seeks to understand how such profound disruptions affect an individual's identity. Forced migration, in particular, is a traumatic experience that often leads to fragmented and hybrid identities. In the novels analyzed in this thesis, the characters are forced to leave their homes owing to civil wars in Cyprus and Syria. Despite the uniqueness of their experiences, the suffering they endure is universal. By examining forced migration experiences depicted in these novels, my objective is to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon's psychological impact on individuals and communities.

From the time when homo-sapiens were nomadic hunter-gatherers without a permanent home, human history is replete with examples of migration. These early humans moved from place to place to ensure their survival in habitable environments. As societies became more complex and people settled down, migration continued, but this time, it was driven by more than just natural causes. The human agency came into play, with property ownership leading to inequalities, tensions, conflicts, and even war. Although additional factors have been added to the causes of migration, its core reasons have remained unchanged. In other words, migration is deeply ingrained in our evolutionary history. Surprisingly, despite the historical trend of migration, statistics indicate that only a minor fraction of the global population resides in a country different from their birthplace. This finding challenges the common perception that migration is a widespread and ubiquitous phenomenon, suggesting that the reality of global migration is more nuanced than often perceived. While the absolute number of migrants has risen, this increase is partly attributable to the overall growth in the world's population. Despite the higher numbers, the proportion of people opting for migration remains relatively modest. According to the World Migration Report 2022, there were approximately 281 million international migrants in 2020, constituting about 3.6% of the global population. This is a slight increase from 3.4% in 2015. (*World Migration Report 2022*). These figures indicate that a significant majority of the world's population still chooses to remain in their country of birth.

Even though the percentage of people migrating has not changed significantly over time, the term *migration crisis* has gained prominence in recent discourse. This raises the question: why are these two words increasingly used in conjunction? In an attempt to understand the transformation of migration, a phenomenon that has been ongoing for years and is considered commonplace, into a perceived crisis, Banerjee argues that the interest in large-scale population movements as a crisis began with the recognition that modern state formation often led to population displacements and the emergence of refugee populations that were racially and religiously different from their host countries (44). Taking this into account, he concludes that “critical forced migration studies have to be post-colonial by nature” (45). His perspective on migration history also extends to his

insights on the future. He asserts that the world's great powers are often hypocritical in their actions, using the example of how they create refugees and displace millions through bombing countries, only to later invoke principles of care and provide limited aid to the displaced. This reflects a larger systemic issue where powerful countries prioritize their own interests over the welfare of those affected by their actions, further complicating the already complex issues of migration and displacement. This brings us to the most significant question *The Beekeeper* asks: "What does it mean to see?" (Lefteri 309). Prompted by this question, Lefteri centralizes the phenomenon of *blindness* in her novel. In today's geopolitical climate, where colonial struggles for colonization have evolved into proxy wars in strategic locations such as Syria and Cyprus, Lefteri implicitly criticizes Europe's ambivalent stance and unwillingness on the refugee issue.

This thesis also explores the following question: How do the identities of individuals who lose their homes because of these dominant powers evolve? With the analysis of the novels, the research explores the significant changes and difficulties experienced by displaced individuals due to the policies of dominant geopolitical actors. The objective is to comprehend the impact of forced migration on an individual's self-perception, cultural identity, and connection with both their country of origin and the cultures they live in. As stated by Boğaç, studies conducted by Erikson, Quarantelli, Raphael, Wright, and Rossi show that "the disruption of one's sense of place through involuntary relocation can threaten self-identity and be very overwhelming to those with strong place attachments" (269). The literature shows the inherent connection between the sense of place attachment and identity, suggesting that these two constructs are intricately interwoven. The experience of being forced to depart from one's place of birth or upbringing can inflict long-lasting harm to an individual's sense of identity. Unfortunately, this phenomenon has been largely disregarded by society and governing bodies for a long time. In discussing the guestworker program in Switzerland, Max Frisch famously stated: "We asked for workers, but instead human beings came" (Brettell and Hollifield 282). This powerful quote leads us to two conclusions. Firstly, in the past, host countries invited migrants without fully considering the long-term consequences of their presence. Secondly, these migrants were often seen as "other." They were reduced to a homogenous and faceless

mass, devoid of individual identities and reduced to the label of “migrant”. This lack of understanding and recognition of migrant identities has led to a significant amount of academic research on the topic, with many scholars arguing that migrant identities are fluid and often exist in a state of in-betweenness, where individuals do not fully belong to either their birthplace or their host country. “Many migrants articulate a multilayered, ‘hybrid’ identity that reflects (and perhaps shapes) their experience of home, self and belonging” (Ralph and Staeheli 521). The novels that will be studied in this dissertation will also explore the complexities of migrant identity and belonging, including the experiences of hybrid identities and the challenges of coping with othering and identity crisis.

Migration is considered a collective action that has an impact on entire communities and societies and results from social, economic, and political transformation rather than a plain separate act. “Migration can even transcend death: members of some migrant groups arrange for their bodies to be taken back for burial in their native soil” (Tribalat qtd. in Haas et al. 42). This makes it a complex phenomenon. In order to comprehend the nature and reasons of migration patterns, numerous social science disciplines have created several theories since the late nineteenth century (Haas et al. 42). The categorization of these theories may help us better understand migration. Haas et al. categorize them into three levels: macro-micro and meso. They explain that macro-structures and micro-structures are two levels that are interconnected by meso-level social structures and mechanisms.

Macro-structures refer to large-scale institutional factors, such as the political economy of the world market, labour market dynamics, interstate relationships, and efforts by the states of origin and destination countries to control migration. Micro-structures embrace the practices, family ties and beliefs of migrants themselves. These two levels are linked by a number of meso-level social mechanisms and structures: examples of these include migrant networks, immigrant communities, business sectors catering to migrants and the migration industry. Such social structures tend to facilitate further migration within established migration corridors. (Haas et al. 43)

Regarding theories explaining the process of migration, they can generally be categorized into two main groups: functionalist and historical structural. Functionalist theories of migration emphasise how migration helps to balance labour supply and demand across

regions, implying that people migrate primarily for economic reasons. These theories frequently underline potential migrants' rational decision-making process, in which they weigh the costs and benefits of relocating to another country. Migration is expected to flow from areas with a labour surplus and low wages to areas with labour shortages and higher wages, helping to maintain economic equilibrium. Functionalist theories are criticized for oversimplifying the migration process by focusing solely on economic factors while ignoring the complex interplay of social, political, and environmental factors that also drive migration.

Historical-structural theories, on the other hand, situate migration within the larger framework of global economic systems and power dynamics. These theories contend that migration is heavily influenced by historical and structural inequalities between and within countries, rather than simply the result of individual decisions. They focus on how colonialism, global capitalism, and unequal distribution of resources and opportunities have created conditions that force people to migrate. Historical-structural theories describe how developed countries exploited labour and resources from less developed countries, resulting in migration patterns that reflect these imbalances. Critics of historical-structural theories may argue that they are overly deterministic, underestimating migrants' agency and the variety of migration experiences. Each group has its own strengths and weaknesses. Haas et al. advocate for theories that combine both groups, regarding them as the most effective in explaining the migration phenomenon. Researchers can acquire a more thorough knowledge of migratory patterns by considering both functionalist and historical structural viewpoints.

As for the organization of this thesis, the first chapter establishes a theoretical foundation by exploring key theories related to identity, home, nostalgia, and trauma. This chapter, enriched with both foundational texts and contemporary writings, aims to provide a solid base for the subsequent analysis of the novels. The second and third chapters are dedicated to an in-depth examination of the novels. These chapters begin by delving into the migrant experiences and the challenges encountered during this process. Following this, the novels are analyzed through the lenses of identity, home, nostalgia, and trauma. The conclusion offers a comprehensive summary of the topics discussed throughout the thesis and then

proceeds to compare and contrast the two novels. Drawing on these comparisons, the thesis concludes with a set of insights and observations derived from the analysis.



CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1.1. Identity

Identity, home, nostalgia and nature, as well as their intersections, have been the subject of substantial scholarly study, particularly in the context of migration. This chapter examines the relevant literature on these topics, laying the theoretical background for a detailed analysis of *The Island of Missing Trees* and *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*. The literature study is divided into sections for each theme, with special emphasis on the impact of migration on these themes.

Migration has always been a significant factor in the development of human societies, and its implications on the people involved have been far-reaching. Cultural identity is one of the subjects that is affected by the transformative force of migration. As a result of the challenging issues that migrants face while attempting to reconcile their sense of belonging and self-understanding within new cultural contexts, this topic is seen as a significant one in the field of migration studies.

Several theoretical views have emerged to better explain the complex and dynamic nature of identity development among migrants. Stuart Hall's concept of “cultural identity and diaspora”, Homi Bhabha's “third space”, and Avtar Brah's “diaspora space” are notable examples. These theoretical frameworks emphasize the fluidity, hybridity, and relational aspects of migration-related identity formation. They also show how people use elements of their native and host cultures to build new, hybrid forms of self-understanding, transcending binary oppositions between cultures and engaging in cultural translation.

According to Stuart Hall (1990), the process of cultural identification is a never-ending one influenced by factors such as history, culture, and personal experiences, including migration. Cultural identity, according to Hall, is not fixed; rather, it is constantly negotiated and reinterpreted. Hall investigates the experiences of diasporic communities in his classic article “Cultural Identity and Diaspora”, suggesting that their identities are characterized by a constant negotiation between their cultural heritage and the influences of their host societies. Cultural identity is not “an already accomplished fact.” It should be perceived “as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation” (Rutherford 222).

Building on Hall's theories, Homi Bhabha's (1994) concept of “third space” emphasizes the complexity and fluidity of identity development among migrants. According to Bhabha, migrants are capable of dealing with the tensions and contradictions of various cultural influences because they occupy a special "third space" that transcends the binary opposition between their home and host cultures. According to Bhabha, this third space functions as a place of cultural translation where immigrants create new identities by blending and reinterpreting elements from their various cultural backgrounds. In an interview, Bhabha explains the concept of “third space” as follows:

The importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom. (Rutherford 211)

Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity has grown more and more important in comprehending the complexities of cultural identities in an era marked by globalization and increasing interconnectivity between cultures. Bhabha's theory of hybridity derives from the history of difference and the notion of cultural translation. The idea emphasizes that all kinds of cultures are constantly going through a process called "hybridization," in which different parts of different cultures are mixed together to make new forms and meanings. Bhabha claims that hybridity does not involve tracing the two separate original moments from which the third hybrid entity originates. He puts a greater focus on the "third space" that hybridity presents, which promotes the emergence of opposing

viewpoints. This third space challenges commonly accepted wisdom by establishing new political initiatives and authority structures that radically transform pre-existing histories. As it embodies the blending of various cultural aspects in a fluid and developing way, it transcends polarity politics and cultural binarism.

According to Bhabha, this “third space” signifies psychoanalytic identification rather than an identity in and of itself. While it absorbs characteristics from the other culture, the process of identifying with and through a different cultural object or “object of otherness” makes the subject ambivalent. The importance of hybridity is found in the way that, like a translation, it keeps the traces of the influences and processes that shape it. These traces are combined via hybridity without being given the status of being original or primary, but rather anterior.

Furthering our knowledge of cultural identity and migration is the idea of “transnationalism” (Schiller et al. 1995). The term “transnationalism” describes the social, cultural, and economic processes that take place as people preserve ties to their native countries while also assimilating into the society in which they are living (Schiller et al. 49). By discussing the importance of reevaluating traditional perspectives on immigration, the writers claim that current theories of immigration frequently depict immigrants as individuals who have been uprooted and emphasize a one-way movement from their place of origin to their country of settlement. Yet, this viewpoint disregards the intricate, multifaceted connections that immigrants have with their native countries and the manner in which they continue to be a part of both societies. To better understand these dynamics, the authors propose the term “transmigrant”, which emphasizes the ongoing and continuous processes by which immigrants construct and reconstitute their simultaneous embeddedness in multiple societies. The transnational networks and behaviors that shape immigrants' lives are significant, and this approach challenges the traditional binary interpretation of immigration. The writers also explore the effects of this transmigrant perspective on nation-state-building projects, which frequently constrain and delimit transmigrant allegiances and loyalties. The writers believe that by redefining terms and reformulating basic assumptions of the immigrant experience, a more realistic knowledge

of transnational migration may be achieved, resulting in more informed and inclusive discussions and policies on immigration.

Avtar Brah (1996) emphasizes the significance of “intersectionality” in understanding cultural identity within diasporic communities. The theory of intersectionality argues that different parts of a person's identity, such as their ethnicity, gender, social class, and religion, are interrelated and cannot be fully grasped when seen in isolation from one another. Brah says that multiple intersecting factors affect migrants' experiences, contributing to the complexity and diversity of their cultural identities. To highlight the intersectionality of migration, which encompasses a complex interplay of economic, political, cultural, and psychological forces, Brah uses the term “diaspora space”. These forces converge in the diaspora space, offering those whose lives have been affected by migration with a diverse and multilayered experience. Diaspora space challenges the traditional binary concept of “native” and “diasporian” and decenters the subject positions of “native”, “immigrant”, “migrant”, and “in/outsider”, recognizing the influence of these positionalities on everyone (Brah 205). Understanding diaspora space necessitates an awareness of power dynamics within and between various empirical diasporas. The performative concept of power, “multi-axiality”, underscores the intersectionality of economic, political, and cultural dimensions of power, illustrating how it operates on multiple scales, from global institutions to everyday experiences (Brah 239). Diaspora space goes beyond the traditional concept of diaspora, encompassing not only migrants and their descendants but also those considered indigenous. This concept acknowledges the entanglement of genealogies of dispersion with those of “staying put,” emphasizing the interconnectedness of migrants and non-migrants within a shared space.

La Barbera's (2015) edited book, “Identity and Migration in Europe: Multidisciplinary Perspectives” provides insightful information on the complicated process of immigrant identity formation. According to La Barbera, migrant identities are fluid, always changing, and inextricably related to processes of inclusion and exclusion. In addition to travelling across borders and across territories, migrants' identities are also being rearticulated in the process of migration (La Barbera vi). The author emphasizes how migrants perceive

identity to be fluid and diverse. In the migratory context, ethnicity and religion become particularly important as identity markers. This is because migrants face various challenges when leaving their country of origin, including the loss of social status, family, and social networks, and may use their ethnicity and religion as a way to maintain a sense of familiarity and belonging. In the receiving country, they find themselves without a history or image, leading them to feel lost, alone, and without reference points. This causes them to exist in a state of in-betweenness, at the borderland, in transit – not yet belonging “here” but no longer “there” (La Barbera 4). La Barbera further problematizes the notion of “home” and suggests that one's identity and sense of belonging are never fully constituted at home or outside of it because both the individual's identity and the host country's borders are in continuous motion. This perspective challenges the dichotomy between “home” and “away,” demonstrating that identities are fluid and multiple for the migrant. According to the writer, identity development in the context of migration is a relational and oppositional process in which recognition frequently appears in opposition to other groups or individuals, and the self needs the other to express itself (La Barbera 3).

In examining the role of identity performance and strategic presentation of identity elements in challenging stereotypes, La Barbera highlights the reciprocal relationship between identity and performance, revealing that markers of identity, such as language, dress, behavior, and occupation of space, can create and define boundaries that distinguish similarities and differences (6). However, the effectiveness of these markers depends on a shared understanding of their meaning, which may be subject to misinterpretation in a multicultural social context (La Barbera 6). Furthermore, La Barbera emphasizes the importance of considering migrants as “people in transit,” as this locationality implies the deprivation of “home protection” and the search for new symbolic and material spaces in which to stay. “Home protection” refers to the sense of safety, stability, and belonging that people get from their familiar environments, which includes not just physical security, but also emotional and psychological comfort found in familiar social norms and networks. For migrants, abandoning this protection entails leaving behind not only their physical homes, but also the complicated network of relationships, cultural traditions, and identities

that are linked to their origins. As they negotiate new and often difficult landscapes, migrants seek to rebuild a sense of home in unexpected and sometimes hostile environments.

Ian Chambers (2008) reinforces the idea that identity formation is a dynamic and ongoing process, especially in the context of migration. By exploring the complexities of identity formation, we recognize the fluid and flexible nature of identity, which is continually shaped by our interactions with various cultures, languages, and historical narratives in an increasingly globalized world. This understanding requires us to question and deconstruct the traditional, singular point of view, which fails to capture the multiplicity and diversity inherent in modern identity construction. By acknowledging the complex and dynamic nature of identities, we open up new possibilities and foster dialogue across differences. The experience of being a stranger, as Chambers describes, entails perpetually making oneself “at home in an interminable discussion between a scattered historical inheritance and a heterogeneous present” (Chambers 6). We cannot simply forget or delete our prior understanding of knowledge, language, and identity. As a substitute, Chambers claims that “the elements and relations of our language and identities can neither be put back together again in a new, more critically attuned whole, nor be abandoned and denied” (Chambers 24). Acknowledging the stranger within ourselves allows for the emergence of new encounters, experiences, and understandings of our own identities and those of others. This recognition enables us to navigate the shifting terrain of our identities in relation to various cultural, linguistic, and historical contexts. Furthermore, it is crucial to include the experiences and contributions of historically marginalized communities, which are usually ignored or silenced in conventional discussions of how identities are formed. Our knowledge of identity and its construction in the modern world can be developed this way.

Acculturation, another term that is worthy of mentioning in the context of migration, refers to the changes that occur when individuals from different cultures come into continuous, direct contact. As Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits explain, acculturation covers “those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into

continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups” (qtd. in Berry 149). In order to prosper in their new homes, immigrants must undergo a process of acculturation. It's a delicate balance between being faithful to one's roots and identity and integrating into the larger society. Berry explains two basic issues all acculturating peoples face: “(1) a relative preference for maintaining one’s heritage culture and identity, and (2) a relative preference for having contact with and participating in the larger society along with other ethnocultural groups” (704). Four acculturation strategies have emerged from these two fundamental difficulties: integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization. These strategies represent various ways of dealing with the conflicting demands of preserving one's cultural traditions and also participating in a larger society. As Berry explains, “Four acculturation strategies have been derived from these two issues. These strategies carry different names, depending on which group (the dominant or non-dominant) one is considering” (704). The process of acculturation and the ways people choose to deal with it can have a significant influence on their sense of cultural identity. For example, immigrants who choose an integration strategy are able to keep a solid connection to their heritage while also adopting parts of the new culture. Being able to balance both cultures gives them a unique, hybrid cultural identity that makes it easier for them to move between different cultural settings (Berry 705). On the other hand, immigrants who choose the assimilation technique might see a modification in their sense of cultural identity. Their identity may become more aligned with the dominant culture when they adopt the new culture and separate themselves from their heritage. Although this alignment can make them more acceptable in the new culture, it might also cause them to lose touch with their original cultural identity (Berry 706). Those who choose the separation strategy, which involves keeping their original culture and not interacting with the dominant culture, can retain their original cultural identity. But this strategy can also make it harder for them to connect with the rest of society and make friends, which could lead to social isolation (Berry 107). Finally, the marginalization method, which entails rejecting both one's native culture and the dominant culture, might ultimately result in a diminished sense of cultural identity. This method may make it difficult for migrants to establish a sense of belonging in either culture, which might negatively affect their psychological health (Berry 708). Berry emphasizes that

these strategies are not fixed but can evolve over time and vary based on the individual and the context. They also have major implications for the psychological and sociological adaptation of the individual to the new society. For instance, Berry notes that research has consistently demonstrated that individuals who pursue and attain integration tend to be better adapted than those who are marginalized (Berry 709).

1.2. Home

This thesis also studies the complex concept of home, a notion of critical importance, particularly in the context of migration. The concept of home, filled with profound emotional resonance and positive connotations, often becomes one of the first casualties in situations of forced migration. Despite the familiarity of the term, providing a comprehensive definition of home poses a considerable challenge due to its subjective and context-dependent nature. This section of the thesis aims to explain the complexities of home in relation to displacement and migration. In order to gain a better understanding of the concept of home, it is crucial to first explore the concept of place. This encompasses delving into the connection between physical location and one's sense of self. By thoroughly examining this connection, we can then proceed to have a meaningful discussion about the true meaning and significance of home.

Easthope, by addressing various scholars and thinkers in his article “A Place Called Home,” embarks on an exploration of the concept of “place.” The writer then establishes a link between the concepts of “space” and “identity,” providing a subtle understanding of how these two concepts interact and impact one another. In this context, he engages with the theories of influential philosophers such as Heidegger and Bourdieu, whose works provide a rich theoretical framework for understanding the concept of “place”. Easthope then shifts his focus to the concept of “home”. He undertakes a comprehensive investigation of the term “home”, which, despite its pervasiveness, remains difficult to define due to its subjective and context-dependent nature. Easthope draws on the theories of numerous scholars and integrates their views to create a thorough explanation of the concept of “home”. This work not only sheds light on the complexities of “home”, but also highlights its significance, especially in the context of displacement and migration.

Doreen Massey argues that the idea of "place" is something we socially build, – which means that we actively create places and that our perception of them is shaped by the culture we live in. This does not, however, imply that how places are made is totally subjective. In fact, a number of variables, including physical, economic, and social realities, have an effect on how places are created. Nevertheless, when we construct a feeling of place, these realities are interpreted socially (Easthope, 'A Place Called Home' 128).

The quick pace of globalization and the compression of time and space have challenged old assumptions of places as fixed, stable communities. The concept of a solid feeling of place has become more complex as a result of the constant movement of people, goods, and information. (Easthope, 'A Place Called Home' 128). Massey's argument highlights the need to consider the various social, cultural, and historical contexts that contribute to the creation and interpretation of places. It is important to recognize the dynamic nature of place-making and the various aspects that affect our relationships with the places we live in as places transform and adjust to new conditions. (Easthope, 'A Place Called Home' 129).

The literature on place often explores the connection between place and identity, particularly in the context of modern environments that may foster a sense of alienation. The study of this relationship gained popularity among geographers in the 1970s as they started to acknowledge the emotional bonds people formed with various places. This growing interest was driven by the concern over the alienation produced by "placeless" modern environments (Easthope, 'A Place Called Home' 130). Personal identity, according to Casey (2001), now includes an awareness of one's place in the world and goes beyond a simple matter of self-consciousness. This viewpoint points out that a sense of place cannot exist without a sense of self, and vice versa. This relationship between identity and place shows how crucial it is to comprehend how the experiences we have in various places affect our sense of self and our relationships with others. (Easthope, 'A Place Called Home' 130). Rose's perspective on place highlights the complexities and diversity of elements that contribute to its construction. According to Rose, "senses of

place develop from every aspect of individuals' life experience and ... senses of place pervade everyday life and experience"(Easthope, 'A Place Called Home' 130). While one's sense of place might be very personal, it is essential to bear in mind that it is also greatly influenced by a variety of outside influences, such as "social, cultural, and economic circumstances". The three key arguments that Rose uses to group the various perspectives on the origins of senses of place are as follows:

1. A sense of place is seen as natural. Sometimes it is argued that a sense of place is a territorial instinct and some argue that it is a survival instinct. (Rose, 1995:98).
2. "A sense of place is seen as a result of the meanings people actively give to their lives ... a sense of place can be seen as part of our cultural interpretation of the world around us" (Rose, 1995:99). Some writers have argued that "it is an awareness of cultural difference which may encourage a sense of place to develop" (Rose, 1995:99) and that power relations are important in understanding a sense of place.
3. "A sense of place is part of the politics of identity" (Rose, 1995:103). This includes the idea of defining oneself in opposition to an 'other' (Rose, 1995:104). (Easthope, 'A Place Called Home' 130)

The term topophilia was coined by geographer Yi-Fu Tuan to describe "the affective bond between people and place" (Duncan and Duncan qtd. in Easthope, 'A Place Called Home' 130). According to Duncan and Duncan, this bond may be more robust for some individuals than others and can be manifested differently across cultures. The concept of topophilia highlights the emotional interaction between people and place, stressing the emotional ties that people form with their surroundings. Tuan concurs that the strength of topophilia might vary from individual to individual and culture to culture (Easthope, 'A Place Called Home' 130). In addition to being an emotional response to a place, topophilia is a practice that actively affects and transforms places. Despite the fact that people's emotional attachments contribute to the constant production and transformation of the places they inhabit, the connection people feel to a place can affect the nature of that place. "But people also identify against places, establishing their own sense of place by contrasting themselves with different places and the people in them" (Easthope, 'A Place Called Home' 130). This is a key concept in Edward Said's seminal book *Orientalism* (1979), which investigates the development of identities based on opposition to other places and cultures.

Some studies have investigated the "dark side of topophilia [and sense of place]" in relation to nation-state citizenship (Duncan and Duncan qtd. in Easthope, 'A Place Called Home' 130). Furthermore, Massey and Jess note that the metaphors of "home" and "homeland" have frequently resulted in damaging activity and violence. These results highlight the significance of investigating not just the positive aspects of the relationship between place and identity, but also the possible negative implications of contrasting and opposing places and cultures (Easthope, 'A Place Called Home' 130).

Pile and Thrift draw attention to the fact that spatial metaphors are frequently used in modern academic arguments on identity (Easthope, 'A Place Called Home' 131). They contend that more mobile "route" metaphors are gradually displacing the fixed "root" metaphors' ethnic absolutism. These metaphors, which also incorporate ideas like mobility and diaspora, question the fixed identities of "cultural insiderism". A dual nature is revealed by this change in our perception of place and identity. On the one hand, the deconstruction of geographic boundaries has fueled the emergence of exclusive nationalism and localism. On the other hand, it has also made room for a more diversified and interconnected understanding of cultures and political identities. It can be pleasant to share one's sense of place with people from various backgrounds since it can provide one with a sense of comfort and belonging. But, if it feels threatened, it may also be guarded aggressively, even violently.

One's sense of place and identity are strongly connected. Humans have shown incredible loyalty to their homes throughout history and throughout cultures, even going so far as to risk their lives for them. This emphasizes the complex relationship between place and identity, which has both beneficial as well as adverse aspects. Consequently, as will be examined in the following parts of this thesis, refugees whose connection to their homeland is shattered, fragmented, or entirely erased may inadvertently unsettle the sense of belonging experienced by local inhabitants in their host country. These individuals may be perceived as unwelcome guests, giving rise to a sense of unease and tension between the two communities.

Laying the background of his description of home by discussing place and identity, Easthope continues his discussion by expanding on the perception of home. Home, according to Easthope, is a complex and multi-layered concept in academic literature, with various perspectives on its definition. Home has been considered as a socio-spatial entity, a psycho-spatial entity, and an emotional "warehouse," moving beyond the traditional spatial definition of home as a "house" or a group of houses. Home, according to Saunders and Williams (1988), is a socio-spatial entity formed by the union of the social unit(household) and the physical unit (the house). This viewpoint emphasizes the significance of the home as a "locale" for social interaction and the establishment of fundamental institutions(Easthope, 'A Place Called Home' 134). The psychological experiences of a person's home are the main emphasis of the psycho-spatial approach to the concept of home. For instance, Porteous (1976) contends that, akin to the territories of many animal species, a person's house provides them with a sense of identity, security, and stimulation. This notion aligns with the concept of ontological security, which Dupuis and Thorns describe as being achieved in the home when it meets four conditions, further emphasizing the importance of these elements:

- i) home is a site of constancy in the social and material environment (security) ii) home is a spatial context in which day to day routines of human existence are performed (security) iii) home is a site where people feel most in control of their lives (stimulation) because they feel free from the surveillance that is part of the contemporary world (security) iv) home is a secure base around which identities are constructed (security and identity). (Easthope, 'A Place Called Home' 134)

After discussing various theories on home, Easthope concludes that a person's home is more than just a place or physical building. Because homes are situated in both space and time, a place does not become a home only by virtue of its physical location or constructed environment. Homes are instead seen as "places" that have important social, psychological, and emotional connotations for both individuals and groups. Beyond the physical characteristics of the place itself, the essence of a home lies in the individual and societal connections, experiences, and feelings that people associate with it. "While homes may be located, it is not the location that is 'home'" writes Easthope ('A Place Called Home' 135). Instead, what makes homes truly unique is the sense of security and comfort they provide for their dwellers. Homes are very private and important places that shape our identities and sense of self, whether through the memories we make with our loved

ones or the feeling of safety and security. A home ultimately represents who we are and what we value in life and is much more than just a physical structure.

Ralph (2009) studies the concept of “home” in the context of Irish-born return migrants and explores how this group perceives and experiences home when they return to Ireland. Having lived in the United States and then coming back to Ireland, these returnees fall somewhere between insiders and outsiders. Ralph aims to examine the complex and multidimensional nature of home, taking into account its different aspects and the function it serves in the lives of these returning migrants. According to Ralph, the idea of “home” contains a variety of meanings and experiences that vary across time and space rather than being a simple, fixed term. Home can be a source of comfort and security, but it can also be a site of violence, fear, and ambiguity. Because of unbalanced power dynamics and the presence of the *unheimlich* (unfamiliar), it may be a gendered and exclusive space. “It can be rooted to a particular place or locality, but it can also be uprooted to extend beyond the fireside hearth (*Heim*), region, or locality, to an imagined nation (*Heimat*), through to a global, ecumenical community” (Ralph 184). Home is not a universally fixed spatial imaginary. Instead, it is a fluid, multidimensional concept that includes aspects of mobility, sedentarism, and the interplay between rootedness and displacement. The various experiences of return migrants, as shown in Ralph's study, serve as a reminder that our interpretation of home must remain open to the multitude of meanings and experiences it contains. By understanding the fluidity and complexity of that term, we can better realize the different and perhaps conflicting ways in which the concept of home influences the lives of return migrants and forms their feelings of identity and belonging.

The article “Home and Migration: Mobilities, Belongings and Identities” by David Ralph and Lynn A. Staeheli (2011) emphasizes the complexities of the concept of home in the context of migration, focusing on recent research that explores migrants' engagements with the notion of home. The writers claim that in order to effectively express the concept's complexity and ambivalence, the sense of home should be understood as both dynamic and fixed (Ralph and Staeheli 518). They draw attention to the gradual shift from perceiving the sense of home as a fixed, bounded place and towards an understanding of

its potential to extend and connect people and places across time and space (518). The key finding the writers present is that migrants frequently keep connections to several different places while constantly regulating their identities between the “old” and “new” worlds (Ralph and Staeheli 521). This challenges the perception that migration leads to the uprooting or deterritorializing of migrants' identities. Moreover the writers emphasize that articulation of a fragmented, partial, and fluid identity does not necessarily mean that migrants seek for a stable identification with home (522). This desire for a stable sense of self can occasionally result in the “myth of return” which can be seen as “a symptom of some migrants’ ongoing search for a stable sense of self in a world often characterised as in flux” (522). The writers also mention that migrants frequently feel ambivalence when they return to their imagined “home”, realising that both they and the place have changed. This illustrates the complex nature of home as an accordion-like concept that expands and contracts to encompass both distant and immediate locales and social relations (Ralph and Staeheli 525). The authors also stress the importance of focusing on the difficulties that immigrants encounter in their new countries, as these topics were neglected in early work on transnationalism (522).

The fact that losing one's place can have damaging effects on an individual's self-perception and sense of belonging demonstrates the intricate relationship between place attachment and identity (Boğaç 269). Involuntary relocations, such as those caused by natural disasters or political conflicts, can be very destructive, as individuals may yearn for their former homes even years after departing. According to Oliver-Smith, one's birthplace is regarded as a vital aspect of one's identity (Boğaç 273). Studies indicate that the loss of one's 'place' can potentially trigger a disruption in one's sense of identity. The study by Schward, Brenth, Philips, and Danley (1995) underlined this link between place and identity and took inspiration from a stirring question presented by Eric Fromm: “If I am what I have and what I have is lost, who then am I?” (Fromm 96). We can comprehend that the dislocation from one's 'place' can cause an extreme identity crisis. This idea is powerfully summed up in Fromm's existential question, which emphasizes the deep relation between what we possess- in this case, place- and who we see ourselves to be. So, losing a sense of “place” can make a person deeply question who they are. This shows

how closely our environments and identities are interconnected. Furthermore, previous experiences and memories linked with a certain place play an important role in the formation of place bonding (Boğaç 273). As the evidence shows, displaced people have numerous reasons for bonding with their previous homes. Once the bonding is completed, it becomes extremely difficult and painful to detach. Forced migration often involves losses that are crucial to self-definition, including the loss of possessions, relationships, and familiar surroundings (Boğaç 269). These negative experiences can have a detrimental impact on the process of attachment to a new place, as people often develop strong emotional ties to a specific place based on their past experiences, memories, and even family history.

Brown and Perkins state that place attachments grow slowly but can be destroyed really fast, resulting in a long-term struggle to deal with the loss and rebuild ties with people and places (Boğaç 269). As will be explored in the following chapters, the displaced people in *The Island of Missing Trees* and *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* lose everything in just one day, causing them to retreat by miles on their way to belonging. However, as time passes, they take only small steps forward in developing a healthy attachment and bond with their new environment. Boğaç's study investigates the challenges raised by the forced migration of Turkish Cypriot refugees from the island's southern to northern regions. In that sense, it provides valuable data for this thesis as *The Island of Missing Trees*, one of the novels that will be examined, shares the same context.

The case of Aşağı Maraş residents who were evicted from their homes in Paphos exemplifies the importance of place connection and the concept of home in creating one's identity (Boğaç 276). When these people visited their former homes and discovered that they no longer had a place to return to, they felt a terrible feeling of loss and longing for what was once their home. This realization had a huge impact on their lives, emphasizing the significance of place attachment in establishing one's identity and a sense of belonging. As a result, disrupting one's sense of place, particularly by forced migration, can threaten self-identity and be a terrifying experience for people with strong place attachments (Boğaç 269). The importance of past experiences in developing people's attachment to a

particular place is emphasized in Boğaç's study. The emotional connection formed during the attachment process, which is similar to “falling in love” with a place, cannot be readily replaced or reproduced in a different context (Boğaç 276). This is obvious among the elder exiles, who frequently longed for their birthplaces and idolized their original homes (Boğaç 276). Even though these refugees had weak attachments to their current environment, they didn't want to move. This is likely because they had negative experiences in the past that made it hard for them to leave their homes again. These people often thought of their original environment as a “dream environment” (Boğaç 276) when they recalled it. This emotional attachment seemed to last through the generations, making it very difficult for both older and younger people to plan for the future or set clear goals for their current homes and neighborhoods.

The findings of Boğaç highlight the complicated relationship between place identification, which entails a psychological investment in a place that develops over time, and social relationships within a neighborhood that can help foster a feeling of belonging. The study has implications for a larger understanding of forced migrations in other countries as well. The results reaffirm the notion that providing adequate housing alone may not be enough to compensate for the feelings of loss and alienation experienced by refugees because even after decades of living in different places, people may still consider their original homes as the “ideal home” and find it difficult to completely accept their new houses as their own (Boğaç 277).

Boccagni and Miranda Nieto (2022) discuss the concept of home from a different perspective. Comparing the concepts of home and non-home and emphasizing the abundance of literature on home, the writers delve into the idea of *non-home*. They examine the gap between the normative value of home and the actual, ordinary, everyday practices of homemaking in circumstances that deviate from such an ideal. They assert that not attaching a sense of home to a place and set of connections stems not only from what is lacking or absent there but also reflects people's deliberate decision not to make themselves at home in a certain domestic environment. This could mean transferring a sense of belonging elsewhere or simply giving up on it. People may experience a sensation

of non-home if they do not believe their existing living and habitation surroundings are homelike. As Van der Horst pointed out, this is due to violations of humans' desire, aspiration, and right to home, as well as a handicap for being a whole human being (qtd. in Boccagni and Miranda Nieto 15). Home is a social creation that evolves through time, and building a sense of home as an ongoing battle may result in the negation of home itself. It's possible that claiming a non-home as your primary residence is a more common occurrence than one may anticipate. This gives the critical social study of home a new possible direction, which involves separating a home's practical and positive roles. This is not to dismiss the importance of home or the right to it, but to remind us of the possibility of distancing ourselves from them voluntarily "to elude, at least for the time being, the 'tyrannical' side that, as Heller put it, is inherent in 'all homes'" (qtd. in Boccagni and Miranda Nieto 15).

In "A New Lens on the Migration-home Nexus," Boccagni explores the home's multidimensional and intangible nature, emphasizing its importance in understanding migrants' daily lives, their ability to adapt to their environments, and their ability to build a feeling of domesticity. The author believes home includes security, personal safety, and identity formation. Understanding the emotional, cognitive, and relational aspects of home is crucial to building a sense of home in daily life. Furthermore, the chapter highlights the pivotal role emotions play in the gendered everyday experience of home and the commodification of the desire for it. The socio-cultural factors that shape home and the gap between expectations and reality must be acknowledged. Home and migration, according to Boccagni, are closely linked since they impact and change one another (Boccagni 16). Migration changes the concept of home, detaching it from the sensory realm of everyday experience. Migrants usually feel as though they are far away from home, which reveals the feelings, customs, and living arrangements associated with it. As a result, in order to better understand how migrants negotiate a feeling of home and adjust to their environments, it is helpful to look at the migration experience through the lens of home. This theoretical viewpoint contributes to a deeper understanding of the intricate connection between migration, home, and the act of homing.

The term "homing" is used in Boccagni's book to analyze the various spatialized social practices that people, particularly migrants, use. According to Boccagni, homing refers to the process through which migrants, as individuals who have experienced extended detachment from their earlier homes, attempt to replicate or reconstruct meaningful home-like settings, feelings, and relationships in their new environments. Homing involves spatialized social practices that help migrants adjust to new surroundings and establish a sense of belonging despite their separation from their original homes. From a phenomenological point of view, being at home is marked by a sense of perceived insideness and continuity, which is the most important thing to consider about homing. Boccagni states that further exploration of the ways in which homing is imagined, negotiated, and enacted over space is necessary.

In Boccagni's viewpoint, homing is a dynamic and incomplete process that plays a crucial role in migrants' lives as they experience the challenges of living in a new environment. Homing is more than just finding a place to live; it encompasses the sophisticated relationship between emotional, cognitive, and relational aspects that contribute to a sense of home and belonging. It involves migrants' efforts to assimilate into new cultural and social contexts while retaining a connection to their roots and traditions. This may entail participating in social practices that promote familiarity and comfort, such as cooking traditional meals, engaging in cultural rituals, or forming relationships with people from their home country or those with similar experiences. Moreover, homing involves the negotiation and building of new identities that combine both the experiences of the original home and the new environment. Migrants may find it difficult to find a balance between keeping their cultural heritage and adapting to and assimilating into their new environment. The process of immigrants redefining their sense of identity and belonging may be both challenging and rewarding.

Emotional bonds are also important in homing. Migrants frequently feel a sense of loss or nostalgia for their previous homes, which may force them to recreate emotional attachments in their new environments. This can include making new friends, participating in community activities, or looking for places that evoke the same emotions

of safety, warmth, and belonging that people associate with their original homes. Homing is not a one-time event but rather an ongoing process that evolves as migrants adjust to their new conditions and surroundings. It is a complicated struggle in which migrants must overcome the problems of displacement, assimilation, and identity construction. Understanding homing as a process allows us to better grasp the complicated relations between migration, home, and the diverse ways in which people try to develop a sense of stability and belonging in their lives.

1.3. Nostalgia and Trauma

Although various definitions of trauma are available, Cathy Caruth (1991) defines trauma as follows: “Trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden, or catastrophic events, in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, and uncontrolled repetitive occurrence of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena” (181). This phenomenon is demonstrated through the accounts of soldiers who, when confronted with imminent casualties, initially enter an apathetic state, only to subsequently relive the distress through horrific dreams. The epistemological concerns that are brought up by poststructuralist critique are investigated by Caruth. In particular, the indirect nature of reference and the consequences it has for gaining access to histories and making decisions that are either political or ethical are discussed. She compares these worries to the experience of trauma, saying that trauma provides a method to recognize a past that is not directly referential or sensory. She does this by contrasting these issues with the experience of trauma. The epistemological concerns that are brought up by poststructuralist critique are investigated by Caruth. In particular, the indirect nature of reference and the consequences it has for gaining access to histories and making decisions that are either political or ethical are discussed. She compares these worries to the experience of trauma, saying that trauma provides a method to recognize a past that is not directly referential or sensory. The work of Sigmund Freud titled "Moses and Monotheism" is the subject of a significant portion of the discussion. In this work, Freud's fictionalization of Jewish history and his encounter with trauma link up with historical reality. Caruth examines the ways in which Freud's book, by addressing traumatic events, poses a challenge to the conventional view of history as well as our ethical and political

relationship to it. She investigates Freud's description of Jewish history as a history of return, which is characterized by the trauma of the death of Moses and the ramifications that it had on the Jewish people. In the end, Caruth says that seeing history as a history of trauma means that it is referential in the sense that it is not fully understood as it happens. Understanding the political shape of Jewish culture and its repeated struggles with antisemitism depends on understanding how history refers to itself in nuances. It is highlighted in the paper that history and trauma are never just one person's experience, and that we are all connected to each other's traumas.

Vamik Volkan (2017) gives a thorough examination of the mourning process after a traumatic event, with an emphasis on the realities faced by refugees and immigrants. Mourning, according to Volkan, is a necessary reaction to great losses, such as the passing of a loved one or the abandonment of a home or familiar place of residence. Realizing that everyone goes through mourning in their own unique way, Volkan divides the process into several phases. At the very beginning, there is often shock and denial; next, there is acute sorrow; a separation reaction follows; and lastly, the mourner enters a chronic condition when they accept the truth of their loss and can go on with their lives. An important point raised in the book is the difference between the grieving process and the mourning effort. Various feelings and actions make up the mourning reaction, which includes things like rage, denial, bargaining, physical symptoms like eating disorders, and shock. This reaction can be very strong, and the length of time it lasts varies from person to person. On the other hand, mourning is an exhausting task that requires those who have died to reflect on, revisit, and eventually change their emotional attachment to the lost object. This procedure has the potential to produce illuminating or disorienting associations with the lost object.

Volkan argues that death is the most tangible loss and that it leaves a mark on all aspects of the human psyche:

By reviewing observations of how people respond to the death of a significant person, we can prepare ourselves to examine immigrants' or refugees' reactions to losses, not only losses of individuals they leave behind or individuals who die while escaping with them, but also losses of land, familiar things, security, honor, and prestige. (Volkan, *Immigrants and Refugees* 13–14)

Without understanding reactions to death, it is not possible to understand migrants' reactions to other lost objects. Underscoring the importance of death, Volkan discusses the idea of perennial mourning, a state in which people don't let go of their grief for as long as it takes. The incapacity to actually end the mourning process is what distinguishes this condition. In their self-representations, or "introjects," long-term mourners frequently carry unassimilated images or representations of the thing they lost. As a result of these introspections, "linking objects" or "phenomena" are born, which mourners may use as physical representations of their continuing bond with the dead. A variety of rituals and behaviors can emerge from perennial mourning, all of which point to the maintainer's fixation with the one who passed away. Specific nightmares, rituals, and the repeated mention of death or misplaced items on a regular basis are some ways in which these behaviors might show themselves. Understanding and addressing perennial mourning and connecting things are topics that Volkan further explores, as they have therapeutic consequences. Recognizing these elements in patients can assist in re-inserting and beginning the mourning process, he says. This might help people move beyond their continuous state of grief.

An interesting account of the complicated psychological processes involved in immigration and exile is presented by Ruth M. Lijtmaer (2022). Because people suffer severe and long-lasting losses as a result of these events, the author classifies them as social traumas. At the heart of the discussion is the idea of mourning, which is seen as an essential step for immigrants to establish a connection to their lives. Mourning encompasses the process of expressing sorrow and nostalgia over the absence of loved ones, companions, familiar surroundings, and cultural heritage. Its complexity is heightened by the first wave of "culture shock" and the subsequent alteration of internal frameworks and object relationships within the new cultural setting. In the process of migration, nostalgia plays a big role. Comprising intricate elements, it functions as a defensive mechanism against aggression that arises from present frustrations. It encompasses positive emotions, such as pleasure and gratitude, alongside sorrow induced by the loss of familiarity, security, and historical continuity. When forced migration or exile occurs, the progression of nostalgia may be impeded, which may result in

melancholy and impede the process of mourning. Additionally, the article delves into the notion of linking phenomena and objects, which individuals employ as coping mechanisms when confronted with the traumatic conditions of migration. These figures or occurrences facilitate the process of establishing a connection with the past while adapting to a fresh setting. The interrelation among trauma, mourning, and nostalgia is underscored, with particular attention given to the function of linking objects in the process of regulating these emotions. An additional noteworthy element of the article is the concept of pathological mourning and the emergence of “perennial mourners”. These are individuals who are perpetually preoccupied with the memory of the deceased or their homeland and are unable to reach a resolution in their mourning process. In conclusion, the article advocates for an increased psychoanalytic emphasis on the subjects of immigration and exile, acknowledging the importance of examining the resilience-building and traumatic dimensions of these experiences.

CHAPTER 2: THE ISLAND OF MISSING TREES

2.1. The migrant experience in *The Island of Missing Trees*

Migration, which is usually embarked upon in search of better opportunities, safety, or a fresh start, is a very personal experience. Nonetheless, its consequences extend beyond generations, with each experiencing migration's impact in their own unique way. This generational difference in the migrant experience is vividly depicted in Shafak's *The Island of Missing Trees* through the lives of Kostas, Defne, and their daughter, Ada. While the older generation, Kostas and Defne, struggle with the immediate challenges and memories of their homeland, Cyprus; Ada, born and raised in London, deals with the complications of a dual and fluid identity, created by both her parents' Greek and Turkish origins and her current environment. The first generation, those who take the courageous step to migrate, frequently do so with great sadness, leaving behind familiar landscapes, loved ones, and a piece of themselves. Their lives are marked by a constant balancing act: getting used to and trying to assimilate into a new society while preserving and clinging to their roots. On the other hand, the second generation, like Ada, grows up at the crossroads of cultures. While they may not have witnessed migration firsthand, its implications shape their upbringing, identity, psychological well-being, and worldview.

This section of the thesis explores the differences and similarities between the experiences of first- and second-generation migrants as depicted in Shafak's novel. By closely studying the characters' stories, the thesis intends to uncover the complex nature of the migrant experience and its lasting impact across generations. To start with the first generation, Kostas and Defne, two lovers from different ethnic and religious backgrounds bear the scars of the most traumatic experiences. Falling in love with each other at the beginning of their youth, they have to resist the discriminatory attitude of society due to the

entrenched ethnic divisions and historical animosities that characterize the Cypriot civil war period. As if that is not enough, the civil war escalating in Cyprus would cause these two lovers to part ways, and it would be a long time before they could meet again. Kostas's mother, Panagiota, sends him to live with his uncle in London after the political tension that has already been going on for a long time begins to escalate and triggers a series of actions that starts with the coup d'état against the Makarios government in 1974 and culminates in the military intervention of the Turkish government, one of the guarantors of the island. Kostas has to cope with the psychological weight of leaving behind his home, his family, his memories, and most importantly, his Turkish lover, Defne. Defne, on the other hand, is stuck in the middle of this turbulent environment. Staying on the island, she experiences violence, separation, and pain because of the civil war, coup d'état, and military intervention. Specifically, this forced migration marks the turning point in the novel. For this reason, Shafak starts her novel with the following dedication: "To immigrants and exiles everywhere, the uprooted, the re-rooted, the rootless, And to the trees we left behind, rooted in our memories" (Shafak vii).

The narratives of refugees and exiles throughout human history have invariably evoked feelings of distress. These accounts have highlighted the significance of belonging, the notion of home, the feeling of security, and the process of establishing one's identity in human existence. Shafak's act of dedicating the book to these individuals reflects not only the focus on the migration journey but also on the concepts that become significant during and after the migration process. Shafak uses the term "uprooted" to describe the experience of separation from nature, highlighting the severity and anguish associated with such a process. Just as a plant undergoes trauma when it is detached from its roots, a person experiences similar distress when they are separated from the land in which they were born and grew up. Essential concepts such as identity, home, and memory may become vague and, at times, even vanish. Taking a person away from their home and community can result in psychological wounds that may never heal. This is also true for voluntary migration because, in fact, "all migration is involuntary, forced, for example, by poverty, debt, or food insecurity in the homeland" (Brettell and Hollifield 198).

Upon emigrating, a person often endures various challenges in the host country for an extended period of time after the initial excitement of a new beginning fades away. The term “re-rooted” in Shafak's statement also pertains to such individuals. Mastering the language and adapting to the culture of the host country is a challenging and prolonged struggle that requires patience. Humans require a certain amount of time to adapt to a new environment, much like transplanted trees need time to adjust their roots to the soil in their new environment. Naturally, every individual has a unique way of adjusting to this process. However, there are those who cannot fully adapt, and as Shafak refers to them, they become a part of the rootless group. Much like a plant that cannot draw nutrients from the soil, the rootless are deprived of the social and cultural connections they need to thrive. They carry the heavy psychological burden of not being able to fully adapt. In this respect, Defne can be placed in the same category, as the novel makes clear. Despite starting a new life in London with her husband Kostas and daughter Ada, Defne's deep connection to the memories of Cyprus prevents her from finding fulfillment and happiness. In one of the conversations with Kostas, she states that “people from troubled islands can never be normal” (Shafak 66). Even if they manage to make remarkable progress, they will never be able to feel completely secure. “The ground that feels rock hard to others is choppy waters for our kind” (Shafak 66). The group she refers to as “our kind” here are, of course, those who have been forcibly displaced. In her novel, Shafak often refers to migrants as a kind, highlighting the distinctive and extraordinary experiences they go through.

In a conversation that takes place years later at Aphrodite Hotel when Kostas is alone with his lover, he expresses how difficult the migrant experience is. Defne accuses Kostas of abandoning her and resents him for this. Kostas defends himself as follows.

‘Look,’ she said. ‘I don’t want to talk about this. You must understand, whenever something terrible happens to a country – or an island – a chasm opens between those who go away and those who stay. I’m not saying it’s easy for the people who left, I’m sure they have their own hardships, but they have no idea what it was like for the ones who stayed.’ ‘The ones who stayed dealt with the wounds and then the scars, and that must be extremely painful,’ said Kostas. ‘But for us ... runaways, you might call us ... we never have a chance to heal, the wounds always remain open.’ (Shafak 224)

The conversation between the two lovers is a testament to the complexity of migration and how it impacts both the people who leave and those who stay. This process can cause emotional and psychological exhaustion for the individuals involved. It can lead to detachment from loved ones, homes, and memories, which can form an unbridgeable “chasm” between them, as Elif Shafak writes. The gap formed by the detachment can be so deep that it cannot be sealed even after many years. Kostas acknowledges that it can be difficult to stay, but at the same time, he challenges the reductionist and superficial view that those who leave are saved, comforted, and enjoy an untroubled life. Kostas is convinced that it is impossible to break away from the past. Consequently, there can be no healing of the open wounds. “Runaways”, as he calls them, will live in a limbo where they will remain forever. They will be consumed by guilt for having decided to leave. Kostas' words emphasize the importance of the differences in perspective between the one who leaves and the one who stays. This shows that the concept of migration needs to be examined with an interdisciplinary approach, as Haas et al. point out. Otherwise, it is complex enough to cause this phenomenon to be poorly understood.

Although Shafak does not provide many details about Kostas' initial years as an immigrant, it is evident that he faced significant challenges during that time. The novel suggests that food and climate are among the most challenging, if not the most challenging, factors faced by immigrants. “It would take Kostas a while to get used to the food in [London]” (Shafak 185). Regarding climate, it is a factor that should not be underestimated since it greatly affects the psychology, sense of belonging, and nostalgia experienced by immigrants. Due to being accustomed to the sunny climate of Cyprus, Kostas is naturally not suited to London's hazy and rainy weather. “He was not prepared for this new sky overhead, which was dimly lit most of the time, only occasionally flickering into life like a buzzing bulb with low voltage” (Shafak 188). As a result, his sense of belonging to the new environment cannot be solidified, and he yearns even more for his homeland. This issue has already been addressed by several academics. For example, Gladkikh et al. state that “refugees resettled in Canada shared their distress over the harsh Canadian climate, prolonged winter, and lack of sunlight” (Gladkikh et al. 10). One immigrant explains his experience of the climate as follows: “The first impression

that shocked me, was the snow, and the temperature would be low, my kids they were crying, my younger ones were crying most of the time” (El-Bialy and Mulay qtd. in Gladkikh et al. 10). As some researchers have shown, factors often deemed less significant, such as climate and food, can become serious problems for migrants and put a heavy strain on their mental state. Nature can provide a very positive and stimulating atmosphere for the adaptation and mental health of migrants. Nevertheless, some nature-related factors can adversely affect migrants. This issue may also be linked to traumatic experiences. The vegetation, for example, in the location where traumatic events occurred, or even a specific native tree or plant, could trigger traumatic memories in the minds of migrants. In the novel, Kostas faces similar issues as he struggles to adapt to a new culture, new people, and a new climate, all the while carrying the psychological burden of leaving his loved ones behind in Cyprus.

Living in a different country can create a need for integration. As foreigners, those who migrate may not want to draw too much attention to themselves, as they are already in the spotlight. In her novel, Shafak explores this issue further.

First-generation immigrants are a species all their own. They wear a lot of beige, grey or brown. Colours that do not stand out. Colours that whisper, never shout. There is a tendency to formality in their mannerisms, a wish to be treated with dignity. They move with a slight ungainliness, not quite at ease in their surroundings. Both eternally grateful for the chances life has given them and scarred by what it has snatched away, always out of place, separated from others by some unspoken experience, like survivors of a car accident. (Shafak 23–24)

The narrative of the fig tree portrays the experiences of first-generation immigrants in a meaningful way. The fig tree here represents migrants as a different “species”, implying that they are not like the others in that their identity has been disrupted and their sense of belonging has been undermined. They find themselves in a state of being neither here nor there, but somewhere in-between. The very fact that they wear beige, grey, and brown is symbolic. Migrants already face discrimination and prejudice, and by wearing colorless clothes in this way, they want to disappear into the crowd. Migrants desire to assimilate with the locals, yet this is often hindered by a lack of skills on the part of the migrant and a lack of unconditional acceptance on the part of the locals. This is why migrants often remain passive and prefer to keep a low profile, communicating with a “whisper” instead

of a “shout”. This is because migrants are no longer in their home country and do not feel the security of their homeland, resulting in the tendency to proceed with caution.

At the same time, migrants want to be treated with respect, as they know they have accomplished something significant. A migrant is a survivor. They have gone through many hardships, they have suffered many wounds, and they are struggling against all the difficulties of being away from home in an environment that is new for them. As the fig tree states, they are the ones who survive the “car accident”. This metaphor is particularly striking because forced migration can be as traumatic as experiencing a car accident. Similar to the sudden and radical changes brought about by such an accident, forced migration deeply impacts individuals, altering their lives in profound and often unexpected ways. It can uproot them and leave them as devastated individuals with no roots and no strength. These individuals are caught in the middle in every sense of the word. While they have lost everything on the one hand, they are happy with what they have in their new life on the other. To sum up, Shafak vividly portrays the experience of the migrants through the fig tree. She highlights the resilience and vulnerabilities of migrants, encouraging empathy towards the individuals who have been subjected to stereotyping. She draws attention to their resilience and their weaknesses and opens the way to empathize with the human being who has been stereotyped as a migrant.

The author's choice of London as a setting, in addition to Cyprus, is both strategic and symbolic. As a cosmopolitan city, London is home to many immigrants from all over the world, making it a quintessential *melting pot*. As of June 2021, there were 3,346,000 people living in London alone who were born in other countries and migrated here, which corresponds to 37% of London's population (‘Migrants in the UK’). Needless to say, this is a significantly big proportion. London, a metropolis accustomed to coexisting with outsiders and acquainted with diverse religious and cultural practices, is without a doubt the ideal setting for a novel concerning migration. The city's cosmopolitan nature likely influenced the pace of Kostas's adaptation in the narrative. Kostas, portrayed as a quick adaptor in the novel, might not have waited as long as the fig tree, who waits seven years to bear fruit. Additionally, London holds personal significance for the author, who has

spent considerable time living there. The complex and multicultural nature of London undoubtedly influenced Shafak, an immigrant of Turkish descent, while writing the novel. The author most likely experienced what Kostas went through when he first arrived in London, which is why she is able to empathize with him and convey the migrant experience with authenticity and sincerity. As “writing is the only home available for the migrant writer” (Frank 34), writing a novel about the immigrant experience might have become a refuge for her.

The novel deals with the theme of migration not only through human characters but also through the elements of nature, such as the fig tree. The fig tree, integral to the novel's narrative, has been historically associated with various significant events and figures. For instance, a she-wolf discovered the twin boys Romulus and Remus, the founders of Rome, when their basket became entangled in the roots of a *Ficus ruminalis*. In religious settings, fig trees hold a special place, too. In Judaism, sitting beneath a fig tree is connected with intense Torah study. The Prophet Mohammed expressed a wish to see the fig tree in heaven, and the Qur'an even has a sura named after it. While meditating beneath a *Ficus religiosa*, Buddha acquired enlightenment (Shafak 64). These examples demonstrate the fig tree's profound cultural and religious importance.

By using the art of personification, Shafak extensively includes the fig tree in the novel as a narrator who observes, thinks, analyses, and remembers. Interestingly, the fig tree itself is actually an immigrant. The fig tree, which is a tree that grew by piercing the ceiling of the tavern named "The Happy Fig" before the outbreak of the civil war, is also affected by the events. The murder of Yusuf and Yiorgos by nationalist and homophobic aggressors, who then dispose of their bodies in a well, marks a dark turning point in the narrative. Following this tragedy, the tavern becomes idle, and the fig tree remains neglected for a long time. On a second visit to the tavern years later with Defne, Kostas finds the fig tree sickly and cuts off a piece of its branch, smuggles it in his suitcase to London, and replants it in the garden of his house. “The pattern of [her] branches would not be exactly the same, but [they] were similar in every other detail, who [she] was in Cyprus and who [she] would become in England. The only difference was that [the tree] was no longer a happy tree”

(Shafak 55). Although “the English climate was not warm enough”(Shafak 55) for the tree, she survives and takes root. Similar to other immigrants, the fig tree demonstrates resilience in the face of the inhospitable nature of its new environment and holds on to life through its roots. When immigrants leave their homelands, they can never be the same again. The tree recounts its experience of migration as follows:

I liked my new home in London. I worked hard to fit in, to belong...It would take me seven years to be able to yield fruit again. Because that is what migrations and relocations do to us: when you leave your home for unknown shores, you don't simply carry on as before; a part of you dies inside so that another part can start all over again. (Shafak 55–56)

In the excerpt quoted above, the fig tree explains the essence of the phenomenon of migration in an effective way. The fig tree also could not escape from the effects of migration on belonging and identity. Shafak, through the metaphor of a fig tree, illustrates how immigrants struggle to belong to the new society and assimilate into it. The time period that is seven years for the tree would probably be longer for the people, and a complete adaptation would never be actualized because “a part of you [would] die inside” (56). This metaphor encapsulates the fundamental nature of the sacrifices and the feeling of loss inherent in the migrant experience. Migrants frequently have a strong desire to start over, which necessitates abandoning certain aspects of their identity in their native country, like a symbolic act of burial.

The fig tree is not the only non-human migrant in the novel. Apart from human migrants like Kostas and Defne, Shafak includes many other migrant creatures. The most striking of these characters is Chico, a yellow-headed Amazon parrot. Chico's story of migration contains themes of belonging, identity, and displacement, just as human stories do. Residing in The Happy Fig, a restaurant depicted as a haven of beauty and happiness, Chico is nonetheless a bird that belongs neither to the restaurant nor to Cyprus. “Chico's presence [is] an anomaly” (Shafak 278). This is because his homeland is actually Mexico. The story of Chico's journey to Cyprus is an interesting one. Originally from Mexico, Chico is uprooted from his natural habitat and finds himself in Hollywood, in the luxurious home of a famous movie star known for a passion for exotic birds. After living there for a while with nine other parrots, he is displaced again because the movie star admires the

beauty of Cyprus and decides to spend more time there. Except there is one problem. The Hollywood celebrity misses his parrots very much. So, she decides to bring them back to Varosha, where she is residing. This is Chico's account of his journey:

Ten birds in total. Placed in smelly, stuffy containers, loaded from one plane to the next, they were dispatched from LA all the way to Cyprus. And that is how Chico and his clan ended up on our island. The trip wasn't easy for the birds. Being photosensitive, they found the travel across oceans and continents gruelling. They stopped drinking water and eating properly, homesick in their ornamental brass cages. One died. But the remaining birds, when they finally reached their destination, swiftly adapted to their new home in Varosha, in the southern quarter of Famagusta. (Shafak 279)

The parallels between Chico's journey to Cyprus and today's crossings from Syria to Greece or from Africa to Italy are both surprising and heartbreaking. The sea crossing conditions of refugees are no different from those of parrots packed in cages and brought to Cyprus. Even today, refugees are being forced to make their way to new countries in complete uncertainty, in terrible conditions, and facing a myriad of difficulties. The crossings are extremely dangerous due to the lack of safety in makeshift boats. Numerous lives are lost during these journeys. The journey of the parrots to Cyprus does not go well either. One of them, a companion to Chico, tragically loses his life. However, the paragraph at the end says that once the parrots arrive in their new home, they immediately begin the process of adaptation, which highlights the resilience of migrants and their ability to survive against all kinds of odds.

Another migratory species mentioned several times in the novel is the butterfly. There are 46 references to butterflies in the novel. Defne's affection for butterflies is evident (Shafak 158), and towards the end of the novel, it is revealed that she has a butterfly tattooed on her arm (218). Defne's daughter Ada shares the same interest in butterflies. Bored in her History class, she draws pictures of butterflies in her notebook (11). The lid of the music box that Kostas gave to Defne in the early years of their love also has butterflies on it (77). As is understood from all of these references, the butterfly metaphor in the book serves as a significant representation of the migratory experience and the associated challenges, including issues of fluid identity, displacement, rootlessness, resilience, and the quest for a sense of belonging. Butterflies have always been known to be delicate creatures, but the

fig tree in the book finds this view puzzling because some species of butterflies migrate by undertaking incredibly long and challenging journeys. Therefore, labeling butterflies as delicate creatures would be an incorrect characterization. They are indeed very resilient. Because migration by itself involves many difficulties. In this light, the novel suggests that the one who migrates embodies a definite strength.

As she gave me an account of her travels, I listened to her with respect, knowing what resilient migrants they are, seen almost everywhere across the globe. They can fly for an impressive 2,500 miles. I have never understood why humans regard butterflies as fragile. Optimists they may be, but fragile, never! (Shafak 259)

Shafak prefers to convey a lot of critical information in the book through non-human characters such as animals, plants, and insects. A notable example is the story of the discovery of the bodies of Yusuf and Yiorgos, which have been missing for years. Defne and Kostas have intercourse before the Civil War when they are only 18-19 years old. Defne becomes pregnant from this intercourse, but shortly after, the civil war breaks out, and Kostas is forced to leave the island. Defne does not reveal her pregnancy to him, and Kostas only discovers the existence of the child and his fate when he returns to the island years later and meets Defne. Defne conceals her pregnancy from everyone because the child is conceived by a Greek Cypriot. Amidst the chaotic atmosphere of the civil war, she convinces herself that giving birth to a child fathered by two individuals from opposing ethnic groups is impossible, and she makes an agreement with a doctor to abort the child. Given the circumstances of the civil war, the doctor picks The Happy Fig restaurant, owned by Yusuf and Yiorgos, for the abortion. However, things go terribly wrong there as well. During the night of the abortion, a group of radicals raid the restaurant. As Yusuf and Yiorgos go out to protect Defne, they are killed and thrown into a well. The book's non-linear narrative reveals that the bodies of Yusuf and Yiorgos are discovered thanks to a colony of ants in the well. As their nest grows, the colony expands into the well, leading to its walls collapsing and unearthing the couple's bones.

If we now turn to the butterflies' role in the novel, according to the story of the fig tree, one day, there was an invasion of butterflies in Cyprus. The fig tree learns about one of the places the butterflies go while chatting with one of them. The butterfly lands on a gravestone. The inscription on the stone is as follows: "OUR BELOVED BABY IN

MEMORY OF YUSUF YIORGOS ROBINSON JANUARY 1975 NICOSIA – JULY 1976 NICOSIA” (Shafak 261). From the butterfly's narration, we learn that Defne decided to have the baby and name it after the couple who were killed to protect Defne, yet the baby later died. The reason for the baby's death is revealed later in the book. Due to the conditions of the civil war, Defne is unable to take care of the baby, so she gives the baby to an English family. Unfortunately, that same year, the baby Yusuf Yiorgos is affected by an epidemic that mysteriously kills babies in Cyprus, and her baby passes away. He is buried with the other babies in a cemetery belonging to the British Army. Thus, while narrating one of the most important points of the novel, Shafak chooses a fig tree once again as the narrator and a butterfly as the source of information.

Another point revealed in the book is through a bee. The identity of the bodies that were found in the well is revealed to the reader through the testimony of a bee that enters the lab belonging to CMP (Committee on Missing Persons). The scientist at the lab calls Defne and tells her that the DNA analysis of the bones in the well matches those of Yusuf and Yiorgos. Consequently, the missing elements of the novel are gradually completed, and the story is brought into a coherent framework.

The juxtaposition between immigrants and natives and the downsides of being an immigrant, such as otherness, are also portrayed in the novel through some tree species. The thesis has already mentioned that the fig tree is an immigrant and was smuggled to London by Kostas. It has also been mentioned how long and arduous the process is for the fig tree to adapt to the climate, take root again, and bear fruit. Here is how the fig tree relates to other trees:

The hawthorn, the English oak, the whitebeam, the blackthorn – all properly native to Britain. I wonder if the reason why I am more inclined to melancholia than any of them is because I am an immigrant plant and, like all immigrants, I carry with me the shadow of another land. (Shafak 189)

As can be seen from the text above, the indigenous species are more resistant to hardship. Since they are “properly” native to the UK, these plants are adapted to the local climate and do not require any extra care during winter months. A tree from another country, on the other hand, is subject to a different set of challenges as the immigrant is more fragile.

It has already struggled with countless difficulties, and this struggle is still going on, changing shape and perhaps becoming more difficult. The migrant must deal with problems of belonging and identity and with the traumas of the past. As a result, any additional stress on the migrant may be the death blow, and the migrant may experience a psychological breakdown and fall into melancholy.

The fig tree also uses the term shadow of another land. The term “shadow” here deserves particular attention. Despite the intangibility of the shadow, it is always something that makes one feel its presence. Immigrants carry their homeland like a shadow, always present but intangible. They cannot reach it; however, they can feel it. Thus, despite the apparent closeness, it remains distant due to its unattainability. In that vein, the migrant's homeland, which exists only in their imagination, is unreachable. In his mind, the immigrant creates and idealizes a new homeland. This is due to various reasons, such as the destruction, transformation, or loss of appeal of their actual hometown, which no longer fits their idealized hometown. Salman Rushdie explains how an immigrant's homeland becomes an imaginary homeland over time:

It may be that writers in my position, exiles or emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt. But if we do look back, we must also do so in the knowledge—which gives rise to profound uncertainties that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, , not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind. (Rushdie 10)

Although the shadow is a shadow of the past, it affects the migrant's present and future. This shadow is always with him and will influence his feelings and decisions. The shadow will remain with the migrant indefinitely. It will continuously pierce his identity and force him into a change. As a result, the migrant will not have a static identity but rather a fluid and ever-changing dual identity. The word “shadow” also relates to this duality. A person's shadow has a striking resemblance to that person, although it is not an exact replica. When an individual examines their shadow, they acknowledge their own presence. However, they are aware that the shadow is never a perfect image of themselves. Thus, it can be argued that the migrant harbors two different identities in one body. One aspect of the

migrant is characterized by a static nature that yearns for the past, while the second is fluid, wants to change, and is focused on the future. The migrant portrays an interesting coexistence of these two contradictory aspects within a single entity.

Shafak portrays the intricate underworld where trees and plants have their roots, implying that the immigrant world is similarly multi-layered. By contrasting different worlds, the writer employs an underlying criticism of the standardizing and simplifying nature of human beings. As the narcissistic human nature cannot see the underworld, it is commonly ignored, belittled, and marginalized.

Life below the surface is neither simple nor monotonous. The subterranean, contrary to what most people think, is bustling with activity. As you tunnel deep down, you might be surprised to see the soil take on unexpected shades. Rusty red, soft peach, warm mustard, lime green, rich turquoise ... Humans teach their children to paint the earth in one colour alone. They imagine the sky in blue, the grass in green, the sun in yellow and the earth entirely in brown. If they only knew they have rainbows under their feet. (Shafak 80)

Comparably, migrant communities often reside together in the cities they migrate to. Consequently, communication between the two groups remains limited, and the local community is unable to appreciate the cultural diversity and the “colors” of these migrant communities. Within these communities, however, lies a vast wealth of traditions, customs, and interpersonal relationships that are unique to them. The absence of a relationship between two cultures prevents the formation of an empathic situation, which facilitates the formation of stereotypes and presuppositions. As Shafak points out, if a child is asked to paint a picture, they may color the soil brown, which is a result of cultural conditioning. Ultimately, the nuances of the "rainbow" beneath the soil, as described by Shafak, may be overlooked. It is often not recognized that migrant communities harbor cultural treasures that can actually be useful for the local population and for the cultural enrichment of the country. By uncovering these hidden treasures, divisive ideologies such as nationalism and tribalism will become less prevalent, and it will be more possible to embrace these people.

Shafak implies the resilience of migrants and their ability to cope with trauma by drawing further parallels to trees. The part of the novel describing the fire-fighting methods of trees

should not be overlooked, as these methods are also used by migrants to cope with the challenges.

In fire-prone regions trees develop myriad ways to protect themselves from the devastation. They surround themselves with thick, flaky bark or keep their dormant buds underground. You can find pine trees with hard, resistant cones ready to release their seeds at the first prickle of intense heat. Some other trees drop their lower branches altogether, so that flames can't easily climb up. We do all that and more to survive. But I was a fig tree living inside a cheerful tavern. I had no reason to take such precautions. My bark was thin, my branches plentiful and delicate, and I had nothing to shield me. (Shafak 169)

Just as some trees cover their trunks with thick bark to protect themselves from fire, migrants can sometimes build walls around themselves by withdrawing into themselves or adopting aggressive attitudes, becoming harsh, brutal, and socially isolated. These walls may provide protection from external factors, but obviously, people are different from trees. Some people construct psychological barriers in the belief that these walls will offer them comfort and protection. In a sense, these individuals are insulated from external harm, as they view the world and everyone in it with a lens of suspicion. This defensive stance makes them appear impenetrable, like a wall, to the outside world. However, this approach comes with its own challenges. While they may be shielded from external factors, they are left to confront an internal struggle, often battling with their own thoughts and emotions. This internal conflict can be one of the most daunting battles, as it is a struggle within the self. Shafak writes that some trees give up their branches close to the ground. Displaced people also give up many things by leaving their birthplaces. They “give up their branches” just like trees. That is why migrants always feel incomplete. Their search for change is constant, resulting in a never-ending cycle of adaptation. As a result, a migrant's identity is fluid and must constantly change and adapt.

Considering these various factors, migrants often find themselves perceived as invaders by the local populace in their new environments. From the perspective of some locals, immigrants are seen as a group that displaces native workers, exploits the amenities and beauty created by the host community without contributing to its development, and poses a significant threat to the long-established and successfully maintained social order. By utilizing the metaphor of trees, this perspective can be explored in more detail. In the

novel, it becomes clear that the introduction of acacia trees to Cyprus was a mistake and that the authorities were not thoughtful enough in this regard. Shafak approaches the matter as follows:

In the distance, by the undulating hills, he saw acacia trees. Sweet-scented, fast growers. An alien and invasive species from Australia. They had been planted widely across the island, with good intentions no doubt but little understanding of the local ecosystem and its complex groundwater, which they now were quietly changing and destroying. Kostas knew it wasn't only bureaucrats with barely any grasp of ecology who had caused the problem. (Shafak 249)

Shafak most concretely reflects the migrant experience by describing the acacia trees as “alien and invasive”. Immigrants are uprooted from their homeland and placed into unfamiliar environments where they may feel like “aliens” and are perceived as such by locals. The term “alien” here indicates the frustrating sense of isolation and otherness experienced by the migrant. It also portrays the hostile attitude of the local population towards migrants. However, it is important to note how migrants are also experts in resilience. Acacia trees, referred to as a “fast-growing” species, demonstrate the high level of adaptability of migrants. Despite encountering numerous challenges, they are able to adapt to their surroundings, take root, and survive. However, their ability to adapt does not affect their status as “aliens”. The wrong immigration policies of countries, in particular, can lead to tensions between migrants and the local population. Shafak's use of the term “good intentions” regarding acacia trees illustrates how well-intentioned decisions made by incompetent bureaucrats who lack a broad perspective on cultural, social, and economic dynamics can have unintended negative consequences. While it is common for immigrants to face challenges in adapting to new cultural and social norms, attributing social issues solely to migrants overlooks broader systemic factors. A balanced approach to assimilation and cultural preservation is crucial. Rapid societal changes can unsettle local communities, but by fostering an environment of mutual understanding and respect, countries can harness the benefits of cultural and social diversity more effectively.

Up to this point, this chapter has focused mainly on the first-generation migrant experience through the human and non-human characters in the novel. Ada, the daughter of Kostas and Defne, who was born and raised in London, will now be analyzed as a second-generation immigrant. As a preliminary step, it is necessary to provide some background

information on the character. Ada, who plays a pivotal role in the novel, embodies the complex experiences of second-generation immigrants. The daughter of parents from diverse ethnic backgrounds and religions, Ada also stands as proof that love is a phenomenon that has the power to transcend borders. Ada's character is shaped by her mixed cultural background, resulting in multiple identities. These identities are not fixed but rather fluid. With her character, Ada, Shafak shows how the experiences of first-generation immigrants, as described in the novel with Kostas and Defne, change shape and present different challenges in the second generation. The author addresses the topics of displacement, belonging, identity, and intergenerational trauma, which are outcomes of the migration process, through the lens of this character. She shows the difficulties and the advantages of being in between, of being stuck between different worlds.

One moment that vividly illustrates Ada's experiences as a second-generation migrant is the incident where she screams in history class. At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher announces that the day's topic is migration and generational change. Caught up in various emotions and thoughts, Ada cannot concentrate on the lesson. She even sketches butterflies in her notebook, which her mother really loved. Her indifference to the lesson stems not from disinterest but from a reluctance to view history merely as an academic subject. Ada yearns for a connection to her personal history because Defne and Kostas chose not to burden her with their agonizing memories. This leaves Ada feeling a sense of incompleteness. She is someone who does not fully know her own history, has never seen Cyprus, and has grown up in England, the only island she knows. She receives guidance neither in Turkish nor Greek. At home, only English is spoken. She just hears bits and pieces of Greek and Turkish sentences like "mou" (Shafak 42) in Greek and "canim" (Shafak 117) in Turkish. However, instead of achieving their intended result, these efforts actually fuel Ada's fascination and obsession with her past. She yearns to reach her own history, which she will be able to access when her aunt Meryem comes to visit. In such a context, the incident of shouting in class in the novel is of critical importance. The teacher uses the question-and-answer method to engage and gather opinions from the students and asks Ada about her thoughts on family heirlooms. The topic then shifts to Ada's father, who has a particular passion for plants. After all these conversations, triggered by the

judgmental looks of her classmates, Ada feels cornered and uncomfortable. The teacher's questions hit the wall of silence. Finally, Ada experiences an extended outburst of screaming.

The demanding questions of the teacher and the malicious looks at Ada from the other students in the class cannot explain the shouting incident in the classroom. While the feeling of being trapped in the classroom may contribute to the behavior, Ada's deeper sense of being stuck, which has been accumulating in her for years as a second-generation immigrant, is the true cause. This sense of being stuck is caused by factors such as alienation, rootlessness, and an unstable identity. Ada also carries with her the trauma of the generations before her, which is referred to as transgenerational trauma and is stressed at many points in the novel. Additionally, Ada's self-perception is also problematic as she dislikes herself in photographs (Shafak 96) and feels there is "something wrong in her head" (Shafak 94). In class, derogatory remarks such as "God, she's so cringey!" (Shafak 18) also exhaust her. Ada does not seem to be a popular student in her class, and while the novel does not explicitly state it, she may face discrimination in London due to her ethnic origin. However, Ada is accustomed to such treatment and does not harbor any hatred towards those who discriminate against her. The person she hates most is herself for not being able to create a unity of identity. Like her mother, Defne, Ada possesses a melancholic nature: "So many times in the past she had suspected that she carried within a sadness that was not quite her own" (Shafak 18). To cope with these inner struggles, she buries herself in solitude.

As outlined in this thesis, migrants are often in a paradoxical situation - seeking recognition while resisting unwanted attention due to their status as outsiders. Thus, they do not want to exacerbate this strangeness and difference. Yet, Ada screams her head off in the classroom. Beyond the sense of not belonging, Ada wants recognition because immigrants often get lost amid the chaos of a big city like London. Shouting in a traditional and orderly place like the classroom is Ada's way of rebelling against societal norms, prejudices, exclusion, and injustices that are commonplace. Her scream is not to say notice *me*, but to say notice *us*- the different, the uprooted, the homeless. Later, it is revealed that

Ada's scream was recorded on a cell phone. With the influence of social media, the incident gains international attention and Ada's video becomes viral. Consequently, a hashtag is created for the video: "#doyouhearmenow?". This hashtag represents a rebellion against the marginalization of migrants and against being treated as if they do not exist. The hashtag, in fact, asks the question: Do we need to shout at the top of our lungs to be noticed? Many individuals' voices are drowned out in the chaos of this world and may not fully actualize their potential.

As discussed previously, a dichotomy of visibility and invisibility arises as a multilayered issue in the discourse on immigrant experiences, each presenting its specific set of challenges. The idea of the "invisible disadvantaged," proposed by Enneli et al. (2005), provides a useful theoretical framework to grasp the hardships of being "invisible". They argue that "Turkish children are often ignored by teachers, remaining the 'invisible disadvantaged' compared to ethnic minorities who are more 'visible' due to their skin color and being more well-known targets for racial abuse" (Ceylan 450). It is crucial to remember that whereas overt racism targets those with obvious racial markers, covert forms of racism target immigrants without such obvious differences. As an example, Enneli et al. emphasized how reluctant pupils are to speak Turkish in class. This prejudice is further emphasized by the teacher's description of a Turkish student as "surprisingly brilliant" (Ceylan 450). Turkish children and members of other ethnic groups who don't fit the stereotype of a minority may experience neglect as a result of the lack of obvious signs of difference.

Ada falls into Enneli et al.'s "invisible disadvantaged" category. Despite similar characteristics to her classmates, she experiences subtle discrimination that may not be immediately apparent compared to other minority discrimination. By screaming in class, Ada wants to throw off this cloak of invisibility and be seen for exactly what she is, even though this is a very uncomfortable feeling for a migrant, which reminds us of the famous quote from D.W. Winnicott: "It is a joy to be hidden, and disaster not to be found". Because when one is identified as a migrant, disturbances often follow. "Crude indifference" (Shafak 18) is what Ada generally prefers. Therefore, remaining hidden and

invisible can be a means of coping with the stress brought about by migration. It can provide comfort and security. When she recalls the moment of screaming, she regrets her impulsive behavior. She later realizes that this action has put her in a difficult position. As she always does, “remaining more or less invisible to everyone in the classroom, unnoticed but also undisturbed” (Shafak 19) would be the most sensible action for her.

2.2. Identity in *The Island of Missing Trees*.

The previous chapter of this thesis analyzed the depictions of 1st and 2nd generation migrant experiences in Elif Shafak's *The Island of Missing Trees*. In this section, the novel's approach to identity will be examined, and the impact of migration on the immigrant identity will be discussed through the characters. The novel as a whole demonstrates that the phenomenon of migration has a major impact on identity. Immigrants who are displaced from their birthplaces and the places where they have lived for years may have problems with belonging and sense of identity. As explained in the thesis's theory section, a fixed and singular identity cannot be attributed to migrant identities. Instead, the identities of migrants are multiple, flexible, and fluid. “Discourse holds that we are moving away from (rooted) identities based on place and toward (routed) hybrid and flexible forms of identity.” (Easthope, ‘Fixed Identities’ 62).

In an age where different cultures are so easily accessible, especially through social media, even some people who have not migrated reject a static identity. These people consciously cut their roots and adopt a transnationalist attitude. For migrants, of course, this uprooting and growing of new roots happens automatically because circumstances force them to do so. To gain insight into the formation and transformation of migrant identities, it is useful to return to the section of the novel that takes place in the classroom and to analyze the character of Ada in more detail. Yet, prior to that, it is worthwhile to explain how societies or state policies create divisive, artificial identities that are *ready to wear* for the people. For this analysis, it is essential to look at the sociological and political situation in Cyprus before the partition while staying within the framework of the novel.

1963 was a tense year between Turkish and Greek communities. After the violence escalated, a 12-hour meeting was held in late 1963, mediated by British General Peter Young. The decision was made to separate the territory of Cyprus into two, which was done by the general using a green pen to draw a line on the map. This line then became known as the Green Line despite the absence of any greenery in the area to remind us of its name. The fact that the pen used by the British general to divide Cyprus, the former colony of the British Empire, was green cannot solely explain the logic behind the name choice. “The colour was not a random choice. Blue would have been too Greek and red too Turkish” (Shafak 141). The choice of green seemed reasonable in a situation where these two colors were automatically eliminated, and options were limited.

Cartographic changes affect thousands of people. They create countries and nations and have profound effects on people in terms of how they understand life and where they position themselves in life. Acknowledging this, it is worth noting that the separations depicted on the map possess both a historical and political burden, as they create prejudices and presuppositions between societies that used to live together. As posited in Shafak's definition at the novel's very beginning, maps have an impact on identity: “A map is a two-dimensional representation with arbitrary symbols and incised lines that decide who is to be our enemy and who is to be our friend, who deserves our love and who deserves our hatred and who, our sheer indifference” (Shafak 1). When human beings who inherently possess discriminatory tendencies are provided with such an opportunity, things may spiral out of control. People can hate *the other* for no reason at all; they can see them as enemies. Alternatively, they can ignore them altogether. This is exactly what happened on the island of Cyprus. The people in two different areas, formed by a line drawn by a green pen, have developed two different identities. Classifications have been defined, and the concepts of self and *the other* have become clear.

Maps are not just navigational tools. With their borders, they are spaces where power dynamics are embodied, a playground of colonial powers for people living in disputed territories. Ghosh argues that a border is “a space of hyperdocumentation and is marked as a pre-eminent site of intervention for the state to dramatize its security apparatus to its

domestic and international audiences” (qtd. in Brettell and Hollifield 210). In the novel, the borders have both physical and metaphorical meanings. The novel starts by defining borders on a map and ends with an attitude that shows it does not recognize them. At the conclusion of the novel, Ada's aunt Meryem inquires about Ada's desire to visit Cyprus, asking whether she intends to visit the Greek or Turkish side. Ada replies as follows: “I’ll come to the island,...I just want to meet islanders, like myself” (Shafak 338). Ada intends to go to the island as an islander. She embraces neither a Turkish nor a Greek identity. The people who used to define themselves as Cypriots or islanders before the partition began to define themselves as Turks or Greeks after the partition. Ada serves as evidence of how artificial this division was. She was born to parents from two sides of the island and raised in Britain. Her dual and fluid character contrasts sharply with the static, rigid nature of the borders.

Clashing identities can be constructed and transformed into new forms with the emergence of new borders. The newly constructed identities may compete with each other in shared areas, such as Cyprus. Similar to battles fought with weapons, identity can also become a battlefield for opposing sides attempting to erase each other's identities. There is one section of the novel that is particularly worthy of note at this point.

By 1958, the Greek nationalist organization known as EOKA had banned all English lettering across the island. English street names were crossed out and daubed with paint. Soon Turkish names would be expunged too. Then the Turkish nationalist organization known as TMT started erasing Greek names. And there came a point when the streets in my home town were left nameless, only wet paint over wet paint, like watercolour washes that slowly fade into nothingness. (Shafak 85)

As this excerpt indicates, erasing English street names and replacing them with Greek ones is a rejection of the colonial English presence on the island and the struggle to attain Greek Cypriot identity. Until 1960, Cyprus was a British colony, and the prohibition of all British letters and *name wars* in the streets are not just an expression of anti-colonialism. It is also a struggle for a social identity. Indeed, identity is a question of human existence, and it is important enough to put one's life in danger, to fight for life and death. Giving a name to a place or an object reinforces the sense of belonging. In that sense, naming streets is also a matter of belonging. Those who engage in this battle seek to belong, and they

may be willing to destroy the identity of others to achieve that purpose. The pointlessness of this war, how it leads nowhere and yields no outcome, manifest itself in the expression saying that identity politics “slowly fade into nothingness”. The new names written over prior names merge, causing confusion and a sensation of disorientation. The wet paints used to inscribe Turkish and Greek street names on the walls become mixed and illegible, representing the fluidity of identities. When streets turn into arenas for identity politics, what remains is nothingness. While these names can coexist peacefully, by writing them on top of each other, a "lose-lose" situation arises for both sides.

The concept of identity becomes very important with Ada because she is the child of parents from two different cultures and, therefore, embodies conflicting identities. While this plurality adds to the richness of her character, the burden of carrying more than one identity is often too heavy for her to handle. The division in her identity begins in her early years, as evidenced by one of her childhood memories. She recalls a sermon. Though she remembers the content, she cannot recall whether she heard it in a church or mosque, as she used to attend both. This demonstrates that her parents' two different religions and her status as a second-generation immigrant have led her to develop a flexible identity. While attending the church, the priest tries to persuade her to select the *correct* religion, and while visiting the mosque, the imam attempts to do the same. They encourage her to “take their side” (Shafak 27). However, Ada chooses not to align with any particular religion or nationality. Instead, she chooses nothingness, which brings with it a sense of lightness. She does not accept the responsibility of belonging to a side. Nor does she believe in the necessity of bearing this responsibility. Seemingly, Ada achieves this consciousness at a very young age.

Additionally, Ada's relationship with her past is complex and multilayered. On one hand, she seeks to learn about her past and establish an identity based on this knowledge as a means of fostering a sense of belonging. On the other hand, she wishes to eliminate the stress of coming from a different culture and being the child of an immigrant family. In other words, Ada both desires to erase the traces of her past and to cling to them. For example, Ada feels uncomfortable looking at her reflection in the mirror, which indicates

problems with her self-image. When she looks at herself in the mirror, for instance, she finds her nose too big and her chin too prominent. “She [fights] hard to flatten” her curly hair (Shafak 95). Ada, to put it bluntly, seeks to remove any evidence of her Eastern roots from her physical appearance, as her facial features do not conform to the Western criteria of beauty. She strives to assimilate into the dominant culture, into the many, by erasing one of her identities. Ada's native language is English, but learning the language and culture is not always enough to assimilate into the new culture. Differences in appearance disrupt this attempt to assimilate and to fit in. Although Ada is a beautiful girl, she does not meet Western beauty standards, so she wants to change herself to eliminate prejudices. In this regard, Ada's unfair dissatisfaction with herself sheds light on the problems many immigrants face.

As stressed already, identities are constructed and fluid. They can also be performed like a play is performed on stage. According to Klein et al., identity performance refers to “the purposeful expression (or suppression) of behaviors relevant to those norms conventionally associated with a salient social identity” (Klein et al. 30). In other words, it is the act of exhibiting behaviors and habits that are associated with a particular social identity, even if the individual does not fully embrace it. This brings some advantages, especially for the immigrant. For instance, immigrants may perform this particular type of identity in order to assimilate into the dominant culture. Evidently, it is important to distinguish between identity and social identity. As Klein et al. clarify, identity performance differs from self-presentation in that the latter is motivated by a desire for personal benefit (30). Such identity performances are evident in Ada, the daughter of immigrant parents, and Ada's aunt, Meryem. They present their social identities in contrasting ways. Ada was born and raised in London. Therefore, she identifies herself as English. On the other hand, Meryem has a strong bond with her Turkish roots. Despite receiving a British education in her youth, she sometimes performs her Turkish social identity in an exaggerated way because she is afraid of being under the influence of another identity. For instance, while Ada eats cereal like a typical European (Shafak 51), Meryem prepares a large Turkish breakfast, “a banquet more like it” (67) every morning. While Ada refrains from any religious or superstitious beliefs (194), Meryem is very

attached to them. She frequently incorporates Turkish proverbs and idioms like “search[ing] for a calf under an ox” (195) into her English through direct translation. She believes in the evil eye and malevolent energy. She often carries an evil eye talisman around her neck (Shafak 58), visits spiritual healers and organizes rituals next to the fig tree Kostas brought from Cyprus that grows in the garden of their house in London (65). All these details indicate that both characters demonstrate identity performance for different reasons.

Defne and Kostas raised Ada as a British kid in order to protect her from the traumatic experiences of the past. However, the Turkish and Greek identities that they aimed to eliminate from Ada caused inner unrest in her, and these identities surfaced when the day finally came, as evidenced by the shouting incident in the classroom. As argued in this thesis before, Ada has had a fluid identity. She belongs neither *here* nor *there*. The label of Britishness that was imposed upon her did not fit her at all. It felt too constricting, causing Ada to become restless and depressed, with little self-confidence. In a conversation with her father, Ada highlights the challenges of growing up in London with a mix of ethnic and religious backgrounds. When Kostas suggests that this diversity is a “great richness” (Shafak 158), Ada clucks her tongue and remarks with irony: “Yeah, sure, I’m rolling in richness!” (158).

As Ada notes, she does not find satisfaction in her *richness* because it can pose significant risks to overall psychological well-being due to factors such as prejudice, exclusion, and othering. Ada's longing is to blend seamlessly into the crowd, to be more similar than different, and to experience a sense of belonging within a group. However, this aspiration is not always realized among immigrants. Even when they desire to assimilate, which is not universally the case, the dominant culture in the host society may resist their integration. Brettell and Hollifield articulate this dynamic, noting: “The general starting assumption ... is that over time, and certainly over the course of generations, immigrants want to assimilate, and the host society wants them to assimilate” (169). Yet, this mutual desire for assimilation is not always the reality. In numerous instances, the host society may actually be opposed to the assimilation of immigrants, creating a barrier to their

integration and sense of belonging. To them, the immigrant must remain *different*, and this differentiation must be evident, as it is important to differentiate between *us* and *them*. Many times, the host society wishes to protect itself from external *threats* by withdrawing into its own shell. Host societies feel that their pure essence is in danger of being *polluted* by outsiders. Peutz claims:

The deportee body is doubly stigmatized—polluted and polluting—both in the host society and at home. Simply put, deportable bodies exude the danger of their transnational state(s) ... and as aliens, they are all the more outcasts. Similarly, deported bodies are suspected of carrying with them the pollution contracted abroad while also remaining anomalies at home, their forced return subverting the fetishized immigrant success story. (Brettell and Hollifield 211)

Peutz explains how immigrants are viewed as *pollutants* that disrupt economic, cultural, and social harmony. It is tragic that there is no peace for the migrants either at home or in the places where they go. They become homeless, rootless, and stateless, without a place to call home. Even in their country of birth and upbringing, they may not feel that they belong there: the society there does not allow them to do so. Because, in their eyes, they no longer belong to that country. For instance, separatist terms such as "gurbetçi" and "almancı" in Turkish that are used to describe those who go abroad to work suggest that they are no longer identified as Turks in Turkey. They are now considered foreigners in their own country and culture. As a result, immigrants can no longer firmly belong to either place. The damage has already been done, and therefore, these individuals will continue to lead rootless lives with a fluid identity as they move from one place to another.

Otherness is a multidimensional concept that has received much attention in academic discourse. Numerous publications on this topic can be found in the literature. *Strangers to Ourselves*(1991) by Julia Kristeva is a seminal book in this field. Reflecting on the concepts of identity, belonging, and otherness, the book makes an excellent contribution to how the phenomenon of the stranger is formed and functions in the human mind. The book also gives some insight into the origins of xenophobia. Kristeva argues that the concept of the foreigner exists within individuals rather than outside of them. "Strangely, the foreigner lives within us,"(1) Kristeva writes.

He is the hidden face of our identity, the space that wrecks our abode, the time in which understanding and affinity founder. By recognizing him within ourselves,

we are spared detesting him in himself. A symptom that precisely turns "we" into a problem, perhaps makes it impossible, The foreigner comes in when the consciousness of my difference arises, and he disappears when we all acknowledge ourselves as foreigners, unamenable to bonds and communities. (Kristeva 1).

Fundamentally, every individual carries within themselves an element of the foreigner, an unfamiliar and dark aspect of their own identity that can evoke fear and discomfort. One tries to alleviate the unbearable pain of this sense of foreignness dwelling inside by attributing the concept of foreignness to someone else outside. This is an excellent explanation of the tendency and the speed with which human beings draw a clear line between the self and the other. The human effort to create a sense of belonging is a tragedy. This process manifests through targeting, insulting, humiliating, blaming, threatening, and ignoring those deemed *other*. *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*, the other novel analyzed in this thesis, further elucidates this phenomenon.

There are some significant examples in Shafak's novel that illustrate how the mechanism of othering works. Shafak highlights the challenges faced by migrant children like Ada when attempting to develop an identity. For example, as we know, Ada and her family are seen as weird by Ada's classmates. Since Ada desires to fit in with a group, she is deathly afraid of being odd. Her father is a botanist and leads a scientific life. Ada speaks about her father as follows:

Somewhere in the course of her young life, Ada had understood that he was very different from other fathers, but she still found it hard to take kindly to his obsession with plants. Everyone else's fathers worked in offices, shops or government departments, wore matching suits, white shirts and polished black shoes, whereas hers was usually clad in a waterproof jacket, a pair of olive or brown moleskin trousers, rugged boots. Instead of a briefcase he had a shoulder bag that carried miscellaneous items like his hand lens, dissecting kit, plant press, compass and notebooks.

This way of life appears weird to the class, and it is implied, if not explicitly stated, that Ada is ridiculed for it. At this point, I find it pertinent to engage in some speculation. I wonder: Would this be the case if Ada were not the daughter of an immigrant family but the daughter of a family whose British identity was not questioned? My conjecture is that the answer to this question would be a definite no. In a different context, where her heritage was not a factor, the very traits that subject her to mockery might have been seen

as attributes of coolness, potentially elevating her to a position of popularity in her class. So, as Kristeva suggests, foreignness is not solely related to exterior factors. Individuals are already seeking the foreign or the different outside because of their inner conflicts, and when they find it, they do not hesitate to attack it mercilessly. That is why Ada is so sensitive about the perception of being unusual. “She [has] no intention of giving her classmates yet another reason to conclude that she – and her family – were weird” (Shafak 11). Becoming weird is the worst nightmare for a refugee who is trying to blend in with the new culture. That is why “she [likes] sitting at the back of the classroom” (Shafak 11). Whenever she draws attention with actions such as speaking, the label of weird that will be attached to her instantly is ready and waiting.

Kristeva explores the notion of the foreigner's experience in her work, highlighting that “indifference is the foreigner's shield” (Kristeva 7). This concept is evident in the behavior of immigrants who adopt indifference as a coping mechanism to mitigate the psychological impact of displacement. Ada exemplifies this, often displaying indifference in various situations. While it might seem far-fetched to directly link her indifference to her migrant status, it becomes apparent that Ada's detachment grows as she matures and grapples with her identity and social surroundings. Thus, it can be argued that Ada's journey as an immigrant, fraught with intense emotions and identity struggles, leads her to embrace indifference as a form of self-preservation. This detachment shields her from the emotional turmoil that could lead to a breakdown, as she navigates the complexities of her existence between cultures. “If I'm indifferent, I don't have to make a decision,” Ada reasons, using indifference to shield herself from the pain of her unresolved identity and the pressures of fitting into a new culture. This strategy facilitates Ada's navigation through the complexities of internal conflict and the external pressures associated with her experience as a migrant. In the educational setting, for instance, Ada exhibits a marked disinterest in history and, by extension, her own heritage, until the arrival of her aunt, who acts as a catalyst in rekindling her connection with her past. Similarly, Ada's relationship with her father, a distinguished academic, is characterized by a notable lack of recognition or appreciation for his achievements. Her initial interactions with her aunt, Meryem, are also marked by detachment, viewing her as an unwelcome disruption to her established

routine. This pattern of indifference serves as a coping mechanism, allowing Ada to maintain a semblance of stability amidst the challenges of assimilating into a new cultural and social environment. Although Meryem is a colorful and different character, Ada is not interested in her aunt at all. The reason behind her indifference to her aunt is that she sees Meryem as a ticking bomb ready to explode. Meryem is like a Pandora's box containing the traumas of the past, unresolved issues, pains, and regrets. That is the reason behind Ada's initial indifference. She does not want to open the box and drown herself in intense emotions. This is how immigrants develop defense mechanisms against difficulties. Indifference is one of them, and it sticks to the identity of the immigrant. It surrounds them and does not leave. Thus, the migrant always remains as a stranger. His foreignness never diminishes. It lasts for generations. The stranger is in a void, unable to establish his own identity. Traumas have always inflicted deep wounds on the immigrant's identity. The immigrant patches up his torn identity with pieces of identity he takes from here and there. Kristeva further elaborates on this notion:

Settled within himself, the foreigner has no self. Barely an empty confidence, valueless, which focuses his possibilities of being constantly other, according to others' wishes and to circumstances. I do what they want me to, but it is not "me" -"me" is elsewhere, "me" belongs to no one, "me" does not belong to "me," ...does "me" exist? (Kristeva 8)

In line with Kristeva's observation, Ada cannot decide who "me" is. Is she English, Greek, or Turkish? Is she a Christian or a Muslim? What does she have to be, and according to whom? Every now and then, she finds herself immersed in trying to find sensible answers to these questions. She is uncertain of her self-image and seeks validation externally. She feels as though she is on display, under the scrutiny of others, causing her to constantly question her actions. That's why she is cautious with every action, as her identity must not be revealed in any way. Despite any internal fragmentation, her exterior appearance must always remain intact and solid. She puts forth diligent effort towards this goal, often leading to exhaustion.

Names are also important in the process of identity formation. They are not just given to distinguish people from others; they carry histories, stories, and, most importantly, identities. In this respect, analyzing the character's name, Ada could greatly contribute to

the main focus of this thesis. Her name appears as a significant symbol in the novel regarding identity formation. Ada is a Turkish name, and it means “island” in English. Her name connects two different worlds: Cyprus, where her parents originated, and Britain, her birthplace. Both are islands, and their distinct histories, cultures, and landscapes have various effects on Ada's psyche and sense of self. The unique characteristics of these islands contribute greatly to Ada's mixed and fluid identity. Detached intentionally from her past, Ada thinks that her name refers to Britain. However, she later finds out that her name is not a reference to Britain but to Cyprus, a place which she has never been to. This revelation acts as a catalyst, provoking her to re-evaluate and reform her identity as she is suddenly attached to a land and a history that feels both foreign and familiar. This dual identity and the tension between them become a recurring theme in the novel.

On islands surrounded by vast bodies of water, “tides rearrange the borders” (Seyhan 63). With their defined yet fluid boundaries, they stand as a testament to transnational identities. Similarly, immigrant identities, though rooted in certain facts, are flexible and influenced by the discoveries, experiences, memories, traumas, and the world around them. And just as islands can have “a way of deceiving people into believing that their serenity [is] eternal” (Shafak 225), the migrant identity hides a chaotic characteristic behind its pacified existence, ready to unveil whenever it gets the chance. Ada's journey of identity formation mirrors this, reminding us that the migrant identity, filled with revelations, acceptance, and, at times, internal conflicts, is not fixed but fluid.

Food and cuisine also play an important role in the novel in terms of identity. Food culture is one of the most direct ways of expressing identity. It establishes or transgresses cultural boundaries. It can become a means of assimilation and dissimulation. Meryem, according to her traditional Turkish upbringing, believes that a woman is responsible for the kitchen and must cook well. She manifests her existence and identity and resists the threat of assimilation into English culture through her cooking when she comes to London to visit the Kazantzakis family. With her cooking, she brings with her flavors, aromas, and heritage that have long been forgotten. Meryem thinks that “food is the heart of a culture” (137) and understands the fact that food and identity are intertwined, saying, “If you don't

know the cuisine of your ancestors, you don't know who you are” (137). For an immigrant, food becomes one of the most important factors in adapting to a new culture. It is also one of the most difficult since the new cuisine is one of the first and the greatest challenges many immigrants face in the process of adaptation.

In the context of culinary themes within literature, it is imperative to discuss the representation of “The Happy Fig,” a restaurant featured prominently in the novel. Opened in 1955, the restaurant was founded by a gay couple named Yusuf and Yiorgos. It is portrayed in the novel as a migrant utopia where individuals from different backgrounds can coexist and share dialogue. It is “a popular hang-out frequented by Greeks, Turks, Armenians, Maronites, UN soldiers, and visitors to the island” (Shafak 87). Its perfect multicultural character moves it from a real place to a more surreal one. The Happy Fig is a near paradise. With its parrot, a tropical bird that is a symbol of beauty and harmony with its vibrant colors, the music, the tasty food and drinks, and a fig tree that grows through the ceiling, The Happy Fig makes guests feel as if they are in paradise. This tavern stands as a testament to the fact that people from different religions and ethnicities can live together in peace and harmony. “Between its walls, strangers turned into friends, friends into lovers; old flames rekindled, broken hearts mended or shattered once again” (Shafak 87).

The island of Cyprus was chaotic in the 70s. Shafak aims to establish a space for refuge from the violence, conflict, marginalization, and hostility of the outside world. She wants to have a *liberated zone* that functions as a miniature model of a new world order, where people can live in harmony without worrying about their differences. Shafak recognizes the usefulness of food as a tool for achieving this ideal and chooses a restaurant as the ideal setting for a paradisiacal place in her narrative. Food, serving as a universal element that eradicates disparities, becomes the perfect medium for this purpose. Its fundamental role in Maslow's hierarchy of needs underscores its potential as a unifying force. The choice of a restaurant, a place where diverse individuals come together over the shared experience of eating, symbolizes the potential for food to bridge differences and bring people together.

Fundamentally, people exhibit a core homogeneity in their inherent nature. The social differences are, in fact, social and cultural constructs. In this sense, it can be claimed that they are artificial to a certain degree. Food, on the other hand, is a unifying structure that transcends such constructs and is easily accessible to all. The Happy Fig exemplifies this phenomenon, as people from all backgrounds gather around food - one of our most basic needs. To emphasize the unifying power of food, Shafak includes the restaurant's menu in the novel. The restaurant's menu offers a diverse selection of food and drinks from various cultures. It begins with the following statement:

Our cuisine is a mixture of the many cultures who have inhabited this heavenly island throughout the centuries. Our food is fresh, our wine is old and our recipes timeless. We are a family here – a family that gives, shares, listens, sings, laughs, cries, forgives and, most importantly, appreciates good food. Enjoy! Y & Y”

The tavern offers Turkish, Greek, and Arabic dishes like "Baba Ghanoush with Tahini," "Chicken Souvlaki Wraps," "Slow-roasted Pork with Wild Oregano," "Oven-baked Spicy Moussaka," and many more.

A particular focus is also placed on baklava, which has been widely adopted by many nations and is the subject of controversy over its ownership. Humans are a species prone to disagreement and conflict, which may further extend even to seemingly simple matters like food. In this sense, The Happy Fig's philosophical stance challenges the notion of polarizing over the origins of baklava. Instead, it promotes a more rational viewpoint, recognizing baklava as a culinary masterpiece born from the contributions of multiple cultures.

NomadicBaklava
(Greek/Turkish/Armenian/Lebanese/Syrian/Moroccan/Algerian/Jordanian/Israeli
/Palestinian/Egyptian/Tunisian/Libyan/Iraqi ... Did we forget anyone? If so,
please add) (Shafak 104)

Baklava is just baklava. It is a dessert that does not have to be labeled with a national name. The Happy Fig's menu promotes transnationalism instead of nationalism and tribalism by prioritizing fluid and nomadic identities over rigid and unalterable ones. It

clings to the ideal of co-existence and the chance of producing a common product. To attain this ideal, a multi-cultural menu is considered to be a good starting point.

2.3. Home in The Island Of Missing Trees

After the prologue, entitled “Island”, opens with the phrase “once upon a memory” (Shafak 1), The Fig Tree, the main narrator of the novel, offers readers a depiction of the post-partition state of Cyprus, specifically Nicosia, which is “the only divided capital in the world” (Shafak 3). Hence, this artificial division brings along some discomfort and awkwardness. For many years, Cypriots enjoyed unrestricted movement across the island. However, following civil unrest and the subsequent intervention of the Turkish government, a border was imposed, creating an entirely new reality for the population. The border presented new challenges, including warnings such as “NO ENTRY BEYOND THIS POINT; KEEP AWAY RESTRICTED AREA!; NO PHOTOGRAPHS NO FILMING ALLOWED” (Shafak 2), with the most striking being “WELCOME TO NO MAN'S LAND” written on a barrel by a passerby. This expression has been historically defined as “an area or strip of land that no one owns or controls, such as a strip of land between two countries' borders, especially in a war” (*No-Man's-Land*). Numerous parties lay claim to this private space. In the context of the novel, this phrase provides an opportunity to initiate a critical discussion on the notion of home. This thesis has frequently explored how fluid concepts such as identity, belonging, and rootedness can be. I believe the concept of home can further expand this discussion. Shafak's novel illustrates that the sign on the buffer zone does not solely identify that area. I previously addressed in the theory chapter of the thesis that home is a challenging concept to define and is actually a socially constructed space. As such, the novel suggests that the no man's land sign belongs not only to that region but to all of Cyprus. In fact, reflecting on the lives of Kostas, Defne, and Ada in London, one could argue that the questions of what constitutes home and belonging are universal, and homelessness is a world-wide issue that can be experienced by every individual independently of space. Determining whether a person truly has a home or truly belongs to a place is a complex matter. Numerous academics have attempted to address these questions, as have novelists such as Shafak. The lives of the novel's immigrant characters offer insight into the development of this

notion. Shafak's *The Island* questions the concept of home in an unconventional manner. The civil war in Cyprus led to a complete transformation of society, rendering all Cypriots homeless despite having a physical dwelling. For immigrants like the Kazantzakis couple, who fled the conflict, neither their original nor new hometowns provided a sense of belonging. They experienced a complete sense of alienation.

After the civil war is over and the tension subsides in Cyprus, Kostas finds the strength in himself to return to the island. As the couple reconciles their past grievances, their love is rekindled. Kostas invites Defne to come to London with him, an invitation which she accepts with question marks in her head. Upon the opening of the arrival gate, the sentences uttered by Kostas are quite remarkable. He says to Defne and probably to the fig tree he smuggled from Cyprus and carried in his suitcase: "We're here, we made it! Welcome to your new home" (Shafak 33). These statements demonstrate how concepts such as belonging and attachment differ between the two characters. Kostas is more adaptable. Therefore, it is easier for him to belong to a place. When he welcomes his *guests*, he cannot foresee the fact that calling a place home is a complicated phenomenon. As stated by Easthope, the concept of home encompasses social, psychological, and emotional dimensions and, therefore, requires certain conditions to be met in order to be considered as such. In addition, although the concept of home can be lost very quickly, it is a very slow process to regain it. For instance, Kostas and Defne's perceived home in Cyprus is not the house they reside in with their families, but rather The Happy Fig restaurant. The couple's last visit to the restaurant brings back nostalgic memories. Upon arriving, they find The Happy Fig in ruins.

The moment he walked in it all came rushing back to him. Evenings redolent with delicious odours of steaming food and warm pastry, the chatter and laughter of the customers, the music and the clapping, the smashing of plates as the night wore on ... He remembered the afternoons he had trudged up the hill, carrying bottles of carob liquor and those honey-sesame bars that Yiorgos loved so much, and how happy his mother was with the money he brought home ... His eyes brightened as he recalled Chico flapping his wings, Yiorgos telling jokes to a newly married couple, and Yusuf watching it all with his customary silence and attentive gaze. How proud they were of what they had created together. This tavern was their home, their refuge, their entire world. (Shafak 291)

The couple used to feel happy and safe there because this restaurant provided a cozy environment where everyone could communicate and socialize with each other without prejudice or hostility. At The Happy Fig, boundaries were nonexistent; sharing was prioritized, and differences were not only acknowledged but welcomed. Nationalities like Greek, Turkish, and British were irrelevant at this tavern, which served as an oasis in the midst of the desert racked by violence. Everyone was equal there and had the right to have fun together.

"While homes may be located, it is not the location that is 'home'" (Easthope, 'A Place Called Home' 135). Therefore, for Defne and Kostas, and for many others, The Happy Fig provides a sense of home. However, the feeling of home this idyllic place gives would be shattered by the slightest threat from the outside. Unfortunately, a bomb detonated here by extremists shatters the whole aura of this place. Defne and Kostas are left homeless. They rediscover the sense of safety they had lost at The Happy Fig in one another. After the bomb attack, in the battle between Eros and Thanatos, which Freud wrote about in his famous essay "Beyond the Pleasure Principle", Eros emerges victorious. They make love in the open that same night. From this sexual intercourse, they would have their daughter, Ada.

Reconstituting a sense of home in a new location is a process that unfolds over an extended period. When Defne relocates to London alongside Kostas, a segment of her essence remains tethered to Cyprus, mirroring the manner in which the roots of the fig tree cutting, transported to London, metaphorically persist in Cypriot soil. Defne observes "the human mind [is] the strangest place, both home and exile" (Shafak 200), indicating her struggle to reconcile the concept of home within her own psyche. This situation weighs heavily on her psychologically, and her health gradually deteriorates.

The novel explores the concept of home from multiple perspectives. The effects of forced displacement on the reconstruction of a meaningful home-like setting have been discussed through the lens of the Kazantzakis family. The military presence of the British army in Cyprus offers a contrasting perspective on the concept. The soldiers here are not

immigrants. They were sent to Cyprus to secure British colonial interests. Thus, the power dynamics work differently from this perspective. The shift from the perspective of the oppressed to that of the oppressor is expected to indicate a different approach to the concept of home. However, the difficulty of creating a sense of home remains. Like the Kazantzakis family, the British soldiers, in the position of oppressors, are far from feeling at home. They are also “hanging on to each other for support and camaraderie, a sense of home, belonging” (Shafak 90). The absence of feeling at home frightens them and wears them down. The arrival of the soldiers is recounted by the fig tree as follows:

I remember the day they arrived, Her Majesty's troops, tired and thirsty from the long journey, and slightly confused as to who exactly were to be their colonial subjects. The English, though themselves islanders at heart, have never quite known where to place our island inside their minds. (Shafak 84)

Upon the arrival of British soldiers on the island, the Cypriot's sense of home and understanding of what it means to be home is also disrupted. Sigmund Freud's terms "heimlich" and "unheimlich" provide a rich framework for further exploring the complexities of home. "Heimlich" refers to what is “familiar, native, belonging to the home” (Freud 2), while "unheimlich" is its opposite, referring to what is uncanny or unhomely, commonly translated as “uncanny”. Freud notes that not all unfamiliar things automatically become uncanny. The feeling of uncanniness only arises under certain conditions, one of which is that the object must be “something which ought to have been kept concealed but which has nevertheless come to light” (Freud 13).

In *The Island*, the arrival of soldiers creates an uncanny feeling on the island by shifting it from the familiar to the unfamiliar. Once the soldiers appear, Cyprus is no longer the homely place it once was. The turmoil in the subsequent years further shatters the sense of security of the home. This discussion underscores that while the concept of home is anchored in physical locality, its essence extends far beyond mere spatial dimensions. The saying “home is where the heart is”, aptly titled in Easthope's scholarly article, reaffirms its validity, illustrating that home encompasses a complex interplay of emotional, psychological, and spatial attachments. After Kostas' mother sends him to London, he writes a letter to Defne, whom he left behind in Cyprus.

You know what I've been thinking since? I've been thinking that you are my country. Is that a strange thing to say? Without you, I don't have a home in this world; I am a felled tree, my roots severed all round; you can topple me with the touch of a finger. (Shafak 183)

In this part of the letter, Kostas writes that Defne is his country, expressing the depth of his attachment to her. In that sense, he declares that he cannot exist without Defne. Without her, he says, he would not have a home in this world, and he would be a “felled tree”. With these words, he draws a picture of vulnerability. Like a tree without roots, he would be cut off from his sources of nourishment, weakened, and open to external threats. For Kostas, the real reason for being uprooted is not his migration to London but a life without Defne. She is the reason for him to continue living and connecting to the world, acting as an emotional anchor.

2.4. Nostalgia and Trauma in *The Island of Missing Trees*

When migrants lose their homes and realize that they cannot have a home in any place or time, and their feeling of belonging and comfort is lost forever, they take refuge in memories. Nostalgia becomes a toy that entertains them when they lose hope for the future. However, the past also has a dark side. Asylum seekers often desire to reflect on joyful memories of life back home; nevertheless, the memories of traumatic events that caused them to migrate linger in their minds, constantly scarring them and making them suffer mentally and physically.

Obviously, a discussion of nostalgia and trauma requires an understanding of time. Defining time is a complex matter, requiring knowledge ranging from physics to philosophy. It is a popular belief that time can heal all wounds. While this may hold true for certain cases, it is not necessarily applicable to displaced individuals. Does time truly work in their favor, or does it only complicate and distort their memories further? “Time is a songbird”, Shafak writes in the novel. “And just like any other songbird, it can be taken captive. It can be held prisoner in a cage and for even longer than you might think possible. But time cannot be kept in check in perpetuity. No captivity is forever” (Shafak 5).

Songbirds are known for their free-spirited nature and are unsuited for captivity. However, this does not stop people from trapping them and putting them in cages. Songbirds are not meant to be kept captive forever, just as time cannot be confined. People try to control time for various reasons. But just as it is impossible to keep a songbird captive forever, it is also impossible to confine time. When the appropriate time arrives, the songbird will either flee and avoid captivity or meet its demise as a prisoner. Similarly, time, like water, will find its way out through the cracks. Humans have long endeavored to master the passage of time, often seeking to either cling to a past filled with cherished memories or to live fully in a present that promises happiness and security. However, achieving either of these states appears elusive, as even minor disruptions in their system of maintaining comfort can lead to significant disturbances. In Shafak's novel, this concept of disruption is personified through the character of Meryem, whose role will be dissected in further detail later in this thesis. Before delving into Meryem's influence, it is crucial to explore the underlying notion of time that pervades human consciousness.

Human-time is linear, a neat continuum from a past that is supposed to be over and done with towards a future deemed to be untouched, untarnished. Every day has to be a brand-new day, filled with fresh events, every love utterly different from the previous one. The human species' appetite for novelty is insatiable and I'm not sure it does them much good. Arboreal-time is cyclical, recurrent, perennial; the past and the future breathe within this moment, and the present does not necessarily flow in one direction; instead it draws circles within circles, like the rings you find when you cut us down. Arboreal-time is equivalent to story-time – and, like a story, a tree does not grow in perfectly straight lines, flawless curves or exact right angles, but bends and twists and bifurcates into fantastical shapes, throwing out branches of wonder and arcs of invention. (Shafak 47)

The fig tree is contemplating time and distinguishes between human time and arboreal time, which trees experience. It can be concluded that the time of immigrants is similar to that of trees – they do not live in a linear fashion. Similar to story time, they revisit memories of the past and modify them. Therefore, nostalgia, a concept that affects both the past and present, can be said to impact immigrants in a similar way as trees. Every act of remembering alters memories. These changes can result in nuanced variations in the original memory. From this point of view, it appears that memory is a dynamic phenomenon rather than a static one.

Revisiting the theme of how time can either heal or exacerbate the challenges faced by those who are displaced, Shafak's work delves deeply into this issue. Through Ada's experiences, we learn the inescapable nature of one's past, enduring through successive generations. No matter how much Defne and Kostas may try to isolate Ada from their traumatic past with the best of intentions, traces of the past somehow find their way to the surface. "[They] don't want Ada to be burdened by the things that hurt [them]" (Shafak 137). Defne, with her unwavering conviction regarding the influence of the past on the future, firmly advises Kostas on the necessity of shielding their child from their historical burdens. Her cautionary stance is encapsulated in her stern warning: "If we want our child to have a good future, we have to cut her off from our past" (Shafak 317). Despite the clarity and determination behind Defne's approach, the outcome is ironically counterproductive. Rather than liberating their daughter from the weight of history, their efforts inadvertently foster an intense fixation within Ada, who develops an "obsession with the past" (Shafak 158). Although Ada never lived through the Cypriot Civil War, she feels pain and uneasiness about the past. She is well aware of the fact that her parents' past has an effect on her present as well. She claims she is "already burdened with it" (Shafak 158). She believes in collective memory and transgenerational trauma. To her, "this ... pain becomes part of your flesh. It stays with you and marks you permanently" (Shafak 317). He confronts his father, who does not believe in her, with the following words: "You don't mind believing young butterflies inherit migrations from their ancestors, but when it comes to your own family, you think that's not possible" (Shafak 158). This feeling haunts her and prevents her from becoming a self-actualized individual. Ada is a young woman who suffers an inherited pain that makes her sick day by day. During class, her history teacher hints at how to find a possible cure for her *inherited illness* by presenting the following question to the class: "Without understanding our past, how can we hope to shape our future?" Indeed, as difficult as it may be to confront past experiences, acknowledging and processing that pain can have long-term benefits. As a second-generation immigrant, Ada appears to be more motivated and is putting forth an active effort to unearth past events to obtain these benefits.

The initial introduction of Ada in a history class indicates the direction the novel is going to take. By using a history lesson as a metaphor, Shafak implies that the narrative will deal with a troubled past. Notably, Ada's screaming incident, which has already been discussed, also happened in history class. The fact that Ada's outburst, a culmination of years of pent-up energy stemming from identity confusion and her sense of invisibility as an immigrant, occurs during a history lesson is symbolically significant. Therefore, we can assert that the history lesson is the first blow in the collapse of the protective wall built around Ada. The second blow will be the arrival of Meryem.

The novel also mentions that “a storm [is] on its way” to London before Meryem's arrival which means during a certain period of time, including Christmas, people will be unable to go out. Therefore, they are storing supplies in their homes. Kostas buries the fig tree, which he brought from Cyprus and planted in the backyard to protect it from frost. The whole of London is preparing for an approaching storm called Hera. And Meryem comes with this storm, or in other words, she is the one who brings the storm because she is, herself, the embodiment of the past. Having experienced the civil war in Cyprus and personally observed the sufferings of Defne and Kostas, Meryem brings all her memories and the past itself to the Kazantzakis family. With her arrival, old pages are opened, and the “wounds that had never quite healed” (Shafak 18) are further exposed. However, in the end, there is a chance for the wounds to heal.

When Meryem visits, Ada explicitly expresses her discomfort with the situation. When Meryem first walks into the room, she is presented in the following manner:

In a little while a woman walked in, bundled in a fuzzy taupe overcoat with a hood that made her round face appear rounder and her olive skin warmer. Her eyes were shifting hazel with specks of copper, set slightly apart under thinly plucked eyebrows; her hair fell to her shoulders in auburn, wavy ripples. Her nose was undoubtedly her most prominent feature – strong, angular. In her left nostril shone the tiniest crystal stud. Ada studied their guest, concluding that she looked nothing like her mother. (Shafak 58)

Meryem's arrival is a glorious one. She brings the East to the West. She is like a black box on a plane containing crucial information about the past. This thesis has previously discussed the intimate relationship between food culture and identity. Food relates not

only to identity but also to memory. Since taste and smell are closely linked to the part of the brain responsible for memory storage, recalling past experiences is often easiest through these senses. Sometime after her visit, Meryem tries to form a bond with Ada, and she shares some Turkish delight with Ada that she brought from Cyprus. "Sighing, Ada leaned forward and selected a lokum. It had been some time since she had tasted one. The smell of rosewater and the gummy, sticky texture reminded her of things from way back, things she thought she had long forgotten" (Shafak 124). Upon tasting the Turkish delight, Ada experiences an overwhelming flood of memories from her past. This seemingly magical experience will be the first step in unearthing Ada's long-forgotten memories. However, the journey towards uncovering these memories will not be easy. At first, Meryem's mere presence is enough to stress Ada. She pulls at a cuticle on her finger and makes it bleed. She sucks it right away (Shafak 57). This type of behavior is a clear indication of the stress she is experiencing. However, this discomfort later turns into interest. Her presence triggers Ada's interest and questioning about her identity and her past. This time, it will be Ada who will approach Meryem and try to communicate with her.

Ada pulled up a chair and started eating, though she was now hyper-aware that the cereal had a funny sweet air about it. 'So, did you learn how to cook from your father? He was a chef, wasn't he?' Meryem stood still. 'You have heard about Baba?' 'Mum told me – once. She wasn't sober, if you must know. Otherwise, she never spoke about Cyprus. No one does in this house.' Returning to her washing-up, Meryem was silent for a moment. She rinsed a mug, placed it upside down on the draining board and asked cautiously, 'What do you want to learn?' 'Everything,' replied Ada. 'I'm sick and tired of being treated like a child.' 'Everything,' echoed Meryem. 'But no one knows that. Neither me, nor your father ... we only grasp bits and pieces, each of us, and sometimes your bits and pieces do not match mine and then what's the use of talking about the past, it'll only offend everyone. (Shafak 114)

As the above passage shows, Ada has a great appetite for the past. Since Defne and Kostas never told her anything about what happened in Cyprus, she wants to learn everything from Meryem. However, Meryem is cautious. The term "everything" concerns her, and she means that it is impossible to know everything. Additionally, she notes that what she knows and what she will share will not always align with reality. In this regard, Shafak actually conveys her own concerns to the reader through Meryem. The question arises here: Is telling a true story even possible? It is challenging to write a novel about a

sensitive topic like civil war. Conveying a love story without offending anyone while navigating the sensitivities between two opposing sides that have been made enemies is a delicate task.

As Meryem and Ada become closer, Ada's feelings towards her gradually change. Anger and resentment are replaced by curiosity and closeness. "For the first time since her aunt arrived, Ada [feels] the distance between them closing just a little" (Shafak 127). Ada is now willing to unlock the door that is opening to the past. She will reopen the old wounds, let them bleed, and then heal them. Of course, all members of the family will participate in this adventure. Like a virus, nostalgia and trauma are contagious. Once the door to the past is opened, it is not easy to close it again. In a chain reaction, everyone will confront their past, good memories will be recalled, and regrets will be voiced. The novel stresses the significance of communication between individuals, be it within families or at the state level. Failure in communication and dialogue between people is a recurrent theme in the novel. To exemplify, lack of communication and refusal to talk about the past lead to the loosening of family ties in the Kazantzakis family. Likewise, history has demonstrated the potential for disastrous outcomes resulting from a lack of dialogue between nations and their people. Unlike her parents, Ada wishes to maintain a connection with her past.

The novel frequently explores themes of history. We have already mentioned that the shouting incident takes place in history class. It is noteworthy that this motif recurs throughout the text. For instance, on one occasion when Ada spends her time with Meryem, "her history notebook lay[s] open in front of her. Not exactly to study, but to finish the butterfly she... left incomplete on the last day of school, just before she ...started screaming" (Shafak 137). It is a fact that she is uninterested in her history class, but as the above quotation suggests, Meryem's arrival encourages her to open the pages of her history book. However, it's not official history that captures Ada's curiosity, but rather the stories passed down through oral tradition. That is why Ada aims to learn history solely from Meryem instead of relying on her history teacher or books.

It should be noted that the storm's name is also significant. In Greek mythology, Hera is recognized as the guardian of women during childbirth and protector of marriages. While Hera can be devastating in her wrath, she also promotes harmony, reconciliation, and fertility. Like Hera, the storm coming to London will strike the city with fury, but when it calms, it will cause an improvement in relations between the characters. Kostas and Ada will rekindle their father-daughter relationship. Ada will let go of her resentment towards Meryem and have better relationships with her classmates. “Now that Storm Hera was gone, there was something new in the air, the sense of a delicate peace that comes after a ferocious battle” (Shafak 323). The past has brought with it a storm, and war has indeed erupted in the Kazantzakis family. Although the war with the past wears the family members down, they eventually find peace. Now, for Meryem, there is nothing left to do in London, and it is time to return to Cyprus. She came to London as a carrier of the past. The pages of dusty books were reopened, the missing parts of Ada’s identity were closed, and a complete reconciliation was realized thanks to the confrontation. Meryem has now completed her mission. The storm loses its effect in the skies over London. Just as Meryem comes with the storm, she goes back with it in the same manner.

Narrating historical events is not an easy task, as every attempt to recount history inevitably involves some degree of alteration. This task becomes all the more challenging when handling a highly sensitive subject like a civil war. Because it is almost impossible to disclose the events in an impartial manner without reopening the wounds left by the civil war. This means taking on a huge burden. Shafak, the author of the novel, is also well aware of this reality. She wants to lighten her burden and, therefore, transfers some of it to the fig tree in the novel. The fig tree always comes into play at very critical points. So, she serves as the primary narrator in the novel. “A tree is a memory keeper” (Shafak 211). Although she is not happy about it, she remembers everything. “[She and her kind] are afflicted with everlasting memory...[To her], it is a curse, an enduring memory” (Shafak 34). The concept of memory does not only emerge as a cognitive function but also as a multi- dimensional existential experience. From a non-human perspective, the fig tree touches on how remembering can turn into torture and how forgetting sometimes becomes a safe harbor to take refuge. Unlike human memories, which are often temporal and

fallible, everlasting memory is permanently vivid and impeccable. Human memories can fade away over the course of many years, but trees remember every detail like the first day.

I still carry the island with me, though. The places where we were born are the shape of our lives, even when we are away from them. Especially then. Now and again in my sleep I find myself in Nicosia, standing under a familiar sun, my shadow falling against the rocks, reaching towards the prickly broom bushes that burst with blossoms, each as perfect and bright as the golden coins in a children's fable. (Shafak 33)

The fig tree, which speaks here and is itself a migrant, beautifully expresses the plight of all migrants. It is not possible for an immigrant to break away from his past. Although the fig tree itself lives in the garden of a house in London, she is still deeply rooted in Cyprus. She paints a nostalgic picture with her sentences and points out how strong her ties to her home are. Remembering and bonding with the past are actually two actions that feed each other. Every time the immigrant remembers his homeland, the connection between them is strengthened. The strong ties established also lead to changes in their memories. Over time, certain memories, especially those marked with pain or perceived as redundant, may fade or be selectively forgotten. Sometimes, memories that do not exist might be added. This phenomenon will be clearly seen in *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*, the other novel this thesis will focus on in the second chapter.

In essence, the real home of the migrant is no longer the same as the home he has created in his mind. The homeland that the migrant yearns for is often a reconstructed, idealized version, different from its physical counterpart. This imaginary, nostalgic home fosters an even deeper attachment. This reciprocal relationship continues in this manner, creating a loop of longing and remembrance.

The relationship between remembering and forgetting is also one of the issues emphasized in the novel. There are differences between the characters in this regard, and these differences cause conflict. Ada wants to learn about the past, protect memories and ancestral heritage. As we mentioned before, Meryem's role in the novel is to trigger the memories. Acknowledging that missing parts of the past cause discomfort, she thinks the past should be revisited for healing and acts in that direction.

Kostas, on the other hand, creates a balance between remembering and forgetting. Although he does not want to completely break away from the past, he maintains a cautious stance against it. The novel includes a part called "How to Bury a Fig Tree" (Shafak 7), which gives a step-by-step guidance on how to bury a fig tree. Kostas intends to bury the fig tree that he brought from Cyprus to protect it from the storm Hera, which is approaching London. The fig tree has numerous symbolic meanings in this novel, one of which is remembering. "When you save a fig tree from a storm, it is someone's memory you are saving" (Shafak 28). Kostas not only buries a fig tree but also the traumatic memories from Cyprus. This act of burial should be seen in a twofold way, of course. By burying these memories, Kostas is not trying to get rid of them completely, but to preserve them in some way. Despite the pain that these memories cause, they are invaluable to him because they are a part of him, forming his identity. It is impossible for him to completely distance himself from these memories, but when they are out in the open, they certainly inflict suffering on him.

As the narrative progresses, a subsequent chapter titled "How to Unbury a Fig Tree" (Shafak 309) emerges. Here, the storm's influence has disappeared. Meryem, the harbinger of memories, has left the house. Kostas is now ready to dig up the fig tree again. The time is ripe. The deadlock about the past has been resolved. In light of all this, the character of Kostas holds an important place in the novel in terms of memory. He stands as an element of balance between Ada's aggressive curiosity and Defne's conservative attitude towards hiding the past.

For Defne, the past is something that brings unbearable pain and should be avoided. In order to achieve this detachment, she seeks solace in alcohol. She often loses herself in the temporary oblivion that alcohol provides. There are moments of acute loneliness, where she feels adrift, disconnected not just from her surroundings but also from herself. She occasionally creates distances between herself and her loved ones, especially Kostas and Ada. Her husband, Kostas, bears witness to her problems, frequently caught between his desire to help her and his own emotions of powerlessness. Ada, their daughter,

struggles to understand a mother who oscillates between moments of motherly affection and periods of severe withdrawal. Ada sees Defne's behavior as a difficult puzzle, with parts hidden in the annals of a history she knows little about.

One of the events in the novel that bears symbolic importance in terms of nostalgia and trauma is Defne's work at the CMP (The Committee on Missing Persons). When Kostas returns to Cyprus for the first time in years, he finds Defne, now an archeologist, working at the CMP. The organization's main aim was to locate and identify people who disappeared during the civil war in Cyprus in the 1960s and 1970s. The committee, which includes many researchers such as historians, anthropologists, and geneticists, was established in 1981 but could not begin its work because there was no consensus on the number of missing people, which was later set in 2002, consisting of 1510 Greek Cypriots and 492 Turkish Cypriots ('CMP'). They hold concerns that the work may incite previous grievances.

When considering Defne's employment at the CMP, it can be posited that it is multi-dimensional. Primarily, her motives appear to be deeply personal. Defne works for this organization because Yusuf and Yiorgos, the owners of the heavenly restaurant The Happy Fig, are among the missing. This couple significantly supported Defne. However, she bears an indirect responsibility for their demise. Because, as noted earlier, Defne had to give birth to the baby from her relationship with Kostas at a time when the civil turmoil in Cyprus was at its peak. The doctor designates The Happy Fig as a delivery room due to the civil war conditions. That night, the place is raided by a group of people. Defne survives, but Yusuf and Yiorgos disappear that night. Defne feels guilty about this incident. Therefore, it is of great importance for her to find Yusuf and Yiorgos. By finding their bodies and returning them to their families, she wants to pay at least part of the debt she owes them. Later in the novel, it will be revealed that Yusuf and Yiorgos were murdered that night and thrown into a well together. Ironically, the couple, who have been lying together in the well for years, must now be separated. Yusuf is buried in the Turkish cemetery, and Yiorgos is buried in the Greek cemetery because one is Turkish, and the other one is Greek. The partition in Cyprus no longer allows even the dead to be reunited.

For Defne, working at the CMP is a personal challenge. Rather than hiding from the traumatic events she experienced, she opts to confront them. The committee's job is to go to a place on a report and unearth what is under the ground. This is like unearthing memories that have been pushed into the deepest corners of the mind. Just as Meryem goes to London after Defne's death to unearth the memories and contribute to a feeling of mental peace, Defne provides peace to the restless families of the missing people. Another thing CMP does is to give missing people an identity. These unidentified people are examined in the laboratory. After meticulous analysis, it is revealed who these people are. Now, they can have an identity and belong to a place, even if they are dead. In this respect, the importance of the feeling of belonging to a place is once again proved here. For families grappling with the disappearance of a loved one, the most agonizing aspect is the enduring ambiguity. The individual in question occupies a purgatory-like space, neither conclusively alive nor deceased, rendering them in a state of existential uncertainty. The pervasive sense of rootlessness deeply hurts families. However, the discovery of their missing kin brings great relief. Indeed, within a chapter of the novel titled "Remains of Love", it is articulated that a woman, upon learning of her husband's fate, undergoes a transformative emotional shift, which is symbolically mirrored in her clothing.

When we informed her that we'd found the bones of her husband she cried so much. But the next day, she comes to the lab wearing this pink frilly dress with silver shoes, silver purse. Bright red lipstick on her lips. I'll never forget. This woman who had worn nothing but black for decades, she came to pick up her husband's remains in a pink dress. She said she could finally talk to him. She said she felt like she was eighteen again, and they were dating. Can you believe it? A few bones, that was all we gave her, but she was as happy as if we had given her the world. (Shafak 208–09).

People, like the woman here who lost her husband, resort to various ways of coping with a loss. Through the clothes she wears, she demonstrates how she processes the pain and how she eventually finds solace. Now that her husband has been found, she can complete the mourning process. The transition from mourning to celebration is sharp at this point. The woman tries to reclaim lost time, memories, and emotions by wearing a pink dress and lipstick when she comes to collect her husband's remains. As tragic as the situation may seem, she finds something to be happy about. The complexity of the human psyche

guarantees its unpredictability. The bones discovered are not merely physical remnants; they also unlock the memories intertwined with them. A reckoning with the past can now begin, and through this, plans for the future can be made to move forward.

Defne's reasons for working at the CMP extend beyond personal motivations. Shared struggles have the power to bring people together. The traumatic experiences from the civil war have instilled in her a sense of responsibility towards not just Yusuf and Yiorgos but towards all Cypriots, whether Turkish or Greek. Initially, Defne is portrayed as deeply engaged in the exploration of her own history, demonstrating a strong attachment to her past. This phase of her life, marked by a profound connection to her roots precedes a significant transformation. As she establishes her life and family in London, Defne shifts towards a stance focused on cutting off all ties with the past. This evolution in her character illustrates a deliberate move from an embrace of her history to an effort to insulate her present and future from it, underscoring the complex dynamics of memory and identity in shaping one's path forward.

After Kostas returns to the island and reunites with Defne, he and the CMP employees gather for dinner at a restaurant with a warm and inviting ambiance reminiscent of The Happy Fig. The group engages in a discussion about themes of loss, memories, and new beginnings. When Kostas inquires Maria Fernanda, a CMP employee, regarding whether the human remains unearthed by them had affected her dreams, the ensuing dialogue unfolds:

I used to have disturbing dreams,' Maria-Fernanda said, taking off her glasses and rubbing her eyes. 'But not any more. Or perhaps I just can't remember.'
'Injuriarum remedium est oblivio,' said David. 'Oblivion is the remedy for injuries.' 'But we have to remember in order to heal,' Defne objected. (Shafak 215)

Defne believes that healing requires coming to terms with the past, and that is what she is doing here. She strives to heal not only herself but also society as a whole as much as possible. Healing, according to her, can only be attained by revisiting the past. Her idealism brings her to the CMP. Thus, her work at this organization has symbolic significance. In addition to her job of finding missing individuals, her underlying motivation appears to be rooted in a desire to delve into and comprehend the emotional

and psychological dimensions of these disappearances, including the related traumas and memories. Therefore, a layered approach is required relating to her work, where the physical act of finding is intertwined with a more introspective journey into the past and the emotions linked to it.



CHAPTER 3: THE BEEKEEPER OF ALEPPO

3.1. The migrant experience in *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*.

The Beekeeper of Aleppo, written by Christy Lefteri, narrates the poignant story of Nuri, a beekeeper, and his wife, Afra, an artist. Once enjoying an idyllic life in Aleppo, they are forced to flee their homeland due to the Syrian civil war that erupted in 2011. Their harrowing journey takes them from Syria to England, seeking safety and a new beginning. Witnessing their beloved son, Sami's death due to a bomb dropped in the garden of their house, the couple is crushed under the psychological burden of this heart-wrenching experience. Thus, their journey is marked not only by physical hardship and peril but also by profound emotional and psychological challenges. On the one hand, they overcome physical obstacles by crossing rivers and seas, but on the other hand, they are engaged in a battle with their inner world. Their migration, which begins in Syria, waves through Turkey, then to Greece, and concludes in the UK, represents one of the best examples of migrant resilience. Along the way, the couple confronts deep-seated traumas, experiences waves of nostalgia, grapples with the concept of home, and embarks on a path of rediscovering their identity.

In the first part of this thesis, an analysis was conducted on the interplay between migration and its impact on concepts such as identity, home, nostalgia, and trauma, with a particular emphasis on *The Island*. This exploration sought to unearth insights into the mechanisms by which displacement, intergenerational trauma, and the role of memory contribute to the construction of identity. Through this context, the enduring consequences of migration, as portrayed in Shafak's narrative, were investigated. It was highlighted that these consequences often extend across generations, a notion vividly illustrated through the character of Ada. *The Beekeeper*, on the other hand, focuses on the migration journey

itself and its immediate after-effects. The novel's portrayal of the main characters' struggle to preserve their sense of self, the tangible and intangible elements of the home they have left behind, and the traumatic events that occur during their escape provide a narrative richness that complements Shafak's focus on the later years of migrant life. Consequently, Lefteri's novel was a deliberate choice for this thesis to add a critical layer to the understanding of migration and to provide a holistic and complementary perspective. These two novels are two halves of a whole. They contribute unique insights into the themes of migration, identity, home, nostalgia, and trauma, offering a more complete picture and a deeper understanding of the complexities of migration.

Christy Lefteri, the author of the book, is herself not far from the themes central to this thesis. As the daughter of a refugee couple who fled the 1974 Cyprus War and settled in London, she is able to empathize with migrants. She recounts:

My parents were refugees who left Cyprus in 1974 after the war. They went to London to rebuild their lives, and to have a sense of safety. I grew up knowing that there was something darker in the past, and while I had a happy childhood, there was a sense of something unsettling happening to them before. (Lefteri 320)

These words seem to reflect the transgenerational trauma discussed in the first part. This personal history not only inspired Lefteri but also shaped her perspective, as she explains:

My dad was a commanding officer during the war, and he left when the war was over. They had to leave for their safety. So, I grew up with that sense of loss in the background. I didn't realize it until years later, in the summer of 2016 when I went down to Cypress for a visit. I was on the far-east side of Cypress that faces Syria. And as I sat there on a beach, I looked across the water and realized how safe I was, sitting on this beautiful shore-the sea in Cypress is so beautiful-and I was safe there, and then just across the water, there was fear and a sense of catastrophe. (Lefteri 320)

Despite not having lived through the Cyprus conflict, there exists an intrinsic sense of dissonance, mirroring the experiences of Ada as portrayed in *The Island*. Lefteri's understanding of the loss of basic securities, such as safety and a sense of home was a driving force behind her decision to start a novel. Another inspiration came from her volunteer work with refugees in Greece under UNICEF, where she discovered the refugees' desire to communicate their experiences. No matter how deep their wounds were, these people wanted to talk and share their experiences. Lefteri's attentive listening

to these stories indisputably influenced the development of her book, adding authenticity and depth to her portrayal of the refugee experience through her keen observation.

Analyzing Lefteri's novel, this thesis seeks to redirect its attention to examining the migration process itself and the more acute problems it presents. Besides enduring the brutality of civil war and the trauma of displacement and loss of home, migrants also face the degrading and belittling attitudes of the host country. When migration becomes a global crisis, such as the one in Syria, xenophobia begins to escalate. In turn, political parties that seek to exploit people's fears of refugees entering their homelands for political gain may rise in popularity.

Lefteri's novel, *The Beekeeper*, offers a clear demonstration of the dangers of such journeys and their aftermath. The characters encounter numerous perilous incidents during their journey, which begins in Syria and ends in England. They regularly confront traffickers, who are dangerous people, and they have to travel in terrible conditions, such as sharing the back of a lorry with “a cow in the back of the pickup, the floor scattered with its feces” (Lefteri 60), or crossing the Aegean Sea in makeshift boats. Nuri faces death threats in Syria unless he joins the armed forces. To afford their flight to London, he becomes a delivery man for a smuggler in Athens. Tragically, Afra is subjected to rape by the same smuggler, Mr. Fotakis. The migrant's journey is, therefore, constantly perilous and fraught with danger. Xenophobia is another factor that further complicates the situation for the migrant. From the viewpoint of the host community, migrants are held responsible for problems within the country, making them a scapegoat. This is particularly noticeable when Nuri and Afra reside in a refugee camp in Athens and in a government-funded bed and breakfast in England, where a nearby billboard proclaims that the size of migrants is excessive and will be detrimental to the country: “The billboard just outside says that there are too many of us, that this island [England] will break under our weight” (Lefteri 5).

Xenophobia fosters a hostile climate for migrants and hinders their ability to adapt. In situations where xenophobia is pervasive, communication between the migrant and host

communities is minimal, which can result in misconception and perpetuation of stereotypes. The emergence of a broad attitude of exclusion towards migrants carries significant implications, including discrimination, racism, and even violence. Once discord is sowed in society, adapting to the new environment becomes increasingly challenging for migrants. This ultimately results in additional pressure, tension, and separation for both the migrants and the host society, leading to a lose-lose situation for all parties involved. The media's influence in spreading xenophobic ideas can be seen in this above excerpt from the novel, where a biased perspective portrays migrants as burdensome. However, such portrayals ignore the complexities of migration, as it is evident from the novel that immigrants do not willingly seek to abandon their homes. Nuri and Afra were uprooted from their contented life in Aleppo due to the devastation of the civil war. Their displacement is a result of forced relocation due to the absence of a stable home. This crucial aspect of the migration phenomenon is unfortunately overlooked amidst pervasive xenophobic rhetoric.

The generalizing and reductionist attitude towards the migrants fosters the discriminatory mindset, opening up a new discourse where the main focus becomes sending the migrants back. However, it is an overlooked fact that migrants come from very diverse social and economic backgrounds, and they can make a major contribution to the country's development. In the context of *The Beekeeper*, the host community is surprised and puzzled by Afra's occupation back in Syria. She was a successful painter before the war, which contradicts the Western stereotype of the Eastern populations. Art which is not exclusive to the West can also flourish in countries like Syria, where Afra expressed her creativity and talent. "The art she made was amazing. She won awards for her paintings of urban and rural Syria" (Lefteri 20). However, this often elicits surprise in the West, where they migrate. While skepticism might not always be overtly articulated, the subtle nuances of surprised glances or the probing nature of follow-up inquiries indicate such a sentiment.

Nuri encounters a similar attitude to that which Afra faced. Despite his proficiency in English and his background as an educated beekeeper in Aleppo, Nuri's capabilities often

come as a surprise to others. This reaction is particularly evident in the case of the official guiding the Ibrahim couple through the asylum process. She seems taken aback by Nuri's competence. Nuri notes, "Her name is Lucy Fisher, and she seems impressed that I can speak English so well" (Lefteri 24). This surprise takes its source from a narrow and distorted perception of Syria, predominantly seen through the lens of civil war. Such a perspective, unfortunately prevalent in the West, effectively erases Syria's rich and diverse past, reducing it to a war-torn geography devoid of normal life, education, and success. This reductive view fails to acknowledge the existence of a functioning society in Syria before the conflict, where people like Nuri could lead successful and fulfilling lives.

The migration experience presents challenges beyond those encountered in a migrant's home country during war or on their journey to their new destination. As mentioned earlier, residents of the host country may also create difficulties for migrants. Alongside these social obstacles, migrants face official challenges such as the grueling process to be granted asylum. Afra and Nuri, who come from a high socio-cultural background in Syria, have to endure the same degrading process. Nuri, a successful beekeeper, and Afra, an immensely skillful artist, renowned for her captivating paintings, face the same challenges as other immigrants when they migrate to the United Kingdom. The questions posed to Nuri and Afra during the reception process provide considerable insight in this regard. The prerequisite for acceptance to the UK is stated as follows: "To stay in the UK as a refugee, you must be unable to live safely in any part of your own country because you fear persecution there" (Lefteri 25). Nuri and Afra meet this condition. However, this alone is not sufficient for approval. Nuri will also have to "convince [the officer] that [he is] not a killer" (Lefteri 7). The verb "convince" carries significant weight, revealing a broader prejudice against immigrants as potential criminals. Nuri faces the daunting task of overcoming prevailing preconceptions, a challenge compounded by deep-rooted societal biases. This endeavor is critical, as he has neither a homeland nor a home to return to, making his success imperative despite the difficulties ahead.

Nuri feels unwell after the asylum interview due to his awareness that the questions posed are an attack on his identity. The questions seem absurd to him, and he cannot comprehend

why they are being asked. Indeed, the questions are unreasonable when viewed without context: “Have you ever killed anyone? What’s the national anthem of your country? Can you sing it without the words? Do you read political books? What is the current situation in your country? Who is your president? Are there any landmarks in Aleppo? Have you seen Daesh?” (Lefteri 235–38). Needless to say, the authorities are posing these questions in a methodical manner to reach a particular objective. However, it is important to acknowledge that these inquiries may inflict emotional harm on migrants who have already undergone experiences of civil war and trauma. At the interview's conclusion, Nuri articulates his sentiments: “When I stand my legs are numb and I feel that I have been robbed somehow, of life” (Lefteri 238). Nuri's physical numbness is actually a manifestation of the numbness in his own emotional state. The displacement has had a traumatic effect on Nuri, leaving him in a state of mental paralysis. The questions he is being asked worsen this effect to the point where his mental paralysis is likely to turn into a physical paralysis. These questions are hurting because they dehumanize him. Unfortunately, the bureaucratic process surrounding migrants often reduces them to mere *numbers* and *cases*, stripping them of their identity and humanity. This leads to further identity questioning and weakening for migrants who are already experiencing an identity crisis. The use of “robbed” by Nuri is particularly noteworthy, as he does not believe that he has simply lost his life but rather that it was taken from him by force. This is an accurate depiction of the situation when examined closely. The city of Aleppo, formerly depicted in the novel as a paradise, has been stripped of everything that gave meaning to the protagonist's life. The beehives in Aleppo were destroyed; his son, Sami, lost his life due to a bomb that landed in their garden; his wife Afra was raped; and he was separated from Mustafa, his closest companion. The questions exhaust his life energy because, after the loss of everything of value in his life, Nuri expects to be confronted with more meaningful questions.

The initial indications of bureaucratic torment that await immigrants in the UK become apparent as soon as Nuri and Afra set foot in Greece for the first time. Almost everything in the migration process hinges on the availability of documents. Because without the documents, the system cannot *see* the migrants. Nuri expresses the matter as follows:

“They wanted their papers so that they could exist in the eyes of the European Union. And the ones who were the wrong nationality would get no papers—except for a ticket back to wherever” (Lefteri 130). Only when migrants present the required documents can they become eligible for basic rights, such as the right to life, education and healthcare. However, not all migrants are fortunate enough to obtain these rights. There's a discernible bias based on the country of origin, which can work either in favor of or against the migrants. In the novel, it is stated that Syrian migrants are given priority because the dimensions of the civil war in Syria have become the largest humanitarian crisis in recent years. Thus, Nuri and Afra can be considered *lucky* as they are Syrian. This manifests the inhumane treatment that it is not the difficulty of the migrants' situation, but the country they come from that is decisive in the admission process. The threat of being deported to their war-torn homeland looms over the migrants like a modern-day Sword of Damocles, exerting relentless pressure. For many, the prospect of being sent back is equivalent to a death sentence. Consequently, bureaucratic barriers rank among the most intimidating challenges faced by migrants. These administrative obstacles can be as challenging and demoralizing as any other hardship they encounter during their journey.

At this point, it is important to note that there are other dangers associated with the experience of migration. Their migration experience can be divided into three pivotal phases: the initial stage in Turkey, the intermediary period on the Greek island of Leros, and the concluding phase in Athens. During these three periods, Nuri and Afra face various dangers, and in Athens, they suffer the biggest blow before they are able to escape to England by plane. In this respect, it can be argued that the couple's migration process turns into a journey taking them to the heart of a black hole in that the conditions worsen and worsen, and thus, their hopes for the future gradually fade into nothingness. Eventually, however, they emerge from this black hole, reach England, and find salvation.

In Istanbul, Nuri and Afra find themselves in a shared house, a temporary refuge arranged by a human trafficker. Women stay in one room, and men stay in another. With immigrants from numerous different nationalities, the conditions are quite cramped. Although the conditions are very challenging, Nuri harbors a sense of hope in Istanbul, contrasting

sharply with the despair he feels in Athens. Athens stands out as a city that kills hope in the migrant's heart:

I remembered the wild dogs of Istanbul and standing on Taksim Square with some hope in my heart. Hope existed then in the unknowability of the future. Istanbul felt like a place of waiting, but Athens was a place of stagnant resignation, and Angeliki's words played on my mind: "This is the place where people die slowly, inside. One by one, people die." (Lefteri 175)

The wait in Istanbul is a temporary state, a steppingstone for those seeking asylum in a European country via Greece. The journey to the Greek island is contingent on favorable weather conditions. When the day finally comes, Nuri and Afra, along with other migrants, embark on a perilous sea voyage for the purpose of entering Greek territorial waters. As often heard on the news, the boat has been filled with migrants far beyond its capacity. The success rate of this crossing is very low, as the slightest mishap can cause the boat to sink, and the chances of survival for passengers are almost zero. As their boat enters Greek waters, it begins to take on water, teetering on the brink of disaster. In a moment of despair, Greek authorities intervene, rescuing the boat and its passengers. They are first taken to Farmokonisi, an island off the coast of Didim, before being moved to the larger island of Leros, where they are destined to spend some time.

The island of Leros, with its dark history, emerges as a significant setting in the novel, reflecting the ongoing plight of migrants. Its past, marked by conflicts and its use as a leper colony, draws a pessimistic picture for the migrants arriving there. This history is unveiled to Nuri in a conversation with an official: "'This island was a leper colony once,' she said. 'This asylum was like a Nazi concentration camp. People were caged and chained without names or identities. The children here were abandoned, tied to their beds all day'" (Lefteri 138).

The novel draws a parallel between the island's past and the present, highlighting the persistent nature of human suffering and cruelty. Lefteri does not provide this historical context just for background information but to emphasize the continuation of inhumane treatment across time. She also aims to underscore the similarity between the past

treatment of people on this island, who were subjected to inhumane practices without names and identities, and the current experiences of migrants stripped of their identities. The narrative effectively shows that the story of people who were de-identified and reduced to numbers in the past is still ongoing. The migrants on Leros are faced with a similar fate, inheriting the island's tragic legacy and becoming part of a history where the vulnerable are consistently subjected to harsh and inhumane conditions. This historical parallelism underscores the continuous nature of human suffering and stresses the significance of having compassion and empathy for individuals who are in vulnerable positions.

For Nuri and Afra, Athens represents the final and most challenging phase of their migration journey. Upon arrival, the couple is accommodated in a refugee camp, where they experience harrowing incidents that prompt them to depart permanently. The camp becomes a hub for all sorts of illicit activities, including the operations of organ mafias, drug dealers, human traffickers, and prostitution rings. Asylum seekers from various parts of the world, having entered the country, are brought to this camp. Ironically, situated in an old airport, a world of mobility and freedom, this camp offers its visitors nothing but captivity and entrapment. The city, for these migrants, turns into a dead-end, a place where hope dwindles and dies. "Peoples are get stuck here... This is the place where people die slowly, inside" (Lefteri 175). As the story unfolds, it becomes clearer what kind of environment the migrants are thrown into. Nuri's description of the camp paints a grim picture: "I began to notice what was wrong with this place. Men gathered in gangs like wolves: Bulgarians and Greeks and Albanians. They were watching and waiting for something; I could see it in their eyes. They were the eyes of intelligent predators" (Lefteri 185). The uncanny setting makes Nuri feel like a prey in the middle of predators. Danger lurks at every moment. In this dystopian setting, where law and order seem to have been suspended, Nuri and Afra find themselves isolated, with very few individuals they can trust. The perpetual sense of danger and the depressive atmosphere of the camp wear them down, eroding their hopes and resilience day by day.

At this point in the novel, Nadim emerges as a character whom Nuri encounters at the Athens camp, highlighting the challenges of trusting others in that setting and how appearances can deceive. Nadim is portrayed as a complex and enigmatic figure, particularly in his interactions with children, which raises concerns among the other residents. When Nuri first meets him, he is impressed with his remarkable skill playing the traditional instrument, the rebab. The melodies he plays enchant Nuri and take him to otherworldly places. However, beneath Nuri's pleasant appearance lurks an evil character. Although not explicitly stated in the novel, it is implied that Nadim is involved in facilitating sexual activity between teenage boys and older men for financial gain. After witnessing Nadim's ambiguous relationship with the twins, Nuri becomes suspicious of him. The enchanting aura Nadim created for Nuri with his rebab begins to fade. He secretly follows Nadim. When he discovers the truth, he attempts to communicate with Nadim, but Nadim reveals his true face, seizes Nuri's arm, and stabs him with a knife. Shocked, Nuri retreats and cannot defend himself. Some time passes after this incident. Nadim is nowhere to be seen during this period. One day, Nuri notices a crowd beating someone. That person turns out to be Nadim himself, who ends up getting caught up in a lynch mob. The situation is further intensified when the final and fatal blow to Nadim is delivered by Nuri, a person who, under normal circumstances, would not resort to violence. This action is a significant moment in the narrative, illustrating the extreme circumstances that can push even the most peaceful individuals to acts of violence. This event adds to the psychological burden that Nuri already carries due to his broken psyche.

The novel effectively highlights the perils of refugee camps. Nadim serves as a powerful symbol of the deceptive and perilous nature of the refugee camp environment. His character is likened to a siren, drawing a parallel to the ancient Greek myth of Odysseus. When Angeliki learns about Nadim injuring Nuri's arm, she gives an indirect warning to Nuri, referencing the story of Odysseus. The conversation between Angeliki and Nuri goes as follows:

They will try to entice men to death with their song. If you hear their song they will take you. So, as they are pass the island, the men put wax in their ears to no hear the song, but Odysseus want to hear the Siren song because he had been told it is so beautiful. So do you know what they do?" "No." "This very important. The men tie Odysseus to the mast of the ship—they tie him on so tight. He says for

them to leave him tied there no matter how much he begs, until they are safe, far from the Sirens and their song. (Lefteri 221–22)

This allegory is a metaphor for the perils that lurk beneath a pleasant appearance. Nadim's apparent attractiveness and aptitude with the rebab cover his malicious character, much as the Sirens' lovely singing conceals a terrible menace. Angeliki's caution to Nuri is a reminder to be vigilant and not to be seduced by looks, as danger lies under the surface all the time.

Another character worth mentioning when discussing the perils of migration is Mr. Fotakis, a human and drug trafficker. He initially appears to be helpful but soon reveals his true, sinister nature. With the aim of escaping to England, Nuri finds him in Athens through a third party. He demands seven thousand euros to smuggle Nuri and Afra into England. They agree on five thousand euros in return for Nuri working for Mr. Fotakis until a fake passport is produced. According to the agreement, Nuri will act as a courier for Mr. Fotakis to deliver packages to various locations in Athens. During this time, Mr. Fotakis invites the couple to stay at his home. While being aware of the potential dangers of staying with a smuggler, Nuri accepts the invitation to avoid the dangers of the refugee camp mentioned earlier. Nuri remarks that “Mr. Fotakis [makes him] uneasy” (Lefteri 271) but also notes that “[they were] treated like special guests” (Lefteri 271). The couple is persuaded to stay when Mr. Fotakis provides them with a room. The room provided by Mr. Fotakis is damp, cramped, dirty, and suffocating. Despite these conditions, Nuri remarks, “It's better than [sleeping in] the park” (Lefteri 270). Afra, too, feels a sense of unease in Mr. Fotakis' apartment. She insists that Nuri lock the door from the outside and take the key with him whenever he leaves to deliver packages. For more than a month during their stay at the smuggler's house, Nuri follows Afra's request. He locks her in every time he leaves for his nightly errands of delivering packages. On one occasion, Nuri realizes he has forgotten the key on the coffee table at home. He hesitates whether to go back or not. He decides not to go back because he is worried that he will not be able to deliver the packages on time. Upon his return, Nuri finds the key missing from the coffee table and the room locked. He calls for Afra to open the door, and upon seeing her, he

immediately senses that something horrible has happened: Afra has been raped by Mr. Fotakis.

Following the traumatic event, Mr. Fotakis behaves as though nothing unusual has occurred with Nuri and Afra. He continues with the arrangements as if Afra were simply an object in his possession. Despite the gravity of the situation, there is no deviation from the original plan: passports are prepared, and tickets for their flight to England are secured. He even makes Greek coffee for them. Nuri, however, is trapped in a moral and emotional dilemma. He contemplates exacting revenge on Mr. Fotakis, much like he had previously dealt with Nadim. However, such an action would inevitably anchor them in Athens indefinitely, an outcome they desperately want to avoid. The alternative is to mimic Mr. Fotakis' distressing indifference, to act as if his sexual assault never occurred. Nuri, recognizing the dire vulnerability and powerlessness of their situation as immigrants, reluctantly opts for the latter. Despite his deep-seated desire to avenge Afra, he is constrained by their circumstance. This situation is made even more complicated by the fact that Mr. Fotakis seems to be aware of Nuri's inner struggle. Despite Nuri's desire to kill Mr. Fotakis for what he has done, he cannot follow through. Mr. Fotakis seems almost unnervingly at ease around the couple, possibly because he understands that Nuri, despite having the means to harm him, is unlikely to do so. This could suggest that Mr. Fotakis might have even deliberately provided Nuri with the opportunity to act against him, fully aware of the psychological and situational constraints that would hold Nuri back. Nuri expresses the situation in his own words as follows: "But, if I took this revenge, Afra and I would never be able to leave. If I let him live, we would still have this chance to escape, even though something of me would always be left behind, trapped within the dank walls of this apartment" (Lefteri 292). Reaching England is the ultimate goal for Nuri and Afra, overshadowing all other issues. Their journey has been fraught with peril and suffering, and the prospect of remaining in Athens or continuing life on the road represents a fate worse than death. The hardships and dangers they have endured during their journey have been extreme, making the idea of prolonging their time in transit unbearable. The urgency of their situation, the need to escape the dangers of the road, and the prospect of finally finding some semblance of safety and stability in England compel Nuri to suppress his

desire for vengeance. At this moment, the priority of reaching a safe haven takes precedence over the immediate impulse to seek justice for the wrongs they have suffered.

3.2. Identity in *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*

The purpose of this section is to examine migrant identity from an alternate viewpoint than the one taken in the previous chapter of the thesis related to Shafak's *The Island*. As was pointed out in the second chapter, migrant identity is a dynamic and fluid phenomenon rather than a static one. This was particularly examined through Ada, a second-generation immigrant born in England to migrant parents. Trying to embrace both the English and the Cypriot identity, Ada experiences a state of in-betweenness. Her challenges, while significant, differed from those of her parents, who directly experienced the civil war and its associated traumas. In the path of identity formation, her struggle is with herself.

As explained above, our focus with *The Island* centered around the identity struggles faced by second-generation immigrants. In contrast, *The Beekeeper* by Christy Lefteri recounts Nuri and Afra's migration from Syria to England during the civil war and their introspective journey along the way. Therefore, this section will analyze the novel and explore how the concept of identity alters and frequently undergoes destruction and reconstruction in first-generation immigrants amidst challenging circumstances. To this extent, Lefteri's novel serves to reinforce the notion of immigrant identity as inherently fluid. In addition to their fluid structure, the identity of the people who fled the civil war and migrated is characterized by their resilience. So, despite enduring immense suffering and loss, many individuals fleeing the civil war have managed to preserve their overall well-being. In the pursuit of adapting to new environments, navigating the balance between their authentic selves and the ideal identity expected of them is not an easy undertaking. Nuri and Afra, the main characters in the novel, embody this resilient and fluid identity. By fostering such an identity, they attain their goal of reaching England and consequently get ready to approach life with a newfound sense of hope.

As indicated by the title, bees hold significant symbolic importance throughout the novel, in which various bee-related features are frequently referenced. Similar to the fig tree's

connection to migration in Shafak's novel, a parallel exists between bees and migration in Lefteri's novel. Shafak employs the metaphor of a fig tree, which has its roots in Cyprus and is brought to England with various difficulties. The tree struggles for years to adapt to the climate there, depicting the migrant experience. In a similar vein, Lefteri pays homage to migrants all over the world by utilizing bees in her novel, which are identified with concepts such as migration, constant mobility, industriousness, cleanliness, and resilience.

The importance of bees for nature is an undeniable fact and awareness about their crucial role in maintaining the balance of the environment has grown considerably. Thus, much effort has recently been put into campaigns to protect these little creatures because scientists claim that the world would cease to exist without them. The very first reason for this is that bees play a crucial role as pollinators. Plants rely on bees, insects, and some animals like birds and bats for pollination, crucial for reproduction. Bees are particularly vital, pollinating 90% of the top 107 crops, highlighting their indispensable role in agriculture and ecosystem sustainability, as noted by Millar (Millar).

In addition to their crucial benefits to the environment, bees also contribute to the economy through their production of honey. Moreover, the anti-inflammatory and immunomodulatory effects of bee venom have also been studied, with promising results for its use in the pharmaceutical industry (Carpena et al. 17). Thus, bees are not only vital for pollination but also benefit nature and humans through their honey and venom. Patel et al. have also shown that bees can contribute to the sustainable development goals of the United Nations in the following eight areas: “Quantity and quality of food, nutrition and medicine, inclusive communities, biofuels, forest conservation and regrowth, healthy and diverse ecosystems, economic opportunities, innovation, and inspiration” (Patel et al. 55). Given these numerous benefits, bees have been a subject of intense study and have even inspired literary works. In *Poetics of the Hive*, Hollingsworth examines how the mental structure he calls the Hive is embodied in artistic products. He substantiates his argument by analyzing Homer, Virgil, Dante, and Milton, highlighting the recurring literary significance of bees: “The honeybee is a fitting emblem for the good cause: no other

animal type communicates quite the same qualities of purity, altruism, and social perfection, and none other has enjoyed so much sustained attention from so many esteemed poets” (Hollingsworth 161).

In this respect, it is only natural and fitting that bees appear in the title of *The Beekeeper* and are frequently referred to in the novel. Lefteri establishes a parallelism between bees and migrants. In particular, the fact that the wingless bee that Nuri discovers in the guesthouse where they stay after defecting to England continues to live obstinately and demonstrates perseverance is noteworthy in terms of giving an example of how resilient bees and immigrants are. The novel uses bees to symbolize different aspects of life before and after the Civil War, as well as the transformation in the lives of migrants. In other words, it is the civil war and migration that distinguish the bee references in the novel. Before the Civil War, bees are depicted as industrious creatures, diligently producing honey and representing “the Western fantasy of a just and happy order” (Hollingsworth 23). On one occasion, Afra, who observes the bees working non-stop even amidst the turmoil of civil war, exclaims with astonishment: “Look at them still working, when everything else is dying” (Lefteri 12). While everything else loses meaning, the bees remain in harmony, contrasting sharply with the disarray of human society in civil war. In this sense, the bees become a symbol of hope in this part of the book. In a letter to Nuri, who is on his way to England, Mustafa writes to him not to lose hope: “Where there are bees there are flowers, and where there are flowers there is new life and hope” (Lefteri 198).

In England, however, the representation of bees shifts. There is no longer a community of bees working together for a common cause. Here, a solitary, wingless bee Nuri finds in the garden becomes the main focus, reflecting the isolation and challenges faced by Nuri in a foreign land. This change signifies the transformation in the identity of migrants. The cohesive, collaborative community of bees is replaced by the struggle of an individual bee, mirroring the shift from a collective identity to one centered on individual survival as society has become dysfunctional, transitioning from a community that prioritizes mutual

assistance to one that inflicts harm and death. Consequently, Nuri and Afra, the characters of the novel, abandon their old, static identities and adopt a resilient, fluid identity.

Nuri and Afra's journey to England and their adaptation to a new life can be seen as a move into Homi Bhabha's concept of the "third space". As mentioned in the theory section of the thesis, the third space goes beyond binary opposition and adds a new dimension to the identity struggles of migrants trapped between home and host community. This is also reflected in the novel, where Nuri and Afra try to shed their past identities but completely refuse to adopt the ready-made identities of the host community. The third space thus provides a source of comfort for them. Like the bee who has adapted to living without wings in England, Nuri and Afra have adapted to living without their past values. This observation should be considered not only in terms of the opportunities they possess but also from an identity standpoint. As previously stated, Nuri was a successful businessperson, and Afra excelled as a painter in Syria. Insisting on maintaining these titles and clinging to a rigid identity would have hindered their chances of survival. Therefore, the couple abandons these labels and is able to start anew with fresh identities, allowing them to move forward and rebuild their lives. Nuri's appreciation and sympathy towards the bee are striking and reflect the migrant experience:

The bee is sleeping on one of the dandelions. I stroke her fur, very gently so that I will not disturb her. I am amazed that she has survived in this little garden she has made into a home. I watch her resting among the flowers with her saucer of sugar water by her side; she has learned to live without her wings. (Lefteri 299)

This solitary bee, now away from his companions and his lucrative days, becomes the symbol of vulnerability and resilience. The instant connection formed between the bee and Nuri stands as a testament to the fact that the migrants have to accomplish their never-ending task of reconstructing their homes and identities.

Nuri is clearly not the only migrant with empathy for the bee. The Moroccan man, another asylum seeker staying at the B and B in the UK, also joins Nuri's efforts to save the bee. On one of his outings, when he returns with a gift for Nuri with "a huge smile on his face, holding a wooden tray with five plants on it" (Lefteri 97), the Moroccan man demonstrates his affection for the bee. The fact that this special attention to a wingless bee is

acknowledged and supported by other migrants besides Nuri reaffirms that the impact of the uprooting and rerooting process on identities is not limited but widespread. It also demonstrates how migrants typically develop a heightened feeling of empathy and solidarity, not just towards each other but also towards other vulnerable beings, such as the wingless bee, as they adapt to new surroundings.

Lefteri's use of the bee analogy to portray migrant experiences and identities is made explicit by the character Afra in the novel through the following conversation: "I think the bees are like us... They are vulnerable like us. But then there are people like Mustafa. There are people like him in the world, and those people bring life rather than death" (Lefteri 200–01). The theme of vulnerability, explored through butterflies in *The Island*, is similarly addressed through bees in *The Beekeeper*. In *The Island*, the fig tree asserts that butterflies, often perceived as vulnerable, are, in fact, resilient, enduring long migrations under challenging conditions. This notion of resilience is echoed in *The Beekeeper*, where bees are frequently emphasized for their resilience. However, as the quote above suggests, Afra's perception of bees contrasts with other references in the novel. This divergence apparently stems from her own migration journey and the accompanying traumas. We have mentioned above that Afra admires the diligence of bees in Aleppo. Initially, Afra admires the bees' industriousness in Aleppo, but post-civil war, her view shifts, and she begins to see them as vulnerable, reflecting her own vulnerability. In this context, the only person who gives her hope is neither her husband Nuri, who is grappling with PTSD nor the other migrants around her. Mustafa, embodying the diligence and productivity of the bees, stands out as an emancipator for Afra, as he is the only person who can repair their broken identities. Thus, Mustafa becomes a central figure in their journey towards rerooting and rebuilding.

The references to bees in the novel do not only indicate the resilience and fluidity of migrant identities. Through the bees, the novel draws a contrast between the migrant and the host community, thereby providing a greater understanding of the difficulties of migrant identity. For instance, Nuri recounts how Mustafa taught him to work with bees, saying: "The native bees were aggressive from the heat, but he showed me how to

understand them” (Lefteri 11). Although bees are the literal subject here, Lefteri subtly uses the metaphor to reflect on migrants and societal perceptions. In this respect, the bee metaphor emphasizes the value of integration and the presence of immigrants in society. Although the bees here are referred to as "natives", they are, in fact, creatures whose environment has been drastically altered by humans and who have, therefore, become immigrants in their own homes. It is, therefore, quite understandable that these bees show an aggressive attitude. Stressed and in an unfamiliar environment, the bees do not hesitate to use their defensive weapons for self-protection.

In this respect, the situation is similar to that of migrants. When migrants move to a new country, especially when they leave behind a country devastated by civil war, they struggle with cultural differences, language barriers, the general stress of displacement, and xenophobia. For this reason, these factors should be taken into consideration when examining migrant behavior. Lefteri also uses the metaphor of the bee to suggest that understanding and patience are critical to the successful integration of migrants. In a context where it is much easier to judge, marginalize, and scapegoat due to underlying psychological reasons, it is crucial to strive for understanding, empathizing, and keeping an open mind. When this happens, it is clear that a mutually beneficial relationship between migrants and the host community can be established.

The contrast between migrants and locals through the metaphor of the bee extends to the subsequent chapters of the novel. In the correspondence between Mustafa and Nuri, Mustafa writes that he has restarted beekeeping in England and informs Nuri about the native bees of England: “Beekeepers from Britain usually have Italian honeybees exported from New Zealand, but these native bees are much more able to withstand the crazy climate here” (Lefteri 197). This quote indicates how native bees are perfectly suited to the British climate. Seemingly, bees are not the only creatures that have difficulties adapting to an unfamiliar environment. People, too, experience the same difficulties. Just as bees brought from New Zealand have difficulties getting used to the British climate, Nuri and Afra, who came from Syria, also have difficulties starting a new life in England. As noted by Gladkikh et al., migrants from sunny climates have difficulty adapting to

rainy and cold climates, adding an extra layer of stress (10). Here, however, the novel signals the other aforementioned challenges of migration through the bee metaphor. The reference to native bees suggests that they, unlike their imported counterparts, do not face these adaptation challenges, enjoying an inherent advantage that could persist across generations.

In a later correspondence, Nuri shares that he has resumed beekeeping, further expanding the immigrant-native comparison and the bee metaphor. Mustafa's response reflects his passion and resilience:

The beehives are thriving, Nuri! These British black bees are very different from Syrian bees. I thought that they would never work under 15 degrees Celsius, but these bees work at temperatures much lower, and they even continue to work in the rain. The bees gather nectar from flowers along train tracks and in private gardens and parks. (Lefteri 243)

Mustafa enthusiastically explains that native bees also work in cold weather, which is why they are so suitable for the UK. His use of the term "Syrian bees" is quite striking. Through this, Lefteri subtly conveys that Britain, with its different environment, poses challenges for people from Syria. Yet, the tone of Mustafa's letter is hopeful. By resuming beekeeping, he reconnects with a crucial part of his identity. The bees are not the Syrian bees he is used to, but he has managed to work with them and produce honey. As also observed by Afra, Mustafa proves once again that he is a very productive and hopeful person. The bees here collect their nectar not from vast fields but from flowers by the railroad tracks. Despite the limited resources, the bees continue to work diligently. Their resilient and hardworking nature has always been an inspiration to Mustafa. Therefore, this correspondence serves as a sign that Nuri and Afra can also find success in their new environment. For Mustafa, bees are a crucial element that completes his identity. Thus, while adapting to his new life in England, he aims to preserve his old identity. In this case, too, Mustafa and the other immigrant characters in the novel adopt a more fluid identity. Initially feeling incomplete in England as "a beekeeper without bees" (Lefteri 197), he eventually overcomes this, thanks to his resilient and fluid migrant identity. He starts beekeeping again in a different country under different conditions, in a different climate,

and with a completely different kind of bee. In this way, he mends the fractures in his identity and continues forward.

The novel masterfully communicates the profound impact of migration and trauma on the identities of its characters, particularly Nuri and Afra. Afra's transformation serves as evidence of this. "Afra was different before the war" (Lefteri 19). She is portrayed as a vibrant, strong, and cheerful woman. Her lively spirit is reflected in her paintings. Her art is so dynamic that the objects in her paintings seem to come to life, earning her international acclaim and making her works sought after by tourists in Aleppo. However, the onset of war and the loss of her son mark a drastic change in Afra. She suffers a major psychological breakdown, losing her joy and desire for life. Her reluctance to leave their ruined house in Aleppo, perhaps "waiting for a bomb to hit [her]" (Lefteri 40) and take her life, signifies a deep sense of despair. Apparently, the trauma she experiences triggers her death instinct. Additionally, Afra loses her eyesight, which is a devastating blow for an artist. This loss is symbolic, parallel to a bee without wings, as sight is integral to a painter's identity. Interestingly, it is later revealed by a doctor that there is no physical damage to Afra's eyes. This suggests that her blindness is psychosomatic, a manifestation of her trauma and a subconscious desire to disconnect from the world and her identity as a painter. By refusing to see, Afra is, in a way, inching closer to death, dismantling the core of her identity. However, as the novel progresses, there is a gradual shift in Afra's state. She begins to paint again, albeit with distorted shapes and incorrect colors. This change marks the beginning of her healing process. By the end of the novel, her paintings recover their correct colors and shapes, and significantly, Afra regains her sight. This transformation symbolizes a recovery and a reclaiming of her identity. The journey of Afra in the novel underscores the extensive impact of migration on human identity. It highlights that the effects of migration are not only immediate but can also extend across generations, influencing the lives and identities of second and third-generation migrants.

The transformation of Nuri, Afra's husband, in *The Beekeeper* is another significant illustration of how migration and trauma reshape identities. Afra's observation during her session with Dr. Faruk, "I can't explain what it is, Dr. Faruk, but I know something is

wrong. He is not my husband” (Lefteri 211) highlights her awareness of Nuri's drastic change, primarily due to his PTSD. However, Afra struggles to fully grasp the extent of Nuri's transformation as she grapples with her own traumas. Before the war, Nuri is depicted as a vibrant, hardworking individual. However, the war and its aftermath change him significantly. From being a peaceful, sociable person who cherished nature, he becomes introverted, prone to anger, and reliant on his imaginary friend Mohammed for communication. It's worth remembering that he is the one who deals the final blow to Nadim. This shift in Nuri's character is a survival mechanism, a transition to a more fluid identity in response to his circumstances.

In this respect, the novel aligns with Brah's concept of intersectionality, as discussed in the thesis theoretical chapter, which posits that migrants' identity formation is influenced by various factors like ethnicity, gender, social class, and religion. Nuri's transformation is also shaped by his Middle Eastern cultural background. As a Syrian man, he feels a sharp sense of responsibility towards his family, leading him to adopt a more protective and, at times, aggressive attitude. This change is a reflection of the pressures he faces as a man in a “diaspora space”, where traditional roles and expectations are challenged and redefined. In Brah's “diaspora space,” the distinction between immigrant and native blurs, and identity formation happens for each individual in an exceptional way. Nuri's journey as an immigrant in England exemplifies these differences. The novel skillfully portrays how each character's response to the migration journey is unique, influenced by their socio-economic, cultural, religious, and gender backgrounds.

Changes in migrant identity can be both voluntary and involuntary, with migrants often oscillating between their original and adopted identities, sometimes finding themselves in-between. The character of the Moroccan Man in the novel serves as a decent example of voluntary identity adoption. As previously discussed through Ada's character in *The Island*, the difference can be perceived as a disadvantage for immigrants, prompting voluntary assimilation into the host culture. This tendency is evident in the Moroccan Man, who exhibits both a desire to assimilate and a resistance to the host culture. Right at the beginning of the novel, the Moroccan Man's ambivalence is apparent. “He reads *How*

to *Be a Brit*, and sometimes smirks to himself” (Lefteri 6). Written by George Hikes, this book, full of wit and humor, describes the intricacies of being a British. His engagement with this book signifies a clear intention to understand and integrate into British culture. However, his smirking indicates a complex, often humorous reaction to cultural differences. While he adopts certain British customs, like drinking tea with milk (Lefteri 6), using local slangs such as “Geezer” (Lefteri 50), and giving high fives, he also finds some aspects of British culture puzzling or amusing, such as the importance placed on queuing:

Apparently, queuing is important here. People actually form a single line in a shop. It’s advisable to take your place in the queue and not try to push your way to the front, as this usually pisses people off! This is what the woman in Tesco told me last week. But I don’t like their queues, their order, their neat little gardens and neat little porches and their bay windows that glow at night with the flickering of their TVs. It all reminds me that these people have never seen war. It reminds me that back home there is no one watching TV in their living room or on their veranda, and it makes me think of everything that’s been destroyed. (Lefteri 112–13)

The Moroccan Man's response to the British practice of queuing reflects his perspective on cultural differences. His reaction suggests that he views the British emphasis on order, exemplified by queuing, as excessive. Coming from war-torn lands, he possibly attributes the queuing habit to Britain's lack of recent war experiences. By repeatedly using the possessive adjective “their”, he clearly separates *us* from *others*, delineating a clear border between his own identity and that of the host culture. This linguistic choice allows him to establish a space for himself which stays between assimilation and maintaining his cultural identity. His discomfort with certain British norms indicates his adherence to his cultural roots. “He hates the way the non-Muslim men stand up to piss”(Lefteri 6). He finds it absurd when people go out in a tracksuit because, to the Moroccan man, a tracksuit and pajamas are the same thing (Lefteri 70). In a similar vein, the Moroccan Man's experience mirrors that of Ada in *The Island*, suggesting that the struggle to assimilate into a new society and culture continues for generations.

The Moroccan man's account offers a solid basis for examining Homi K. Bhabha's theory of mimicry, particularly in regards to cultural differences and the experiences of migrants. Bhabha's theory of mimicry, as explained in “The Location of Culture” (1994), suggests

that it is a strategy employed in colonial discourse to encourage the colonized to imitate the colonizer. However, this imitation is intentionally left unfinished, resulting in the creation of a mimic man “that is almost the same, but not quite” (Bhabha 86). The fact that the Moroccan man views queuing as an excessive manifestation of order not only demonstrates his recognition of cultural disparities, but also his reluctance to fully integrate into British society. His act of selectively adopting and then rejecting specific norms can be seen as a form of mimicry. Through this process, he embodies the idea of being “almost the same, but not quite”. By using “their” to distinguish between his identity and that of the British, he navigates a liminal space that Bhabha describes as a form of mimicry that is at once resemblance and menace. Furthermore, his disdain for certain British behaviors, such as standing up to urinate or wearing tracksuits in public, can be seen as an instance of mimicry that reveals the ambivalence at the heart of the concept. These critiques serve as a form of counter-discourse to the dominant cultural norms, employing mimicry not just to adapt but to question and destabilize the norms of the host society. By doing so, the Moroccan Man engages in a complex process of cultural negotiation, where mimicry becomes a strategy for asserting his agency and critiquing the cultural practices that he finds unfamiliar or absurd.

In some cases, migrants like Nuri and Afra are forced to change their identities in “an empire of identification” (Lefteri 133). This is evident when they use fake passports to escape from Greece to England, a situation that clearly highlights the novel's emphasis on identity. The change of passports symbolizes a deeper transformation in their identities. Nuri announces their new names: “About a week later the passports arrived. Our new names were Gloria and Bruno Baresi. ‘You're Italian,’ Mr. Fotakis said” (Lefteri 276). This change is more than just a superficial alteration of names; it represents a deeper shift in how they must present themselves to the world.

The transformation process begins with the need for photographs for the fake passports, where they must appear European, not Syrian. Afra undergoes the most significant change. She removes her turban, an important part of her Islamic identity, and her black hair is dyed blonde by Nuri, effectively “bleach[ing] out the Arabic” from her hair (Lefteri 7).

Nuri, too, adapts by shaving, and the photographs are taken. When they receive their new passports about a week later, they have assumed entirely new identities. They have taken another step towards their desired destination in Europe with their fake Italian passports, now known as Gloria and Bruno Baresi.

The symbolism here is deep and multidimensional. Lefteri's use of the phrase "bleach out the Arabic" criticizes marginalization based on appearance. The mere look of being Middle Eastern can increase scrutiny at airports, linking this image with being dangerous. Therefore, for Nuri and Afra, appearing European and erasing their cultural identities is a strategy to reduce risk on their flight to the UK. This setting underscores the importance of identity in the migrant experience, demonstrating how migrants are often compelled to alter their identities in various ways.

The transformation Nuri and Afra undergo is not merely physical; it signifies a deeper, internal, and cultural shift. This change, however, is an involuntary one. The use of the term "bleach out" is well worth the attention again. This moment marks a critical juncture for both Nuri and Afra, but it is especially painful for Afra, who identifies as a Muslim woman. The pain of this identity shift is evident in a conversation between the couple:

"What do I look like?" Afra said to me later as I was getting ready to make my deliveries. "You don't look like you." "Do I look horrible?" she said. "No," I said. "Of course not. You are always beautiful." "Nuri, now all the world can see my hair." "Really they can't," I said, "because it is a different color." "And they can see my legs." "But they are the legs of Gloria Baresi, not yours." Her lips smiled, but her eyes didn't. (Lefteri 276–77)

This dialogue underscores the internal conflict and confusion they experience. Afra, in particular, grapples with the loss of a significant part of her identity. This transformation is considered necessary for their journey to England and their hoped-for salvation. However, this forced change in identity is not without its consequences. Afra's new appearance draws unwanted attention from Mr. Fotakis, the human trafficker, leading to a traumatic incident. As pointed out before, he rapes her while Nuri is away. This event suggests that shedding one identity for another can have disastrous consequences. The novel implies that identity change is an inevitable part of the migrant experience, yet it is never easy. Instead, it is often a path fraught with suffering that goes on forever.

3.3. Home in *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*.

In a civil war, the concept of home often becomes the first casualty. As previously discussed, home transcends a physical space, encompassing social, cultural, emotional, and psychological dimensions. Lefteri's *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* successfully addresses and interrogates this complicated concept with its different aspects. The novel illustrates the fragility of home and how rapidly and easily this cherished sense can be disrupted or lost. Needless to say, the sense of home is something that is difficult to gain but easy to lose. In the light of this information, this section of the thesis will revisit the concept of home, but from a different perspective, based on the novel *The Beekeeper*. The exploration focuses on how the displaced people cling to any semblance of home, be it a blanket on the ground, a tent under a tree, or even intangible elements like familiar scents or tastes, in their quest to recreate a sense of belonging. Additionally, the emergence of familiar faces is identified as a vital component of the concept of home.

Home, as Somerville puts it, is a multidimensional concept that necessitates a holistic view in order to fully understand it. Home encompasses physical, emotional, social, and cultural elements contributing to the overall sense of home. It is a unique and personal concept. Highlighting the seven dimensions of home, Somerville provides a useful framework that could be put into use in understanding what constitutes home.

Home can be argued to have at least six or seven dimensions of meaning, identified by the 'key signifiers' of shelter, hearth, heart, privacy, roots, abode and (possibly)paradise. Each of these signifiers can be explicated in terms of its wider symbolic meaning (its 'general connotation'), its evocation of a specific sense of security, and its characteristic mode of relating to oneself and to others. The selection of the signifiers is supported by Watson and Austerberry's (1986) empirical findings - for example, 'shelter' corresponds to decent 'material conditions', 'hearth' corresponds to 'emotional and physical well-being', 'heart' to 'loving and caring social relations', 'privacy' to 'control and privacy', and 'abode' to 'living/sleeping place'. Two signifiers have been added to these, however, namely 'roots' (which corresponds to a sense of individual identity) and 'paradise'(which connotes 'ideal home' as distinct from the home of everyday life). Taken together, all these signifiers comprise the meaning of home." (Somerville 532).

As can be understood from the above excerpt, many elements play a crucial role in the formation of home. Like the pieces of a puzzle where each piece is essential to get the whole picture, each dimension of home is indispensable to acquire the overall sense of it.

The significance of home, an elusive and delicate concept, is undeniable. Home appears to be a timeless concept that has come to the present day without losing its importance since the existence of humanity. Even in ancient literary texts like Homer's *Odyssey*, the quest to return home and the challenges encountered clearly demonstrate the enduring value of the concept of home to humanity. It is well-known that Odysseus departs Troy after the Trojan War to make his way back to his homeland, Ithaca, and to reunite with Penelope. Along with his crew, Odysseus embarks on multiple perilous adventures before finally reaching his homeland and reuniting with Penelope. However, Homer's epic poetry holds more significance than a mere tale of adventure and heroism. The *Odyssey* is a celebration of the notion of home and highlights the hardships encountered in the expedition to reach there. Lefteri's novel also references Odysseus' expedition. When Nuri is in a refugee camp in Greece, Angeliki, another Somali asylum seeker he meets, tells him about this epic poem:

Do you know why Odysseus make his journey?" the woman said now, nudging me, and I wished she would be quiet. I turned to her for a second, and when I looked back the man and the girl had disappeared. I felt sick. "He went from Ithaca to Calypso to god knows where—all of this journey, to find what?" There was an intensity to her—the way she leaned into me, the way she pushed my leg if I took my eyes off her. "I don't know," I said to her. "To find his home again," she said. (Lefteri 188)

Lefteri's novel compares Odysseus's journey with present-day refugees. The novel's reference to "The Odyssey", particularly in Nuri's conversation with Angeliki, shows the universality and timelessness of the search for home. This conversation acts as a bridge between the ancient and contemporary and emphasizes the universal human experience across cultures and ages. Angeliki's question, "Do you know why Odysseus make his journey?" and her response, "To find his home again," resonates with Nuri's story. Nuri and many others, like Odysseus, want a genuine home's sense of belonging, protection, and identity. This connection highlights the eternal essence of the human condition, where the quest for home is at the heart of our lives.

To delve deeper, an analysis of the novel's narrator, Nuri, is significant. Nuri, as a Syrian beekeeper in Aleppo, finds joy and purpose in his work with bees alongside his wife Afra, their son Sami, and his cousin and business partner Mustafa. This analysis will reveal how Nuri's perception of home evolves amidst the turmoil of war and displacement. In the discussion of Shafak's novel, it was noted that The Happy Fig restaurant serves as a surrogate home for Kostas and Defne, filling an emotional void and providing a shared sense of home. Similarly, in Lefteri's *The Beekeeper*, the concept of home transcends traditional physical boundaries, reminding us that a home does not necessarily need walls. For Nuri, the protagonist, it is the beekeeping grounds that embody the essence of home. The idea of being in the midst of bees, which for many would be a nightmare, represents a personal paradise for Nuri. Throughout the novel, Nuri frequently reminisces about his days as a beekeeper, recalling the peace and satisfaction he experienced in that setting:

I think of the field in Aleppo before the fire, when the bees hovered above the land like clouds, humming their songs. I can see Mustafa taking a comb out of a hive, inspecting it closely, dipping a finger into the honey, tasting it. That was our paradise, at the edge of the desert and the edge of the city. (Lefteri 95)

The term “paradise” used here is particularly striking, suggesting a more holistic understanding of this concept. Home, as portrayed in the novel, is not merely a physical structure; it encompasses the house itself, the neighborhood, the province, the country, the family, and even personal belongings. These elements collectively contribute to transforming a house into a paradisaical home. Nuri's reflections in the novel emphasize this point; he reminisces more about the beekeeping area than his physical house, feeling a deep sense of nostalgia for it. The world he and his cousin Mustafa create there offers an escape from the harsh realities of the Syrian deserts, the urban crowds, and the brutality of war, providing them with an alternative existence. For Nuri, elements like his wife Afra, his son Sami, Mustafa, the bees, nature, smells, flavors, and memories collectively constitute home. “Home is thus located, but not limited to a particular locale; it is sedentary and mobile” (Ralph and Staeheli 520). Just as migrant identities are fluid and multifaceted, so too is the concept of home, which is inherently dynamic and resistant to rigid definitions.

As the title of the novel suggests, the bee metaphor is pivotal in the novel. Bees symbolize a multitude of concepts, such as hope, life, migration, and resilience, and they also stand out as a harmonious community. The conflict between the people in the Syrian civil war and the harmony of the bees create a contrast, thereby holding a critical stance against anthropocentrism and human superiority. The novel suggests that humans, sharing the world with other creatures, have not necessarily improved this shared space, unlike bees, whose contributions to nature and humanity are significant. The contribution of bees to nature and humanity is unquestionable. “Where there are bees there are flowers, and where there are flowers there is new life and hope” (Lefteri 29) writes Mustafa in a letter he sends to Nuri. That's why, even when civil war breaks out, and even when the country is in chaos, Mustafa and Nuri don't want to leave the bees (Lefteri 18), because they are the most important element that connects them to this country, foster their belonging and completes their definition of home. Thus, leaving the bees would mean the loss of hope and life for them.

However, one night, a group of armed elements in Syria set fire to the area where the bees are located. The bees that have been raised for three generations disappear overnight, just as Syria, which had developed for generations, was torn apart in an instant. This event devastates their sense of belonging and home, foreshadowing further tragedies and making them think more seriously about emigrating. Nuri describes the scene they encountered when they arrived at the beekeeping site as follows:

The bees had died and the field was black. I will never forget the silence, that deep, never-ending silence. Without the clouds of bees above the field, we were faced with a stillness of light and sky. In that moment, as I stood at the edge of the field, where the sun was slanting across the ruined hives, I had a feeling of emptiness, a quiet nothingness that entered me every time I inhaled. Mustafa sat down on the ground in the middle of the field with his legs crossed and his eyes closed. I walked around scanning the ground for live bees and stamped on them because they had no hives or colony. (18-19).

As Nuri points out, with the destruction of the beehives, there is an emptiness and nothingness inside them because their sense of belonging has been shaken, and the feeling of home has suffered a great blow. The death of the bees, known for their coordination and harmony, signals that these concepts can no longer be associated with the land. With

the bees' demise, a curse seems to befall the country, and everything they symbolize, including hope, life, and resilience, perishes with them. Following this event, the tragedy deepens rapidly. Nuri and Mustafa lose their children, and their homes become a desolate no man's land. Ultimately, there is no place left for them to call home. The psychological migration has begun for them. Nuri knows that as a consequence of these recent events, he no longer has a home. Grappling with the loss, he asks the following questions: "Where was home now? And what was it?" (Lefteri 222). He finds his own answers: "In my mind it had become a picture infused with golden light, a paradise never to be reached" (Lefteri 222). When forcibly displaced individuals lose their home, they often seek it in memories, taking refuge in the past. This is evident in Nuri's obsessive revisiting and reliving of traumas, trying to resurrect good memories. This phenomenon, also observed in Shafak's novel, will be discussed in more detail in the subsequent section.

To return to the concept of home, as emphasized by many of the authors mentioned in this thesis, such as Easthope, Boğaç, Boccagni, Egoz, and de Nardi, home is not tied to a place. Migrants carry their homes with them, like a turtle with its shell. Since there is no fixed home for them, they can make any place their home. This characteristic endows them with resilience. Through the novel, we can observe where immigrants make their homes. For instance, after leaving Syria, Nuri and Afra stay in Turkey for a while before crossing to a Greek island with the help of smugglers. Nuri observes other migrants and notes how a simple blanket spread on the ground can become a home. For a migrant, a blanket creates a boundary, a demarcation between them and the rest of the world. This boundary, created by something as simple as a blanket, forms an impassable space, segregating the migrant from the outside world. Within this delineated area, a sense of belonging begins to take root for the migrant. This bounded space, like a personal sanctuary, becomes their own. Just as one cannot enter a house without permission, this space, too, demands respect and acknowledgment of personal boundaries.

Belonging, as we know, is a crucial factor in the formation of the concept of home. Without this sense of belonging, the feeling of being *at home* cannot fully develop. In this defined area, the migrant finds a semblance of safety, a fundamental aspect of home. Security,

both physical and emotional, is essential in this context. Taking into account these conditions, the necessary elements for establishing a concept of home for a migrant are met. In such circumstances, even a blanket laid on the ground transcends its material form to become a symbol of home. It is not just a piece of fabric; it represents a defined, owned, and safe space. For the migrant, this blanket, or any such demarcated area, no matter how temporary or humble, can embody the essence of home.

Indeed, for a migrant, the sense of security and the feeling of being at home are often fleeting and fragile. Because of the traumas the migrant has experienced in the past, this feeling of comfort is temporary. Home becomes akin to a transient pleasure, always at risk of slipping away. The forcibly displaced individuals are worried about experiencing this feeling again because the place where they used to feel so safe can suddenly turn into the most insecure place in the world, as evidenced in Syria. The proverb “every cloud has a silver lining” ironically reverses in the mind of a displaced person; he fears that darkness will inevitably follow any moment of brightness.

Nuri and Afra's journey from Turkey to the Greek island of Leros in a makeshift boat is fraught with peril, yet upon arrival, Nuri experiences a fleeting sense of safety:

As I stood there with Afra and Mohammed and the other families, I felt lost, as if I was out alone in a dark cold sea with nothing to hold on to. This was the first time in a long time that I had felt any safety, any security, and yet in this moment the sky felt too big, the rising dusk held an unknown darkness. (Lefteri 133)

Despite their dire circumstances -hunger, thirst, cold, and uncertainty- Nuri feels relief from the horrors of civil war. However, this feeling of safety is short-lived. Almost immediately, Nuri's worries resurface, overshadowing any hope for the future. The darkening dusk becomes a metaphor for his fear of the unknown, rendering him unhappy and hopeless.

The immigrant, having endured a civil war, seems trapped in time, unable to envision a future or live in the present due to overwhelming traumas and anxieties. The past becomes a refuge, yet it is fraught with its own perils, as nostalgic yearnings are often interrupted by painful memories. Thus, the immigrant is lost in time, with space having slipped away.

In his farewell letter to Nuri before fleeing Syria, Mustafa writes the following about Aleppo: "I will be making my way to England to find my wife and daughter. Leave this place, Nuri; it is no longer home. Aleppo is now like the dead body of a loved one, it has no life, no soul, it is full of rotting blood" (Lefteri 35). Mustafa's words touchingly describe the transformation of Aleppo, a city that, while physically present, has lost its soul, rendering it incapable of being a home. I suggest even if the war ended and they returned, Nuri, Afra, and Mustafa would likely not feel the same sense of belonging and security. Death, in this context, signifies not just physical destruction but the loss of the soul and a definitive separation. For Nuri and the other refugees, a country that has experienced civil war is now devoid of its soul. Therefore, a return is not possible for them. They are caught in limbo. They can neither stay where they live nor go back. They are aware that what awaits them when they return will be very different from what they imagined. For example, when Nuri and Afra attempt to fly from Athens to London with fake passports, they fear being caught and sent back: "I thought that was it. We had been found out. We would be going back. But back where? Back to what?" (Lefteri 296). Here, the sense of displacement and homelessness caused by forced migration is evident. The word "back" no longer denotes a safe space for him. A sense of the unknown surrounds their old home. It becomes *unheimlich*. The unknown kills the feeling of home, as home requires familiarity. Nuri here expresses an existential duality that many immigrants face: The migrant can neither go back nor hope for the future.

It has previously been discussed how the concept of home extends beyond physical confines. For migrants, even in the absence of a tangible home, various elements can evoke a profound sense of belonging. Sensory experiences like a familiar smell, taste, sound, or the sight of a known face can instantly transport a migrant back to a feeling of home. This phenomenon is vividly illustrated in the novel when the civil war in Aleppo escalates, leading to the bombing of civilian houses. The Ibrahim family's home is struck, resulting in a tragic loss, the death of their son, and physical destruction. Amidst this devastation, almost every house in the neighborhood shares a similar fate, creating an apocalyptic landscape.

There was a huge crater in this room; the far wall and part of the ceiling were missing, leaving an open mouth into the garden and sky. The jasmine over the

canopy caught the light, and behind it the fig tree was black and hung low over the wooden swing, the one I'd made for Sami. The silence was hollow, though; it lacked the echo of life. The war was always there. The houses were empty or home to the dead. (Lefteri 39)

In this dystopian context, Nuri, searching for food in the remnants of what was once a grocery store, finds only a pomegranate amidst the looted and rotten goods. Returning to his damaged home with this meager find, he is greeted by the smell of bread. "The room smelled of warm bread, of normal life" (Lefteri 36). Afra, his wife, has managed to bake khubz, a type of pita bread. This familiar aroma transforms their perception of space. Despite the house lacking walls and bearing the scars of conflict, far removed from the traditional definition of a home, the simple act of baking bread and its smell momentarily restores a sense of normality and home.

Music, too, can play a crucial role in evoking a sense of home for migrants. This is exemplified in the novel when Nuri, undergoing the admission process in the UK, finds himself wandering the streets of London's multicultural landscape like a flaneur. While entering a convenience store, he hears a piece of music: "Although I'm not familiar with the song that is playing, the music transports me home, its tones and rhythms, the sound of my language surrounding me and soothing me as I enter the little shop" (Lefteri 96). Although Nuri does not know the song that is being played, the fact that it belongs to his own culture is a sufficient condition for it to have soothing and relaxing properties.

Ahmed explains the process of migrants feeling at home again, which he calls homing, as follows:

Homing entails processes of home-building (Hage 1997), whether 'at home' or in migration. Making home is about the (re)creation of what Eva Hoffman would call 'soils of significance' (1989: 278), in which the affective qualities of home and the work of memory in their making cannot be divorced from the more concrete materialities of rooms, objects, rituals, borders and forms of transport that are bound up in so many processes of uprooting and regrounding. Homing, then, depends on the reclaiming and reprocessing of habits, objects, names and histories that have been uprooted – in migration, displacement or colonization. (Ahmed 9)

This is why migrants often cling to fragments of their shattered sense of home, trying to find solace in remnants that remind them of a more holistic home. Nuri's experience in the convenience store is a testament to this.

The music momentarily gives him a sense of home, similar to the fleeting feeling of safety he experienced on the Greek island. However, as he continues to wander around the shop, the presence of newspapers like *The Times* and *The Telegraph* brings him back to his current reality. The shop owner, likely an Arab, represents a potential connection and an opportunity for socialization, something invaluable for a migrant. However, Nuri hesitates. For him, engaging with a stranger risks resurfacing his traumas. Ahmed's explanation of the link between trauma and homing sheds light on this reluctance. Trauma can complicate the process of homing, as it often involves revisiting painful memories and experiences that migrants might prefer to keep buried.

Inherent to the project of home-building here and now, is the gathering of 'intimations' of home, 'fragments which are imagined to be traces of an equally imagined homely whole, the imagined past "home" of another time and another space' (Hage 1997: 106; emphasis added). In this respect, being at home and the work of home-building is intimately bound up with the idea of home: the idea of a place (or places) in the past, and of this place in the future. Making home is about creating both pasts and futures through inhabiting the grounds of the present. And indeed, both uprooting and regrounding can entail forms of mourning, nostalgia and remembrance as well as physical sickness and experiences of trauma. (Ahmed 9)

Nuri and Afra's journey from Syria to England in *The Beekeeper* is more than just a physical relocation; it's a profound journey of confronting past traumas and rekindling hope for the future. Throughout the novel, we witness their gradual transformation and healing, enabling them to get ready for the idea of rerooting. By the end, Nuri comes to terms with his PTSD and the tragic loss of his son, Sami. This acceptance is symbolically portrayed when he recognizes that the boy he sees is not Mohammed but a vision of Sami: "I can see his expression and his face and his eyes more clearly. The boy sitting next to me, looking at me fearfully, is not Mohammed. 'Sami', I say" (Lefteri 288).

Afra, too, undergoes a significant change; her ability to see color again, like noticing the red bucket and the rosebush, signifies her emerging readiness to face past traumas and begin healing (Lefteri 285). This journey of confronting the past is a crucial step towards rebuilding their homes and lives. It's not just about physical resettlement in a new country, but also about mental and emotional resettlement. The idea of having another child, as

discussed by the couple, is emblematic of this transition. “Maybe we can have another child. They won’t be Sami, but we will tell them everything about him” (Lefteri 302). Their desire for a child reflects their growing sense of security and optimism. It indicates their readiness to establish a home in the fullest sense, not just a physical space, but a place of emotional and psychological stability and hope for the future.

The novel concludes on a hopeful note. With the arrival of Mustafa, a familiar face from their past in Aleppo, a certain salvation is in sight for the couple.

But it is Afra’s face that brings me to life, standing here in this tiny garden like she stood in Mustafa’s courtyard in Aleppo, her eyes so full of sadness and hope, so full of darkness and light. She is looking up at something. Among the blossoms of the cherry tree, three hoopoe birds perch on a branch, checking out their surroundings, with their majestic crown of feathers and curved beaks and stripy wings. Here they are, migrants from the east, in this small town by the sea. “Do you see them?” I hear her say. “They have come to find us!” We are all looking up now, and, all at once, they open their black-and-white wings and set off together into the unbroken sky. (Lefteri 305–06)

This reunion, in a new land, symbolizes the beginning of a new chapter for Nuri and Afra. The imagery of the hoopoe birds, migrants from the east, and finding refuge in a small town by the sea mirrors the couple's own journey. The birds taking flight into the unbroken sky is a powerful metaphor for hope and new beginnings. The sky, the birds in flight, the faces looking up...All these are the signs that hope is blooming again. The couple has been in England for some time. Although their physical journey ended long ago, their mental journey has continued during their days in England. After this point, at the end of the book, their mental journey is complete, and for the first time, they really feel at home. In essence, the novel illustrates that the concept of home for migrants is multilayered. It's not just about a physical location but also involves processing and overcoming past traumas, dreaming and planning for the future, and cultivating a sense of hope and security. Only when these elements align can migrants truly feel at home in a new place.

Another issue emphasized in the novel about the concept of home is the *breakability* and *vulnerability* of houses. Since the houses in Aleppo are bombed and razed to the ground during the civil war, the concept of home, which is normally associated with durability in the human mind, is turned upside down. The transformation of the idea of home from a

solid and indestructible image to a destructible and uncanny concept cause great psychological damage for the people who lived through this war. Particularly for children, witnessing their homes being reduced to rubble increases their sense of insecurity to alarming levels. Nuri, the protagonist, reflects on this devastation, saying: "I had forgotten that buildings could still stand, that there was a whole world out there that was not destroyed like Aleppo" (Lefteri 75). The extent of Aleppo's devastation is indeed incredible, fundamentally altering residents' perceptions of home. What was once a symbol of permanence and safety is now a reminder of vulnerability and loss. "Real houses crumbled, fell apart. Nothing was solid in Sami's world. And yet somehow he was trying to imagine a place where the buildings didn't fall down around him" (Lefteri 48). This profound shift is illustrated through Nuri's interactions with his imaginary friend, Mohammed. In a scene where Nuri is going back and forth between imagination and reality, he discovers Mohammed playing under a table. The dialogue between them further underscores the fragility of homes. When Nuri asks why Mohammed is there, he gets the following answer: "This is my house...It's a wooden one, like in The Three Little Pigs" (Lefteri 267). Mohammed's reference to his "wooden house" is akin to that in The Three Little Pigs folktale and is particularly evocative. This folktale tells the story of three pigs who construct their homes using a variety of elements. A Big Bad Wolf is able to destroy the homes of the first two pigs, which are made of straw and sticks, respectively, but he is unable to do the same to the home of the third pig, which is constructed out of bricks. At the beginning of the tale, the protagonist's mother encourages them to "seek out their fortune" by leaving the house and venturing out into the world. The first tiny pig constructs a home for himself out of straw, but a hungry wolf blows it down and eats him. The second tiny pig constructs a stick house, which the wolf proceeds to break down as well; however, it takes the wolf a few more hits until the second little pig is likewise consumed. The conversation between the wolf and the pig is full of insightful sayings, including the following:

"Little pig, little pig, let me come in."

"No, not by the hair on my chinny chin chin."

"Then I'll huff, and I'll puff, and I'll blow your house in."('The Three Little Pigs')

The third of the three tiny pigs constructs a home out of bricks, which the wolf is unable to destroy. The narrative, with its emphasis on the resilience and vulnerability of structures, resonates deeply with Nuri's experience in war-torn Aleppo. Mohammed's choice of a wooden house, presumably stronger than those made of straw or sticks but still vulnerable, symbolizes the precarious nature of safety and shelter in a war zone. It is important to note that Mohammed is a reverie. Mohammed's trauma is indeed Nuri's trauma. The rest of the dialogue proceeds in the following way: "Do you like my house? This house doesn't break like the houses at home. Isn't it nice, Uncle Nuri?" (Lefteri 268), Mohammed asks. Having lost his son to the breakability of his physical home, Nuri, as a Middle Eastern man, is now confronted with the imperative to build a house for his family, not just in a literal sense but also emotionally and psychologically. The cultural and personal importance of providing a secure home for his family weighs heavily on him. However, before he can dream of a home again, he has to convince himself that houses are solid objects that do not *break*. The conversation between him and Mohammed is an important indication of this need.

In a subsequent hallucination, Nuri encounters not Mohammed but his deceased son Sami, marking a pivotal moment in his journey of grief and healing. This encounter is fraught with symbolism and emotional depth. It is at that particular point Nuri realizes for the first time that Mohammed is not real but an illusion that he has substituted for his son Sami.

He takes something out of his pocket and hands it to me: a key. "What's this for?" I say. "It's the key you gave me. You told me it opened a secret house that didn't break." I see that in front of him are pieces of Lego. "What are you doing?" I say. "I'm building a house!" he says. "When we go to England we will live in this house. This house won't break like these do." (Lefteri 288)

This dialogue is profound in its implications. The key, a recurring motif in the novel, symbolizes access to a safe, unbreakable space, a stark contrast to the fragile homes of their past. The Lego house represents a hopeful yet fragile construct of the future. In this hallucination, Nuri is not just conversing with his son; he is confronting his own traumas and fears. The fact that Mohammed is replaced by Sami, his real son, is an indication that this process is a healing process and signifies a crucial step in Nuri's healing process. It

signals a shift from escaping reality to facing it, from substituting his loss with an illusion to acknowledging and confronting the painful truth of his son's death.

The novel successfully contrasts the Lego houses built in Syria with the sandcastles constructed by a child in England, offering a profound reflection on the differing perceptions of home and security in children from diverse backgrounds. In a vivid scene, children are described playing on a beach, with one child meticulously constructing a city of sandcastles:

Kids are running around with ice cream and lollipops the size of their heads. The sand-castle boy has made a whole city—he's used pieces of plastic, bottle tops, candy wrappers, to add color to his buildings. He's made a flag out of a lost sock and a cotton candy stick. He crowns the castle in the middle with a teacup. (Lefteri 51)

This scene is rich in symbolism. The child building the sandcastle is not constructing a shelter for protection; his basic need for a secure home is already met. So, his detailed sandcastle, decorated with colors, a flag, and a teacup, is not a structure built for survival like the Lego houses built by Sami in Syria. Instead, it is a creative expression, a playful assertion of presence and identity. As we know it, a castle, where luxury is sometimes indulged, is built for lords. In the same manner, the castle built by the boy is not like a house made with Legos to stand on its own. It rather represents the child's own ego and the struggle to protect it.

This stark contrast underscores how experiences of war and displacement can profoundly alter one's concept of home. For the Syrian child, a home is a necessity, a structure built for survival against destruction. For a child in England, a home is a common gift, allowing the luxury of imaginative and playful expression. The novel thus highlights the deep disparities in the experiences of children in war-torn regions compared to those in stable environments and how these experiences shape their understanding of home, safety, and belonging.

3.4. Nostalgia and Trauma in *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*.

In the second chapter, this thesis discussed the narrative of the fig tree in Shafak's novel, *The Island*, emphasizing how human time and arboreal time function differently. It was noted that tree time is not linear like human time, suggesting that migrants, due to their traumas, experience deviations from linear progression. This deviation also affects the narrative structure of the novel, leading to a complex pattern of storytelling that intertwines the end, beginning, and middle.

In Lefteri's *The Beekeeper*, similar traces of deviation in time are also evident. Lefteri eschews a linear narrative to model the perception of time experienced by immigrants. This approach aligns with Eugene O'Neill's quote from *A Moon for the Misbegotten*: "There is no present or future, only the past, happening over and over again" (qtd. in Levine 1). Nuri and Afra, the protagonists of *The Beekeeper*, embody this opinion. They seem trapped in the past, unable to live in the present or envision a future, perpetually reliving their past experiences.

The novel frequently references the theme of time, portraying a perception of time that is distorted and *abnormal*. For instance, Nuri describes the Moroccan Man's interaction with a bronze pocket watch:

He is sitting in the living room now by the glass doors, holding a bronze pocket watch in both of his hands, nestling it in his palms like it's a hatching egg. He stares at it, waiting. What for? When he sees that I'm standing here, he says, "It doesn't work, you know. It stopped in a different time." (Lefteri 7–8)

This imagery of the stopped clock explicitly symbolizes how migrants affected by the trauma of civil war are anchored at a specific point in their past.

Psychiatrist and author Peter A. Levine's concept of the "tyranny of the past" elucidates the impact of traumatic experiences on time perception:

All of these "shocks" to the organism can alter a person's biological, psychological, and social equilibrium to such a degree that the memory of one particular event comes to taint, and dominate, all other experiences, spoiling an appreciation of the present moment. The resulting tyranny of the past interferes with the ability to focus effectively on both new and familiar situations. When people pay selective

attention to the riveting reminders of their past, sleep becomes the enemy and life becomes colorless. (Levine 1)

A person's biological, psychological, and social equilibrium can be seriously disrupted by traumatic experiences. So, trauma is more than just a psychological experience; it also has physiological and societal elements. This explanation sheds light on why migrants struggle to live in the present. Their trauma has so thoroughly imprisoned them that the future and the present are overshadowed by the past's "tyranny".

The traumatized and displaced migrant, having lost their home, often struggles to fully comprehend or enjoy their present circumstances. This phenomenon is vividly portrayed through the characters in the novel. Nuri, for instance, experiences persistent unease and insecurity, even in safe environments in England. Any reminder, however slight, of his traumatic past clouds his mind and confuses his thoughts, impairing his ability to perform basic tasks such as decision-making, problem-solving, and managing daily life. Nuri and Afra, in a sense, are paralyzed by their past experiences. Nuri's constant anxiety about the future and past events contaminates his present, making it difficult for him to experience happiness without fear of negative consequences.

In a letter to his cousin Nuri while in England, Mustafa also expresses his inner turmoil: "We cannot go back, cannot change the decisions we made in the past. I did not kill my son. I try to remember these things because if I don't I will be lost in the darkness" (Lefteri 143). Mustafa is tormented by guilt, believing his delayed decision to leave Syria led to his son's death. This decision haunts him, and like many migrants, by revisiting his memories at the most inopportune moments, he experiences time as fragmented and disjointed.

For individuals like Mustafa, the past is not a distant, controllable entity that can be revisited at will. Instead, time acts as a tyrant, at times influencing his present reality and torturing him, and at other times serving as a friend and ally. Understanding this duality of memories for migrants is crucial. While memories can be a guiding force, they can also inflict deep pain. In Mustafa's case, although the memories of his son bring anguish, they

also serve as a beacon, preventing him from succumbing to “darkness”. This darkness is not merely psychological; it represents a temporal void where the future, present, and past are inextricably intertwined.

Due to this temporal confusion, Nuri frequently loses track of his location like his cousin Mustafa. Throughout the novel, regardless of his location, be it Turkey, Greece, or England, Nuri's memories constantly draw him back to war-torn Syria. For instance, a letter from Mustafa momentarily disorients him, blurring his sense of time and place: “For a minute, I had forgotten where I was. I looked up to see the Athenian moon beaming through the trees” (Lefteri 198). This moment captures the disconnection Nuri feels from his current reality.

Nuri's profound trauma is further highlighted during an interview with Lucy Fisher. He mistakenly associates the seagulls flying outside the window with the planes bombing Aleppo, leading to a state of panic. Disturbed by the light and sound, he covers his ears and eyes, overwhelmed by pain. It is only Lucy Fisher's touch that brings him back to reality, helping him realize that the objects outside are seagulls, not fighter jets. Such episodes of panic recur throughout the novel. These moments demonstrate how trauma traps Nuri in the past, distorts his perception of time and hinders his ability to live in the present or plan for the future. Nuri himself provides clear evidence of this distortion in time perception: “Eventually he begins to ask me about my journey here, and I tell him as much as I can remember in a straightforward, linear, coherent way, just like Lucy Fisher suggested” (Lefteri 237). These words indicate Nuri's struggle with post-traumatic coherence, a challenge his counselor, Lucy Fisher, is aware of and addresses to aid him in the refugee admission process. The repetition of terms like “straightforward,” “linear,” and “coherent” underscores the difficulty Nuri faces in this regard. Reflecting his fragmented memory, Lefteri eschews a linear narrative, interweaving events from England, Syria, and Greece in a complex manner to mirror Nuri's confusion. This narrative choice is a direct result of the traumas of internal war. However, it is also important to note that while Nuri's memories are damaged by trauma, he still strives to recount events

as linearly as possible, demonstrating his resilience. This effort to overcome the cognitive challenges posed by his traumatic experiences is a testament to the migrant resilience.

This analysis now shifts focus from the distortion of temporal perception to examine the burden of traumatic events on the novel's protagonists. Nuri and Afra engage in distinct coping mechanisms to navigate their traumas. While Nuri creates an imaginary child, serving as the double of his lost child Sami, and activates a safe space to cope with grief, Afra experiences psychogenic blindness.

To begin with, it is important to note that the theme of blindness plays a pivotal role in the novel, not only exemplifying the refugee experience but also giving the novel a political stance critical of the impassivity of Europe against the refugee crisis. The writer of the novel also announces her motive for writing the novel as finding an answer to the question: “What does it mean to see?” (Lefteri 309). One can argue that different approaches to the subject could yield various analyses. From a scientific perspective, Afra's blindness is attributed to the trauma she experienced after witnessing the death of her son. This is the most direct and obvious explanation, which is also clearly stated in the novel:

It is also possible that the blindness you are experiencing is the result of severe trauma—sometimes our bodies can find ways to cope when we are faced with things that are too much for us to bear. You saw your son die, Mrs. Ibrahim, and maybe something in you had to shut down. In a way something similar happens when we faint out of shock. (Lefteri 209–10)

However, delving into more symbolic interpretations, Afra's blindness can be seen as having deeper dimensions. One interpretation that may be suggested is that Afra's blindness is a form of self-punishment. It is possible that Afra may feel a sense of guilt or self-punishment due to her son's death and her survival. For this reason, Afra, by choice, abandons her sight, her most valuable asset as a painter, and inflicts the greatest punishment on herself. Another interpretation is that her trauma triggers her death instinct, leading her to a desire to return to a kind of inanimate state. To clarify, following this event, Afra exhibits childlike dependence, surrendering her will to others, such as relying on Nuri to dress her, a task she is capable of but insists on avoiding. The dressing of Afra seems to have turned into a ceremony that Nuri cannot comprehend (Lefteri 124).

A further interpretation considers Afra's blindness as a response to the horrors of war. The world's ugliness, amplified by conflict, compels her to shut her eyes, seeking refuge in the beauty of her inner world. For Afra, whose country has been torn apart by civil war, who has been displaced from her home, and who has completely lost her sense of security and justice, there is nothing left to see in this world. The only thing that can help her is the happy memories inside her mind. She relies on the healing power of nostalgia and cuts her connection with the outside world.

Lastly, from a political standpoint, Afra's blindness symbolizes Europe's indifference to refugees. The novel critiques Europe's historical tendency to ignore conflicts in distant lands like the Middle East. Even with the conflict in Ukraine bringing war closer to Europe, the attitude of turning a blind eye persists. Through Afra's blindness, the novel criticizes this apathetic stance towards the migrant crisis.

Trauma also affects the novel's characters in other ways. Nuri and Afra, who mourn the loss of their country, home, sense of belonging, trust, justice, and most importantly, their son Sami, due to the civil war, manifest the effects of trauma. One phase of their mourning process is numbness, a state especially evident in Afra. Afra's transformation from her once joyful self is unequivocal. She is far away from her old happy days. Her laughter, previously described as “gold”, has been lost: “Her laughter was gold once, you would have seen as well as heard it. Look at her, because I think she is disappearing”(Lefteri 3). The use of “disappearing” is striking here and subtly captures Afra's coping mechanism with her trauma.

Such changes are typical following traumatic events. Afra, like many artists, was known for her messiness, which was also reflected in her speech: “Even when she spoke she was messy, throwing words out here, there, taking them back, throwing out different ones. Sometimes she even interrupted herself”(Lefteri 20). This disorganization, which is a core sign of vitality and the complexity of life, seems to have vanished in her current state.

Afra's robust laughter, once so strong that "the house would shake"(Lefteri 20), is now a nostalgic memory. In stark contrast to her current emotionless and powerless state, this change underscores the transformative power of trauma.

Nuri also notes that Afra has not cried since Aleppo: "I haven't seen or heard her cry since Aleppo" (Lefteri 50). This lack of tears is indicative of the deep wounds inflicted by trauma, suggesting that Afra is in a state of numbness and disconnection, a coping mechanism to endure the otherwise unbearable pain of losing her son. "The first stage [of mourning] involves numbness, which is interrupted by outbursts of intense distress and/or anger" (Volkan, *Immigrants and Refugees* 14). Nuri's observation of another mother's tears highlights the *abnormality* in Afra's reaction.

Seeing the mother's tears and the ease with which they fell, I realized that Afra had not cried about Sami. Apart from that day in Aleppo when we were hiding in the hole in the garden, she had not shed a tear. She did not cry when Sami died. Instead her face had turned to stone. (Lefteri 193–94)

Crying is a natural and healing response to grief, and Afra's inability to cry, her numbness, signifies the severity of her trauma and her ongoing struggle to process her emotions.

Nuri copes with his traumas differently. Trying to fulfill the requirements of being the family's father figure, he often appears to be stronger than Afra, but his disconnection from the present and his struggle with past images reveal his vulnerability. To cope with the trauma, traumatized migrants like Nuri often use what Volkan calls "linking objects" as tools for healing. Volkan defines a linking object as follows:

Most individuals with established pathological mourning, however, utilize certain concrete inanimate objects (such as a special photograph) or even sometimes animate objects (such as a pet), that symbolize a meeting ground between the object representation of a lost person or thing and the mourner's corresponding self-image. I call such objects linking objects. Mourners "choose" a linking object from various items available in their environment. A linking object may be a personal possession of the deceased, often something the deceased wore or used routinely, like a watch or camera. A gift the deceased made to the mourner before death or a letter written by a soldier on a battlefield before being killed may evolve into a linking object. (Volkan, *Immigrants and Refugees* 20–21)

In Nuri's case, the "linking object" connecting him to his deceased son Sami is the marble Sami once played with. In the novel, Nuri frequently sees this marble being played with

by the imaginary Mohammed. This marble indirectly links Nuri to his deceased son Sami, avoiding his direct confrontation with Sami's death. In this way, he is provided with the opportunity to confront his trauma, albeit from the sidelines, and take a step towards healing.

Interestingly, Nuri also utilizes a “linking phenomenon”, as described by Volkan:

A linking phenomenon refers to a song, a smell, a gesture, an action, or an affect that functions as a linking object. For example, it was raining on the day a young woman attended her father's funeral. The song "Raindrops keep falling on my head" came to her mind. Later, she utilized this song as a linking phenomenon whenever she felt internal pressure to complete her mourning. (Volkan, 'Nostalgia' 174)

In the novel, the imaginary child character Mohammed, whom Nuri creates in his mind, acts as a linking phenomenon. Nuri always envisions Mohammed dressed in the same clothes, blue shorts and a red T-shirt that Sami wore on the day he died. This visualization allows Nuri to confront his son's death indirectly, shielding him from the potentially destructive effects of a direct confrontation.

The death of his son Sami is not the only trauma Nuri experiences. Nuri's second biggest trauma is the sexual assault of his wife, Afra, by Mr. Fotakis and the fact that he accidentally leaves the key he normally locks the door with at home on the day of the incident. Nuri blames himself for Afra's rape. This guilt leads him to adopt another linking object: a key. The key is a recurring symbol in the novel, playing a crucial role in the narrative, especially in chapter twelve, in which it is also used as a linking word between different timelines. The symbolism of the key is open to interpretation, but this thesis will focus solely on its representation of trauma in this particular section.

As previously stated, Nuri experiences PTSD and occasional hallucinations. For instance, on one occasion, he spots Mohammed playing with his marble in the garden of B and B's house, where they were resettled in the UK. He goes outside to talk to him, and the following dialogue takes place between them:

"What are you doing here?" I say. "I came looking for the key because I want to get out." "What key?" I say. "I think it's in that tree. It's hanging there, but I didn't

know which one." I turn and see that there are more than a hundred golden keys hanging from the tree. They twirl in the breeze and sparkle in the light of the moon." (Lefteri 70).

Mohammed asks Nuri to collect the keys hanging from the tree so he can go outside. Nuri complies with Mohammed's request and gathers all the keys from the tree. However, later in the novel, it's revealed that what Nuri actually collects are not keys but the flowers of the tree. This incident illustrates that Nuri, deeply traumatized by Afra's rape, chooses a key as a linking object to confront this trauma, just as he uses the marble as a linking object to deal with his son's death.

Nuri's genuine confrontation with Afra about the trauma of the rape occurs only towards the end of the novel. They have never discussed it until this poignant dialogue:

"Afra," I say. She sighs and opens her eyes ever so slightly. "I'm sorry." "What for?" "I'm sorry I forgot the key." She doesn't say anything, but she wraps her arms around me so that I can smell the roses, and then I can feel her crying on my chest. I move back so that I can look at her sadness and memories, love and loss, blooming from her eyes. I kiss her tears, I taste them, I swallow them. I take in everything that she can see." (Lefteri 301)

This heartfelt and intimate confrontation marks the first time since the civil war that the couple truly connects and lays the foundations of a healthy relationship. Through this interaction, they take a significant step towards healing from traumas and moving past their "poisonous nostalgia".

Another way to analyze the issue of trauma in the novel is through Afra's paintings. As stated initially, before the civil war, Afra was an acclaimed painter, known for her vivid and dynamic landscapes. Nuri describes her work: "Even in that dim light, the landscapes in her paintings were not still; it was like they were moving, like the sky in them was moving, like the water in them was moving" (Lefteri 20). These paintings mirrored the vibrancy and life of Syria before the civil war, which robbed the Syrian people of their joy and hope for the future, ultimately leaving the country in a soulless state.

Afra's paintings and mental state have been affected by this tragedy as well. As she embarks on her migration journey, she adopts a disconnected and disinterested demeanor. Nuri, attempting to rekindle her passion, provides her with coloring pencils and paper. Despite losing sight, Afra can still draw, and she paints for the first time in a long time while in Greece. Nuri observes: "I looked at the picture again. The colors were wild—the tree blue, the sky red. The lines were broken, leaves and flowers out of place, and yet it held a beauty that was mesmerizing and indescribable, like an image in a dream, like a picture of a world that is beyond our imagination" (Lefteri 155). The transformation in her painting style, from vivid realism to a dream-like abstraction, mirrors the chaos in Afra's inner world. The unconventional colors and distorted lines reflect the turmoil and emotional extremes she harbors due to her trauma. Interestingly, even in this state, Afra manages to create a uniquely beautiful piece. This suggests that beauty can emerge from ugliness, offering hope to migrants. Afra's paintings evolve, and by the novel's end, she creates a piece with accurate colors and shapes, signifying her considerable progress in healing and readiness to face the future with renewed hope. Nuri is quite surprised to see the progress in Afra's painting:

I go to our room. Afra is asleep with her hands tucked beneath her cheek. On the bed table there is another picture. I pick it up, and for a moment I cannot breathe. She has drawn the cherry tree in the concrete garden, with its crooked branches and soft pink petals. This time the colors are correct, the lines and shading less distorted. The sky is bright and blue with wisps of clouds and white birds. But beneath the tree, a gray sketch, almost invisible: the gentle outline of a boy, the pencil marks soft and swift, making him appear as though he has been captured in movement. He is part of this world and yet not quite in it. There is a slight shimmer of red on his T-shirt, where Afra had started to color him in and stopped. (Lefteri 300)

The fact that Afra draws a picture where everything is orderly means that the turmoil in her inner world is gradually calming down. The most important point in the above quote is her decision to include her son Sami in her latest artwork. This act signifies her readiness to confront her trauma directly. Previously, Afra had not fully acknowledged Sami's death, avoiding the pain associated with this loss. Similarly, Nuri used the imaginary figure of Mohammed as a linking phenomenon to cope with his grief. Initially unable to visualize Sami in his mind, Nuri's healing begins in earnest when Mohammed's image gives way to that of Sami. This shift indicates a significant step towards confronting and processing his

grief. Afra's journey mirrors Nuri's. Her reluctance to cry for Sami or even fully accept his death is indicative of her denial and avoidance of the trauma. By choosing to include Sami in her painting, despite the pain this process entails, Afra demonstrates her effort toward acceptance. This inclusion, even though the painting is unfinished, marks a substantial stride in her healing journey. It's a critical moment in the novel that reflects her evolving ability to engage with her grief and begin the process of recovery.

The reappearance of their deceased son Sami in their minds is a sign that the healing process has begun. From then on, the couple's relationship shows serious changes and signs of normalization. Sexuality in the novel is portrayed as an act that encapsulates hope for the future, signifying Nuri and Afra's decision to confront and work through their traumas. Following Afra's sexual assault, a significant distance develops between the couple, with Afra becoming almost a stranger to Nuri. However, a pivotal moment occurs when Nuri feels a renewed sexual attraction towards Afra:

I reach out and touch her for the first time, run my hand along the length of her arm, then down over her hips. I touch her as if she is made of the finest film of glass, as if she might easily break under my fingertips, but she sighs and edges closer to me, though she is asleep. I realize how afraid I have been of touching her. (Lefteri 301)

Nuri's hesitation to touch Afra might stem from various traumas and fears. These include the fear of reopening emotional wounds, the fear of rejection or misunderstanding, vulnerability, or the concern that their relationship may never return to its former state. Afra's rape might have led her to completely withdraw from sexuality, or she might still be grappling with the loss of their son Sami, as some of the most frequently observed sexual symptoms following a sexual abuse are “avoiding, fearing, or lacking interest in sex; approaching sex as an obligation; experiencing negative feelings such as anger, disgust, or guilt with touch” (Zoldbrod 4). Despite these uncertainties, Nuri's approach is met with a positive response from Afra. This development is significant as it indicates a rekindling of hope. For the first time since their tormenting migration process began, the couple contemplates having another child. The discussion about bringing new life into the world symbolizes not just their potential as competent parents but also a renewed partnership, now strengthened by overcoming immense pain. By embracing the idea of a

baby, the couple manifests their resilience and hope for the future despite acknowledging the challenges that lie ahead.



CONCLUSION

Migration has consistently played a crucial role throughout the history of humanity. The curious nature of human beings, which is deeply ingrained in our evolutionary codes, alongside our drive to explore the unknown, has perpetually led us to venture into new territories. Homo sapiens, originating from Africa, has become the dominant species in the world thanks to its propensity for migration. Today, we find the footprints of humans even in the remotest corners of the world. Yet, this widespread dominance of humankind has also been accompanied by incessant conflicts. Wars have displaced millions of civilians from their homes and forced them to migrate to different countries. In 2010, the civil unrest that started with the Arab Spring and affected countries such as Tunisia, Libya, Yemen, Syria, and Bahrain accelerated migration dynamics. The subsequent surge of refugees at Europe's doorstep transformed the issue into a pressing crisis. In response to this, governments have tried to find a solution to the crisis by implementing different immigration policies. More recently, the conflict in Ukraine has highlighted that migration is an issue that no individual or nation can ignore. Given these historical patterns, it's evident that migration will remain a significant aspect of human existence.

Therefore, this thesis embarked on an examination of two novels that portray civil wars in different countries and at different historical periods, offering a lens through which to look at the phenomenon of migration from different perspectives, thus enabling a more holistic approach. With Elif Shafak's novel *The Island of Missing Trees*, the focus was on the long-term effects of migration on identity and home. It was shown that the trauma experienced by those displaced by civil war can linger, potentially across generations. This exploration of transgenerational trauma underscores the notion that such wounds may never fully heal, suggesting a close relationship between personal and collective histories.

On the other hand, Christy Lefteri's novel *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* broadened our understanding of the immediate consequences of displacement. The analysis explored the journey of Nuri and Afra, a couple escaping the Syrian civil war in their quest to reach England, and revealed how this experience profoundly impacts their perceptions of identity and the concept of home, as well as the relationship between trauma and nostalgia amid fresh pain.

The two complementary novels have illustrated that home, identity, nostalgia, and trauma become closely related concepts in the context of migration and can have reciprocal effects on each other. The phenomenon of migration extends beyond the individuals who migrate; it also significantly impacts their host countries and the borders they pass through. This widespread influence underscores the importance of ongoing analysis in this field because such studies are crucial for improving the lives of many people affected by migration. In a time when nationalism is on the rise in Europe and Turkey, these novels offer a valuable opportunity to see the world through the eyes of *the other*.

The exploration of these themes does not occur in isolation; rather, it is also deeply rooted in the personal histories of the authors themselves, creating a rich tapestry of interconnected narratives. Christy Lefteri, whose novel is set against the backdrop of the Syrian civil war, is the child of parents who were displaced from their homeland and migrated to the UK after the Cypriot civil war, a subject Shafak explores in her novel. In this light, it is also possible to find parallels between Shafak's novel character Ada and Lefteri. For instance, although Ada enjoys a happy childhood, the traumas of her parents that have been hidden from her with good intentions cause a kind of disturbance and grief in her. As Lijtmaer discusses, "a parent's silence or refusal to talk about their own traumatic experiences can produce trauma in future generations" (313). This mirrors Lefteri's own experiences. She reflects in an interview that "[her] parents were refugees who left Cyprus in 1974 after the war. They went to London to rebuild their lives, and to have a sense of safety. [She] grew up knowing that there was something darker in the past, and while [she] had a happy childhood, there was a sense of something unsettling

happening to them before” (Lefteri 320). As Lefteri's own words suggest, migration, particularly forced migration, inflicts deep and long-lasting scars on people.

This thesis has demonstrated that migrant identity is fluid and multifaceted, a concept that is constantly evolving and being reshaped by experiences and interactions in new environments. As La Barbera notes, “the concept of identity in post-modern societies has become increasingly complex. The plurality of roles, functions, hobbies and social belongings has made identity a collection of different Selves” (78). This observation highlights the intricate layers that compose individual identity, suggesting that the process of migration further complicates these layers, adding new dimensions and challenges. The complexity of identity is indeed magnified, characterized by a perpetual state of in-betweenness that migrants often navigate. “As Rushdie has clearly seen, the human product of mass migrations cannot find a place to call home on any map” (Seyhan 15). This statement captures the essence of the migrant's dilemma, striving to carve out a space for themselves in a world that continually shifts beneath their feet.

The novels analyzed in this thesis vividly illustrate how migrants, uprooted from their homeland and immersed in a foreign culture, language, and set of norms, struggle to find a sense of belonging. In this respect, Shafak's reference to migrants as a distinct “kind” in her novel gains meaning and becomes more relevant. It emphasizes the notion that migrants, through their experiences of displacement and adaptation, embody a distinct category of identity shaped by the intersections of cultures, languages, and histories. Migrants also experience an existential void that remains unfilled. “The identities of migrants are contingent, constantly re-articulated, and inherently linked to processes of inclusion and exclusion. As migrants traverse territories and borders, their identities shift and evolve, but are also redefined in the process” (La Barbera vi). This thesis, too, has noted that this ongoing flux of identity is a challenging and often painful journey, as vividly portrayed through the experiences of Ada, Defne, Kostas in *The Island*, and Nuri and Afra in *The Beekeeper*.

The interconnected themes of identity, home, nostalgia, and trauma in these novels not only reflect the personal histories of their authors but also resonate with broader narratives

of displacement and migration. In *The Island*, factors such as dual identity, identity politics, the role of the “other” in identity formation, names, cuisine, and climate were discussed. Considering all these factors, it can be suggested that they collectively contribute to the intricate process of deconstructing and reconstructing immigrant identity, rendering it a unique and multifaceted experience. In *The Island*, this process is particularly evident in the character of Ada. While Defne and Kostas, who have directly experienced the civil war, undergo identity transformations due to their traumas, Ada grapples with the challenges of being a Cypriot in England, constantly caught in a dilemma. With a Muslim Turkish mother and a Christian Greek father, and living in England, Ada is distanced from both cultures. Therefore, she grapples with identity confusion, which causes her to experience existential pains. Unable to define her identity, she concludes that she should give up this endeavor. In general, therefore, the argument of this thesis about migrant identity is justified: Migrants do not possess a static identity; rather, their identity is fluid, flexible, and multiple. This process, marked by painful experiences, seems to emerge not as an option but as a necessity.

In *The Beekeeper*, the issue of identity is explored by analyzing the first-generation immigrants in the novel. The process of acquiring identity here is different from that in *The Island* because the novel follows the characters Nuri and Afra and deals with their lives during and immediately after the Civil War. In this novel, identity is discussed through the concepts of resilience, integration, and assimilation. Here, identity appears to have gained more vital importance. Migrants are often depersonalized and reduced to mere numbers in a deliberate policy of de-identification. This is because one cannot empathize with a person without an identity nor feel a sense of responsibility towards them. In this respect, identity transcends its conceptual term and transforms into being a crucial aspect of survival. In order for migrants to survive, they need an identity, both literally and figuratively. The literary works examined in this thesis transform the experiences of migrants from faceless, identity-less masses into narratives with distinct identities. It is the aspiration of this thesis that its examination of migrant identity will echo the significant contributions these novels have made towards a deeper understanding and humanization of the migrant experience.

Upon examining the novels, it became clear that the previously delineated migrant identity and the concept of home are inextricably intertwined. Consequently, a thorough analysis required this thesis to explore the concepts of home and belonging within the migration context, analyzing how the migration process and its consequences shape these fundamental aspects of identity. As elucidated in the literature review, the concept of home extends well beyond a physical construction composed of tangible elements like walls and roofs. Several elements must converge for a location to transform into an actual home. Often, we associate home with physical structures such as walls and roofs, but it's the feeling of security that truly defines a place as home. However, a place where one feels secure can be referred to as home, even in the absence of physical materials. Thus, one may argue that the feeling of security is a key component in developing the feeling of home. The two novels analyzed in this thesis show that one of the first things destroyed by the chaos of the civil war is the sense of security and, thus, the concept of home. In both novels, a bomb explodes and turns the characters' lives upside down. In *The Island*, the couple Defne and Kostas, who come from two different ethnic backgrounds and religions, can freely live their love only in The Happy Fig restaurant. This establishment becomes a symbolic home for them, a sanctuary where their love is not bounded by the societal divisions that is dragging their relationship more and more into an impasse. Therefore, their frequent visits to this restaurant, a place where they experience a sense of belonging absent in their own homes, illustrate the thesis' argument that home transcends physical spaces to encompass feelings of safety, acceptance, and emotional connection.

The devastating bombing of "The Happy Fig", set against a backdrop of escalating social turmoil, not only inflicts physical damage on the restaurant but also irreparably destroys the sense of safety and sanctuary it offers. This act of violence transforms it from a place of refuge into a stark symbol of vulnerability, effectively stripping it of its status as a home. This event marks a turning point in the novel. After that, nothing will be the same for Defne and Kostas. The idyllic atmosphere of Cyprus is broken, and it becomes increasingly dark. This is why the concept of home is one of the first casualties of war. There are many essential elements that constitute the notion of a home. When any of these

foundational components is disturbed or removed, the concept of home can quickly disintegrate, revealing its inherent fragility.

In the same vein, a pivotal moment is marked by a devastating bomb explosion in *The Beekeeper*, mirroring a similar turning point in *The Island*. This catastrophic event occurs in the garden of Nuri and Afra Ibrahim's home, tragically claiming the life of their son, Sami. This tragic incident becomes the central trauma that profoundly shapes the remainder of their lives. In the aftermath, Afra is rendered blind, a symbolic loss that parallels her emotional blindness to the horrors around her. Nuri, grappling with post-traumatic stress disorder, experiences haunting hallucinations. This moment of destruction bears a striking resemblance to the bomb explosion at The Happy Fig restaurant in *The Island*. For Nuri and Afra, life is irrevocably altered after this explosion. The safety and sanctity of their home are shattered, symbolized by the physical hole left by the bomb in their house's wall. This hole serves as both a literal and metaphorical representation of their fragmented lives. In both novels, these catastrophic events underscore the fragility of home and identity in the face of overwhelming adversity and chaos.

Yet, amidst the rubble of these shattered lives, the narrative occasionally shifts, revealing that certain sensory experiences, such as familiar smells, music, or names, can evoke a sense of home for migrants, albeit momentarily. In *The Beekeeper*, Nuri finds a connection to his past life through a wingless bee he encounters in England. Despite being homeless and alone, this bee transports Nuri back to his happy days in his homeland, Syria, where he indulged in beekeeping. Similarly, the smell of bread made by Afra, even in a house without walls, brings a semblance of normalcy and comfort, reminiscent of their former life. Arabic music heard on the streets of London also serves as an instrument for Nuri, momentarily taking him back to his homeland. In *The Island*, Kostas's connection to his surrogate home in Cyprus, The Happy Fig, is symbolized by a cutting from the restaurant's fig tree, which he smuggles into England and plants in his garden. Despite the unsuitable British climate, Kostas nurtures the tree with obsessive care, recognizing it as a tangible link to his homeland. This act underscores the concept articulated by Nowicka: "Home, she argues, is built through a dynamic process of localizing particular sets of relationships that do not necessarily depend on the essential qualities of a particular place. Home, in

other words, is a process involving both the people we share home with and also the material objects therein” (qtd. in Ralph and Staeheli 519). It is important to reiterate that the concept of home is a multi-layered and expansive notion that transcends physical walls to encompass human relationships, various objects, and sensory experiences. Consequently, the answers to what constitutes a home can vary greatly. The novels examined in this thesis demonstrate that the phenomenon of migration adds further complexity to the already intricate concept of home. Therefore, this thesis avoided generalizing the definition of home. Instead, it sought to provide more specific definitions and analyses by examining how individual experiences shape this concept, drawing references from the chapters related to home in the two analyzed novels. In summary, much like the identity of migrants, which is fluid and multifaceted, the concept of home too can be understood as fluid and multiple. Migrants may not be tied to a single place as home; they can form attachments to multiple places, and sometimes, they may remain uprooted, unable to secure a foundational sense of belonging in any specific place. This complex relationship between identity and place demands a deeper investigation into how nostalgia and trauma intricately intertwine with these notions and further complexify these concepts for immigrants.

Building on the above-mentioned characteristics related to the concept of home, the final topic addressed in this thesis has been the role of nostalgia and trauma in the lives of immigrants and their impact on identity, home, and belonging. The analyses of the two novels reveal that displacement disrupts the linear flow of time for immigrants. The perception of time for those displaced is either fragmented, with gaps separating distinct periods, or it becomes cyclical, endlessly repeating in a vicious cycle. This phenomenon is clearly illustrated in both novels. Consequently, both Shafak and Lefteri eschew a linear narrative in their storytelling. Instead, they present the story in fragments, effectively mirroring the experiences of displaced immigrants grappling with trauma. This narrative technique allows the writers to more accurately convey the disjointed and cyclical nature of time as experienced by their characters. *The Island*’s storyline begins in England and then transitions to Cyprus in the 1970s. As the narrative journeys into the past, the story becomes more complete and intricate. Similarly, *The Beekeeper* starts in England, with

Lefteri skillfully navigating the narrative through three distinct time periods by using a common word to transition between them. These periods include pre-civil war Syria, life during the post-civil war era including the migration journey through Turkey and Greece, and finally, the time in England where Nuri and Afra wait for their admission into the country.

The novels' constant shifting between past and present mirrors the immigrant experience of the characters. In both novels, the characters are haunted by the ghosts of their pasts. In *The Island*, the past resurfaces with the arrival of Storm Hera and Ada's aunt Meryem, who play crucial roles in uncovering long-buried histories, reopening old wounds, and eventually facilitating the healing process. Apparently, Ada's fixation with the past evolves into a metaphorical storm, symbolizing the tumultuous impact of history and memory on the present. When the Storm Hera subsides, the metaphorical storm in Kazantzakis's house in *The Island* also begins to lose its effects. Meryem, the harbinger of memories, returns to Cyprus. This marks the beginning of the closure of the gap between Kostas and his daughter Ada, a rift that had widened due to unaddressed traumas. As they confront their past, the father-daughter relationship begins to normalize.

In *The Beekeeper*, the connection to the past is depicted as more intense and immediate. Nuri and Afra's suffering is recent, making the pain from their flashbacks particularly acute. Consequently, both characters develop coping mechanisms to deal with their pain and loss. This thesis has previously studied the concepts of linking objects and linking phenomena, as discussed by Volkan, demonstrating how these concepts manifest in the characters' mourning processes. Afra, despite losing her sight, attempts to confront her past traumas through painting. Nuri, on the other hand, uses a marble, a toy played with by his deceased son Sami, as a linking object. This marble serves as a tangible connection to his son, aiding Nuri in his grieving process. Both characters effectively manage grief and trauma by employing their distinct coping mechanisms, thereby exemplifying the varied and individualistic character of the recovery process following the displacement and loss of loved ones.

In conclusion, migration emerges as a multidimensional phenomenon with far-reaching and long-lasting effects. To fully grasp this multi-layered issue, it's crucial to examine it from various perspectives. Therefore, this thesis has explored how identity, home, and trauma are shaped in the context of migration and migrant experience. The novels *The Island of Missing Trees* and *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* illustrate that those displaced by conflict or other circumstances are thrust into a never-ending journey. Once they embark on this path, there is no true destination or return. Having lost their roots, the displaced are forced to continue their lives by staying on a perpetual route. They are marked with a sense of incompleteness from the moment they set out. Elif Shafak and Christy Lefteri skillfully employ metaphors to address this incompleteness in the migrant experience. Shafak uses the metaphor of a rootless fig tree that Kostas smuggles into England to replant in the garden of his house, and Lefteri employs the imagery of a wingless bee discovered by Nuri in England. The portrayal of the fig tree's ability to take root in the harsh climate of England and the survival of a wingless bee symbolizes the resilience and adaptability inherent in the human spirit. These narratives in both novels foster a sense of hope for the future and underscore the significance of cultivating a culture of coexistence. Migration transcends the mere physical relocation; it involves an internal journey where migrants engage in the process of recognizing, deconstructing, and reconstructing their identities. This dual journey, both physical and spiritual, opens up new avenues not only for the migrants but also for the societies that welcome them. As highlighted by academics like Kristeva and Volkan, these host societies must also be willing to embark on their own journey, reevaluating their concepts of identity, belonging, and home. Such introspection and openness are essential for creating a more harmonious and livable world.

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