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**Thing Theory**

**Exploring Subject-Object Relations in Leila Aboulela's Minaret**

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# **General Introduction**



## Introduction

This center of study is independent in its own and it's called "Subject object relations study". It is the understanding of the psychological, philosophical and social link that holds one to his material possessions and inquires the reasons and the effects behind. This concept is essential and a key element to draw the line between how the person stands in isolation and how he stands in the presence and the demands of his possessions.

Many researchers like Marx, Heidegger and Brown argue that "things" shape the human identity and that a person's uniqueness can be easily sorted out through his attachment and empowerment from these things. The example that has been taken for investigation is " minaret" novel by Leila Aboulela ,there we can see how the author could link the existence of the objects and its impact to the protagonist's self-concept ,self-definition and individuality.

Thing theory or as some would call it material culture theory explores how the relationships between people and objects is significant and intimate and the ways in which altogether contribute in shaping culture and social life. This theoretical framework emerged as a reaction to the traditional perspectives that basically failed to give credit and consider the influence of objects. In in the late 20th century, thing theory has flourished to be included in many disciplines (interdisciplinary) such as: philosophy, sociology and literature.

Mainly, thing theory challenges the idea that suggests that objects are passive entities. Thing Theory emphasizes on how things such as : history ,traditions and status...are active participants in social dynamics. This is to say ; objects play a centered role in constructing meaning, identity, and self-concept within societies and individuals in isolation.

One key aspect of thing theory is the concept of "object agency," which suggests that objects have the ability to act and human choices. This agency can represented in different manners, such as the symbolic meaning these objects can signify, its religious impact, or its

influence on upgrading or changing social classes. Object agency study is very important for better understanding the human experience in relation to the relationship of people to things they encounter through their life journey and common environment.

Thing theorists often draw on a range of philosophical and theoretical perspectives, including phenomenology, semiotics, and post structuralism. Phenomenology informs the exploration of how individuals perceive and engage with objects, emphasizing the lived experience of materiality. Semiotics contributes to the analysis of symbolic meanings embedded in objects, while poststructuralist ideas challenge fixed categories and highlight the fluidity of meaning attributed to things.

Literary studies have used thing theory as a key tool for analyzing literary texts. Researchers examine how literary works perceive objects, exploring their significance to the life of characters. This can also be helpful in understanding the cultural and social aspects embedded in literature.

Hence, thing theory offers an immensely deep perspective on the relationships between humans and the material world by exploring objects role in shaping different characters in which each object can motivate certain moods and attitudes and to help people to unveil human mystery around which objects are the key to influence one's self concept.

### **The Research problem**

Investigating the interplay between human subjects and intimate objects (mutual effect) in Minaret. How the novel portrays the complex relationships and interactions between the characters and various object. The role of physical objects in spiritual and religious practices. How the subject-object relations in minaret intersects with certain fields like post colonialism, feminism and religious fields.

### **The Significance of the Study**

This study can encourage further exploration of the theoretical and methodological approaches offered by thing theory and its applications in various disciplines like post-colonial and cultural studies: exploring how the novel engages with dominant western narratives about Islamic culture and heritage and attitudes towards materiality and modernism.

### **The Research question**

- In “Minaret” novel, how do religious objects contribute to the construction of the protagonist's identity within the context of subject-object relations?
- How does the novel reinforce/challenge the colonial narratives which marginalizes the subaltern subjects through particular objects?
- In what ways does the novel portray material objects as relative means to represent the agency/lack of female characters?
- How do material objects in the novel contribute to reinforce/challenge the patriarchal systems and the objectification of female characters?

### **The Objectives of the Study**

In the light of thing theory, this research aims at exploring the symbolic and significant impact of objects on characters identity and personal growth and the ways in which these objects contribute to the representation of women in the novel. Moreover, this research aims at analyzing how the text reveals the relationship between personal and cultural identity and issues such as hybridity and double consciousness which is reflected by certain objects in “Minaret”. Primarily , the aim of this study is to insure that the relationship between “Nadjwa” the protagonist and her material objects are inseparably intertwined and exchangeable .

### **Methodology**

In order to understand the particular relationship that bounds subjects and objects in Minaret, this study is conducted by a qualitative approach to research. This study also bears a

close reading and descriptive literary analysis in which textual evidence ( relevant quotations) from the novel is employed to examine the power dynamics between the characters and their material surroundings that at shape a distinctive culture . A slight focus is also shed on the use of major themes in the novel that is known by thematic analysis.

Additionally, the current study draws on a number of journal articles to address the target topic in depth and predominantly to determine the related literary theories to associate. Since the protagonist is a Muslim woman who experienced living in a non-Muslim western country, this research mainly invites the postcolonial and feminist literary theories, as well as drawing emotional connections between characters and their religious things in the novel in the light of religion and cultural heritage. This is to extend further exploration and delve into the roots of the topic.

# **Chapter One: Historical Background**

## **1. Introduction**

In order to unveil the significant role behind our current study, it is important to discuss the historical circumstances around it. Mainly, that is to bring solid awareness about the relevance between the historical events and their impact on the topic. Moreover, understanding matters from a historical viewpoint will not only investigate the historical events singularly; but also will assist to attain credibility of the presented materials and its value; as context is presented to be used as a key element to express the relationship between the sources and the research question, As a result, conduct a valid research must rely on a rich load of historical package and its aftermath.

## **2 Contextualizing the Socio-Political and the Historical Environment during the Time of Leila Aboulela's "Minaret"**

### **2.1 Globalization and migration**

According to Tamaz Zubiashvili, migration is the movement of people, goods and informational resources across borders. It has a significant impact on the development and progress of different countries on a global scale. Migration can be a turning point in the process of managing labor markets and the socio-cultural and political situations of many nations that host immigrants. It also brings about changing the structure of labor market and various working conditions; as the migration is a globalized and worldwide phenomenon. (29)

In the process of globalization, people from undeveloped countries start looking for better chances and job opportunities in the developing countries. Zubiashvili argues that the phenomenon of migration has turned into an international business that involves tourists, seasonal workers, pendular migrants and illegal migrants in it. (30). Besides, as a side effect of migration and globalization, a great amount of tension has been experienced by the migrants in

host countries as well as exploiting their potentials to their fullest into labor work (Zubiashvili 33) .

Respectively, in modern times people can easily move to different cities because of the improvement of transport. They also would take such step as a positive effect of globalization of migration across the world which a person could rarely do in few decades ago.(Zubiashvili 31) However, moderate actions should be taken to reduce issues related to labor migration like employment and residence that can go out of hand.

## **2.2 Post colonialism and the Arab diaspora**

The history of the Arab diaspora is shakable and dynamic. Large number of members would leave their Arab lands to adapt, survive and adopt new religious, cultural, and socio-political lifestyles in completely different environments. Be it forcefully or voluntarily, Hammad notes that this immigration has become hard to swallow for Arab immigrants as it turned from: “searching for a better life and financial opportunities to being forced to abandon their homeland due to wars and critical political circumstances.” (285)

In order to understand why Arabs were largely displaced from their homelands, it is necessary to explore how the latter process did occur on different stages, and how it then affected the Arabs in diaspora.

### **2.2.1 First wave (late 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup>)**

Hammad Lamia Khalil confirms that Arabs immigrated to the United States in successive waves. In her article, Hammad argues that Arab Christians are the ones who pioneered the step of displacement to American lands due to finance obstacles and the severe Ottoman Empire persecution to them. This first wave of immigrants according to Hammad involved mainly

Christian Lebanese who was normally immigrants, and so they were able to adapt easily to the American lifestyles. (285). In this sense, Hammad concludes the original group who started moving to the United States and she declares that:

The Lebanese, Syrians and[...] Palestinians are the largest group among Arab immigrants. The history of Arab's immigration to the United States, according to Tanyss Ludescher, dates back to the Nineteenth century. The first wave of Arab immigrants to the United States ranges from 1880 until 1924. It included Lebanese, Syrians and Palestinians who were identified as Turks because of the domination of the Ottoman Empire. Unskilled and often illiterate, those immigrants who identified themselves as Syrian traveled all around the state and worked as itinerant peddlers.

(285)

Hammad notes that this process of migration was not considered to be very challenging especially that those Arab immigrants were quite excited about embracing the American values and customs, and tried to assimilate and learn English language to accommodate and fit in the new world (93).

### **2.2.2 Second Wave (20<sup>th</sup> century)**

According to Huda B. Al-Matrafi, the second wave began post-1945, which brought a large number of Muslim Arabs from the Middle East and North Africa to the western world, carrying a unified 'Arab identity' and influenced and encouraged by the "Arab Nationalism". (443) Hammad argues that :“Ludescher mentions that the second wave of immigration began after World War II” (286). But she specifically traces back the start of this wave to the Israeli war on the Palestinians and other bordering Muslim countries like Egypt and Syria (286) .



Unlike the first wave which included illiterate Christians, the second wave included a group of educated, and skilled ambitious Muslims who due to cultural exchange during Western colonization contributed well to bettering the American finances, and had better political awareness and pride. This group included Palestinian refugees who found themselves homeless after the Arab-Israeli War in 1948. (Hammad 286) Al-Matrafi lists some of the famous Arabs who thrived in the American world and proved to gain remarkable positions such as Edward Said, James Abourezk and Donna E. Shalala (444).

### **2.2.3 The Third Wave (late20<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> century)**

This wave starts in the late 1960s and includes a more variant group of Arab immigrants from different Middle Eastern and North African countries. (Al-Matrafi 445) Specifically, it begins in 1967 and continues to this day. In her article, Hammad highlights some major events that brought about increasing the number of refugees who encouraged this wave; mainly the Lebanese Civil War in the 1970s and 1980s and new immigration laws that established the end of a quota system. These immigrants were mostly Palestinians and Lebanese Muslims from Southern Lebanon who fled as a result of the 1967 war with Israel and the Israeli war on the Palestinian citizens. (286)

Respectively, Hammad notes that those people were highly politicized and well educated. They worked hard to form what is known by the Arab American organizations for the sake of defending the Arab social issues and to challenge the negative stereotypes of Arabs in the western media (286). Despite the fact that these crises has strengthened the Arab unification and nationalism, AL-Matrafi notes that some tried distancing themselves from their Arab identity out of fear, especially after the 9/11 events and the U.S. foreign policy cooperation with Israel (446).

The rise of hardships in the Arab countries results the idea of giving up their possessions and escaping to another place, aiming for better status, abundance, freedom and peace. In fact, a large portion of Arab writers and active figures whether Muslims or Christians, would face a massive difference between their economically helpless homelands and the other side of the western world. Consequently, Hammad argues that some even adopted the idea of writing to express their inhibited thoughts in the new world and started writing to reflect their new experience in diaspora (286) .

In this sense, these Arabs found it hard to assimilate and be flexible to attain regular aims like natives do as they heavily suffer from racism and marginalization, and so they get trapped in non-genuine self-concept through which they lose their true identity. In fact, their motivation to be inspired and individual is completely reduced along their pursuit of assimilating themselves to the new western culture. (Louati and Abu Amrieh 1084)

As an instance, Arab writers were the most to get affected by this cultural shock, and they usually “straddle two cultures” in diaspora in which they blend their Arab cultural heritage in their writings in English (Louati and Abu Amrieh 1084). Finally, Arabs in diaspora have been in isolation but these diasporic contexts could vary in results as some may just report and journal their life in exile while other are hoping for the go back to their countries.

### **2.3 Islam in the Western World: Perception and Reality**

Islam has been the center of attention and hostility for many non-Muslims mainly the Christians and Jews. They would argue that Islam is restricted and rigid about some social matters like topics related to women’s scarves and ways of maintaining human civil rights. (Kohut, Allen et Doherty)

Pagans had their share of hate towards Muslims and Islam too, mainly in places where Muslims and pagans are united in one country like India where Hindus and Muslims are living together. Hindus thought Muslims were taking over India for the sake of political hegemony and that those Muslims were originally withdrawn from Arab lands and Turkey.

As a result, Hindus claim India to be primarily for them especially after Britain's interference to divide Muslims from Hindus by giving Muslims "Pakistan" as their claimed country. Finally, Hindus would start to despise the idea of Muslims living in India and would think India was originally Hindu. This brought about Hindu avoidance of the coexistence between them and Muslims as known as "two nation's theory" which was suggested by Britain.

Moreover, one cannot deny the crucial role the "Ottoman empire" played which made Islam perceived as stereotypical and controversial. Ottoman empire was very extended and thorough. It covered completely vast areas of Europe, the middle east (northwest of Asia and Turkey now) and north Africa(224). The reason why western empires grew hatred toward the Ottoman Empire was the edgy holy war that lied between the Christians and Muslims and encouraged other non-Muslim empires like Russian empire to stand against Muslims and limit their withdrawal before its collapse in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. (Majumdar 216)

However, the Islamic legacy the empire has left is by no mean a strong evidence of the validity of Islam and its higher purpose. The Islamic Ottoman Empire was constructive rather than destructive. According to Majumdar, Though Ottoman Empire has dedicated its welfare and power for most likely imposing authority over other empires, yet its economic improvements and achievements cannot go unnoticed. The Ottoman Empire was renowned nations-state throughout its expansion in Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa. It was one of the greatest kingdoms in world history. (216)

Early stages and its modern eras, Ottoman kingships established many- social and economic, political, and military improvements for better innovation and a unique arrangement for the unification of the Kingdom under the Sultanates. The ups and downs of the Kingdom emphasized that due to its vast geographical boundaries in continents, and different social demography, the Ottomans innovated by themselves through various features, on the other side declined as well regarding ideologies, identification, ethnicity, and a central autocracy over the eastern and western regions. (Majumdar 216)

Ultimately Ottomans are famous and have been famed through their educational, social, and economic restructures open trade policies with Western Europe. Ottomans flourished their skills, crafts, cuisines, culture, and architecture everywhere. The unique nature of the Ottoman market-oriented economy was one of the features of financial structure which even Westerners have learned from. The economic structure has been built throughout four financial hubs of the Empire: Aleppo, Cairo, Istanbul, and Izmir (Majumdar 224).

Ottoman needs were not limited to the cities but within smaller cities, towns, and even villages where most of the people of the Kingdom reside. It is clear that the early modern Ottoman economy was pretty much about the state affairs and not so open to the rest of the world, yet It was an economy for the development and construction in many records. (Majumdar 224)

About twenty years ago, harsh criticism has been delivered around Muslims and Islam in general. According to Nadia Saleem and Muhammad Umair Chaudhary, Islam and Muslims are intensively labeled as terrorists, violent and different. Muslims were at some point of history condemned for 9/11 incident and were called for their barbarian nature and looked at as” inhuman aliens”. (Salim and Chaudhary 109)

According to Saleem and Chaudhary, Muslims in western countries are bearing the consequences of the wrong interpretation and perception of Islam by western media and consequently by the westerners (Salim and Chaudhary 110). Notably, a channel under the name of “Fox News” has been severely a harsh criticizer for the Islamic teachings and mosques in which it describes Islam as rather radical religion that promotes terrorism above all else. (Salim and Chaudhary 111) . it is noticeable how Fox News has drawn a strong association between the act of terror and the Muslims.

Predominantly, the continuous attempts by Fox News to make a racist coverage has resulted in what is known as the Islamophobia, and Sometimes even spreading hate speech and hashtags in order to push Muslims to give up their faith .Just within five days of the attack, 225,000 tweets were received with hateful hashtags like #stopIslam ...thereby making easier to identify different spatial, temporal, and textual patterns. (Salim and Chaudhary 114)

According to BBC News, a group of claimed to be Islamists attacked the two New York’s skyscrapers which resulted in killing thousands of people employed there. El-Sayed El-Aswad argues that:” most Western scholarship and media, through the construction of so-called Islamophobia, have portrayed Muslims in terms of global terrorism, Islamic jihadism, fanatic Islamism, fundamentalism, fascism, and Islamic authoritarianism”. ( El-Aswad 39).This shows how far some people can go and think if they accept the alienation of others instead of taking time to harmonize relationships with them. El-Aswad also argues that:

In a recent article, “Jihad against Islam,” Robert Steinback (2011) argues how 10 years after the 9/11 attacks on the United States, a second wave of anti-Muslim hatred is sweeping the country. The outrage seems largely propagated by politicians and others seeking to capitalize on

Americans' fears.<sup>5</sup> In 2010, American Republican politicians responded harshly to the proposal of the building of a mosque near ground zero. ( El-Aswad 45)

It goes without saying; terrorism is markedly prohibited and against human decency and morals as one must not surpass his limits to harm the other. However, the western-centric media and all its prejudgments are primarily rather unjustified as it is unfair to treat all people the same way out of their shared beliefs.

## **2.4 The Sudanese Civil Wars (1955-1972 and 1983-2005)**

Sudan was the largest African country before 2011. It covered an area of 2,376,000 square kilometers. Mainly, Sudan was abundant in water resources, fertile agricultural land, minerals, mines, oil reserves, and a livestock. (Conrad 139) . However, peace was never a long term option in Sudan as the country went through successive civil wars starting from 1955 till 2011. (Conrad 137)

### **2.4.1 The First Civil War**

The first civil war (1955-1972) was the first war to follow Sudan's independence of the British occupation. It was sparked and initiated by the military mutiny (revolt) in 1955 and led to southern brutal struggles later .The war ended with the Addis Ababa Peace Agreement (CPA) in 1972 which lasted for ten years (Conrad 139).According to Wikipedia, this agreement was established by the Sudanese leaders to bring the conflict in Sudan to an end. It was a set of treaties that to an extent ended the First Sudanese Civil War. The Addis Ababa agreement was later incorporated in the legal Constitution of Sudan.

### **2.4.2 The Second Civil War**

The second civil war (1983-2005) started after President Nimeiri dissolved the southern regional government and got involved in some acts that marginalized the southern people and deprived them from basic civil rights like the central decision making processes in 1983. (Conrad 140).The war also involved the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) fighting against the government in Khartoum which was considered as another revolt(Conrad ,140). Finally, the war ended with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005 with the intention of finding a common ground between the Sudanese government and the southern leaders goals (Conrad 146).

### **2.4.3 The Third Civil War**

The third civil war as known as “post-2011 conflicts” took place technically in 2011. After the secession of South Sudan in 2011, there have been continued clashes between north and south, crises in contested areas, and tribal civil wars. (Conrad 138). For instance, there were violent attacks in the contested areas of Abyei, Southern Kordofan, and Blue Nile. (Conrad 146-147) There has also been increased inter-tribal conflict within South Sudan itself. (Conrad 148).

According to Conrad, the solution for peace in Sudan lies in the will to reclaim the independence to the land, similarly like the successful case of South Africa’s efforts to shift from apartheid racist system into democracy and freedom. Conrad also suggests that maintaining stability of the areas of Abyei, Southern Kordofan, and Blue Nile (149). According to Google map, these three areas are located between the northern Sudan and the southern Sudan. Controlling conflicts in these areas will not only ensure a lasting peace in Sudan, but also will help the Sudanese to overcome many challenges and encourage solidarity among Sudan’s varied people.

### **2.5 The Gathering Storm of Arab Spring (starting from 2011)**

Faruk Hadzic notes that the prior term of Arab spring was the Arab revolution which was first used when Arabs revolted against the Ottoman Empire rule. The term “Arab Spring” was popularized by the Western mainstream media in early 2011. The term itself refers to the revolutions of 1848 which marked a year of social and political revolutions across the European countries. The latter aimed at overthrowing and canceling the old monarchical traditional structures and replacing them by representative democratic form of government. Later, “Spring” has been used to other periods in history that involves a series of revolutions that calls for representation in government and democracy (2)

The Arab spring was the result of the resentment Arabs had towards their leaders. The strong motivation of Arabs to be unified and politically free was one of the important features that characterized and pushed Arabs to take an action, whether individually or collectively. Respectively, people of different Arab countries started to revolt to gradually change the political culture and transform society and make massive reforms as they grew dissatisfied with their situation (Hadzic 2).

As to describe these revolts, Hadzic claims that: “It is the only way to prepare for the exhausting process of democratic governance.” (2). Similarly, Ouael Sarsour in his article confirms that these revolutions aimed to achieve democracy and get rid of the dictator power regimes in the Arab countries, and that they undoubtedly had many political, social and economic sustainable and significant impacts (56).

As mentioned earlier, these series of revolts were motivated by a list of factors in which Arabs could not but stand up for a decision-making action. In this sense, Sarsour reports that:



Other causes are due to injustice to the people and successive decade's oppression, due to the control of the elite in the capacities of the people, which led them to waves of underdevelopment and poverty. The injustice and tyranny that depend on the security services increased and what increased the Arab world's discontent was triple tyranny, political tyranny, social tyranny and economic tyranny (57)

The Arab spring underwent three kinds of revolt according to Igabria Khaled:

The term 'Arab Spring' encompasses three types of revolution in Arab countries: one type was successful and non-violent, such as the Egyptian revolution; the second was successful but violent, such as the Libyan revolution; and the third was a failed type of violent revolution, such as in Bahrain, Syria, and Yemen

(143)

Mainly, not all revolutions were organized and successful but the successful ones proved the Arab spring to be a worthwhile matter in history. In this sense, Igabria argues that these revolutions began in Tunisia, in December 2010, as a result of Tunisian police brutality against Mohammed Bouazizi, who was a vendor in Sidi Bouazid city. The latter committed suicide by lighting fire on himself on 17 December 2010 because of the Tunisian police brutality and injustice. Consequently, thousands of people started protesting in the streets in Sidi Bouazid, and demanded freedom and better living conditions. The situation of these protests quickly worsened and led to the death of many citizens in Tunisia (143).

Somehow, the escape of Ben Ali ran was considered a moral victory for the Tunisian protesters in terms of both the power and the size of their demonstrations. This recognizable achievement motivated the Egyptians as well in January 2011, to protest against the Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. Notably, Ben Ali's escape was contagious and transmitted to other

Arab countries like Egypt, Syria, Libya, Yemen, and Jordan; and the unexpected success of mass and street protests in both Tunisia and Egypt played a significant role to encourage other mass movements in other Arab countries (Igabria 143).

On the other hand, the Arab revolutions occurred because people sought human rights in the context of dictatorships in Arab countries. Thus, we can conclude that these revolutions were caused by several main factors such as: dictatorial regimes, corruption, lack of economic growth, unemployment, social and economic injustice, and absence of human rights and freedom. These issues broadly have affected many fields such as: education, politics, gender, feminism, media, and economics (Igabria 144).

Generally, the Arab Spring was not driven by religious motives only, but was motivated by other secular demands for dignity, freedom, and peace. However, Hadzic argues that some Islamist groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, made use of the movement and gained political influence in some countries, so much that they often clashed with secular forces. (5)

To sum up, these revolutions were performed for a strong cause as mentioned earlier in which Arabs looked for a massively new Middle East political system and this is why Arab spring it is considered to be one of the historical features Arab countries were marked by.

## **2.6 Arab Feminism and its Roots**

The rich history of feminism within the Arab world has witnessed many challenges. It traced the journey of women who, despite not initially identifying as feminists, developed a keen awareness of women's issues and struggles in society. Arab feminism shed light on the need of feminism for a universal consciousness about women's civil rights, particularly in Egypt, where the feminist movement gained momentum following independence from British occupying rule.

First, it's important to acknowledge the origins of Arab feminism, and see from where it has gone popular in the Arab world. Ahmed Saeed Ahmed Moubil was one of a few to talk about that. He confirms that:

After independence, Egyptian women started a social movement under the auspices of the Egyptian Feminist Union. In 1938 and 1941 [2] they united in pan-Arab meetings in Cairo to strengthen Arab feminist consciousness. In 1944, they founded the Arab Feminist Union. Particularly, Arab feminism traced its emergence and development in Egypt as a beginning.

(85)

Since Egypt is considered to be the first Arab country to gain independence from British rule, it seems convenient that Egyptian women and women in Egypt generally, start to reject the idea of oppression in all its forms and adopt an independent worldview about liberty and freedom of speech.

As marked before, independence has a significant role in liberating the minds from the notions of segregation and submission to the oppressor. Women were seen as inferior even after their nation's independence from colonizing states, yet their sense of nationalism moved up their consciousness to call for women independence too. Hence, it's no doubt, national consciousness is the driving force for feminism in Arab countries and that both are intertwined.

Mainly, these movements led by women in Arab countries are known as the "post-independence movements". The latter encouraged the careful shift from national independence to the focus on women's issues, including education, work, and suffrage rights. These movements took place in many Arab states after Egypt, such as: Palestine, Sudan, Algeria, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

In this sense, Ahmed Saeed reports that: “Among Palestinian women, during the entire period of work and after the establishment of the state of Israel, women's nationalism prevailed over the absence of threats and the reality of their land” (85) . This shows how the sense of nationalism has a massive effect on activating women’s voice to call for freedom and civil rights, especially in Palestine where Palestinian people had to stand tall and insist on their nationalism to stand against colonizing Israel.

Similarly, in Sudan and Algeria, Sudanese women participated in a nationwide war to call for independence in the mid-1950s and survived as an organized feminist movement to be followed by the Algerian women who during the Algerian Revolution of 1954-1962, participated as young feminists and freedom fighters (Ahmed Saeed 85).

Concerning the Arab peninsula, Ahmed Saeed notes that women there seem to have advantage already from their new educational opportunities. The helping policy of their countries to reduce the number of foreign workers has opened up new job opportunities for them and to be more autonomous. For instance, women in Kuwait have more opportunities for compromise and a clearer perspective of the debate and the same goes for Saudi women. Even though, women in the Arab peninsula were still less open to speak as they were less visible. (85)

Another influential movement and union that emerged after that is the “Pan-Arab feminism”. In the mid-1980s, Pan-Arab feminism was founded along with the Arab Women’s Solidarity Association (AWSA) in Cairo. Ahmed Saeed praises the role Pan Arab Feminism play in liberating women from traditional patriarchal systems in which he argues that:

The new Pan-Arab feminism is aiming to combat reactionary or conservative move throughout the Arab world to drive women out of the public workforce back into the home and to challenge the rescinding of even minimal gains in family laws. The

new patriarchal conservative thrust, which most progressive men do not challenge, is led by Islamic conservatives and is symbolized by the veil. While some Arab feminists, such as Fatima Mernissi of Morocco and Amina Said of Egypt, continue to speak out, most others are cautious or openly silent.

(85)

Ahmed Saeed argues that these contemporary movements were not only influenced by the western feminism but also by the pre-Islamic Arabia women. He clarifies that in the early days of Arab Islam, Aisha, the wife of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), published many religious interpretations of her husband's Hadith. Respectively, the mystic Rabia al-Adawiya wrote many "esoteric verses" in the 8th century and many poets of the medieval Abbasid court in Baghdad like Ubaida Al-Tamburiya, Sakina and Queen Zubaida had a praised reputation during the Caliph Harun al-Rashid rule. (86).

Later on, and in the 19th century, Arab intellectuals like Zainab Fawwaz and Maryam Al-Nahhas, who was the mother of Hind Nawfal, the founder of the first women's newspaper, depicted the biography and achievements of their female ancestors as well as biographical dictionaries that were dedicated to women (86).

Finally, despite the struggles Arab feminism faced with conservatives and their critics, Arab women achieved a considerable progress in pushing the silenced women to speak up their minds. However, these women in the Arab world have had a more difficult battle than feminists in the West for their own unique history and reasons. (Ahmed Saeed 90)

The events covered in this chapter had many lasting impacts which led to social, economic, and cultural changes in the Arab world and their so far progress. The Arab Spring and the Sudanese war are considered to be the most influential legacies, in which Arabs were forced to

fight for human rights, national Arab identity and Islam against racism, civil wars and far-reaching conflicts. Moreover, these revolutions laid the foundation for Arab women who adopted feminism as a tool to reclaim their civil rights and stand against social injustice, proving the significant role women can play in preserving the Arab traditions and identity.



# **Biographical Background**



## **Introduction**

Leila Aboulela is a renowned Sudanese writer and playwright. Her literary works are written in English, and they explore themes of identity, immigration, hybridity, racism and social inequality. Her novels and short stories provide deep information and insights the experience of Muslim immigrants in the West.

### **1 Overview about the Author**

Leila Aboulela was born in 1964 in Cairo but she grew up in Khartoum. Aboulela studied at the University of Khartoum, graduated and had a degree in Economics before she moved to England to get a Master's degree in Statistics at the London School of Economics. She also had the opportunity to practice on writing as she worked as a part-time Research Assistant. Leila Aboulela currently lives between Abu Dhabi and Aberdeen. (Procter)

Leila Aboulela has written many short stories such as: "The Museum", "Coloured Lights", "Missing Out", "Doctor on the Nile" and "The Ostrich". She also won the Caine Prize in the African Writing in 2000. She also won the award for Saltire Society's Fiction Book in 2018. (Procter)

In terms of novels, Leila Aboulela wrote five renowned novels. The first one was "The Translator" in 1999. The second was "Minaret" in 2005 which tells the story of the protagonist Najwa, a rich Sudanese woman who was forced into exile in London. The third was "Lyrics Alley" which was published in 2010 in Sudan, and was inspired by the life of her uncle who was a poet. She also wrote "The Kindness of Enemies" in 2015; and Finally, "Bird Summons" was the last novel Aboulela wrote in 2019. She has also had several radio plays broadcast such as : "The Mystic Life" in 2003 and The 'Lion of Chechnya" in 2005 (Procter).

### **2 Selected literary works of Leila Aboulela**

In her relatively short career, Leila Aboulela has succeeded to establish a worthy reputation, through which she had several awards and prizes in literature and received an amount of critical praise from two main figures in the African contemporary literature: Ben Okri and J.M. Coetzee. These prominent writers in the African literature appreciate the exclusive emotion of “quiet anger” in which Aboulela implies in her literary works. (Procter)

## **2.1 Bird Summons**

It is one of Aboulela’s famous novels. It published in 2019. The novel narrates the story of three Muslim ladies who travel to the Scotland to visit the grave of Lady Evelyn Cobbold who was the first British woman to complete the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca. The trip evolves into one of adventure and self-discovery for these women. These ladies enjoyed their freedom in Scotland at the cost of being distant from their homes. This inspires them to reflect on their decisions which brought them to where they are (Renfro).

## **2.2 The Kindness of Enemies**

*The Kindness of Enemies* is published in 2015. The novel tackles the theme of Muslims life during the post-9/11 era. It depicts the story of a half-Russian, half-Sudanese professor who undergoes a journey to document the life of a Muslim historical figure, Imam Shamil, who gained notoriety through his leading role in the anti-Russian resistance movement of the Caucasian War. (Grove Atlantic)

## **2.3 The Translator**

In “The Translator”, the protagonist Sammar is a Sudanese widowed woman who lives in Aberdeen and has a work position in a Scottish company. Rae Isles works as lecturer in Middle Eastern History in that company and Sammar helps him to translate the work for him. This working condition helps to grow a relationship between Sammar and Rae. The story is told in the

third person narrator, in which means the thoughts and emotions of Sammar are sometimes unclear and open to many interpretations. However, the development of the relationship between Sammar and Rae is clear within the dynamics of mistranslation in the story. (Procter)

The novel explores cultural and religious barriers in Sammar and Rae's love story. The relationship between Rae and Sammar develops as they talk constantly on the telephone. But when Sammar finally gathers the courage to ask Rae to convert to Islam, he is hesitant, and they both part ways. Sammar returns to Africa, however her feelings for Rae stay and she feels an exile and isolation. Overall, "The Translator" tackles many interesting themes such as: faith, romance, hybridity and identity which make it a worth read story (Procter).

## **2.4 Colored Lights**

Concerning "Coloured Lights", the 11 short stories tells the tragic death of narrator's close brother (Taha). The narrator prefers the darkness between the lights, yet is hopeful to find love in a Scottish kebab shop. Because "colored lights" contains a blend of languages, words, identities and cultures, it is like The Translator, deals with matters of cultural mistranslation. The coloured lights of Aboulela's collection conveys a warmth to the reader through mixed emotions, yet they these emotions are never join up. (Procter)

## **2.5 Minaret**

Principally, Aboulela's next novel, Minaret, is considered to be a postcolonial novel which depicts the life in Sudan between the mid-1980s, the early 1990s and the present, between Khartoum and London. Najwa's family is wealthy and is claimed to be from the corrupt elite in Khartoum. Even when Najwa's crush on the politician Anwar and she remains a passive figure. But things changes as her father is arrested because of the coup, and Najwa flees with her brother and mother to London. Living in drastically pathetic circumstances in London, Najwa becomes a

maid and a babysitter. In her free time she attends the mosque to have classes of Tajweed and learn about Islam. (Procter)

There we can conclude that despite Aboulela's works which are fictional and of different plot twists and creative expression, they all share the consideration of Muslim identity and the validity of clinging to God's faith regardless to one's gender , class or state of mind as well as delving into the problem of cultural misunderstanding. Aboulela is definitely a genius woman who could express her culture through these beautiful novels.

# **Literary Background**

# **1 An Overview of the plot and contextualizing its main themes**

## **1.1 Synopsis**

An upper-class Westernized Sudanese, her dreams were to marry, build and raise a family. Najwa, then at university in Khartoum, would never have imagined that one day she would be a lonely maid whom her dreams would be shattered. But a coup action that was held by some groups who would oppose the corruption of her father forces the young woman and her family into political long exile in London. Later, Laila is orphaned with her twin brother who is sent to jail on a drug charge.

Twenty years later, With her Muslim hijab and pathetic transformation, Najwa now, is invisible and inferior to almost everyone's eyes, especially to the wealthy classes whom Laila does their household in London. She then, feels a sense of belonging and serenity within the Muslim community and particularly, Islamic practices in the mosque that brings back her security and inner peace. Finally, Najwa meets Tamer, lonely younger brother of her employer. They begin to fall in love but things turned hard as the difference between the couple is intensely unmatched since Tamer is a rich young boy , Laila is older and Tamer's mother could never consider her as wealthy or worthy enough to be a wife for her son.

Hence, Minaret is a truly telling novel about Islam and an alluring glimpse into a culture which the rest of the world is just eager to understand.

## **1.2 Story Themes**

### **1.2.1 Religion and Displacement**

While Najwa was still a student at university in Sudan, she had started a relationship with Anwar, the mysterious secular guy. Anwar is a communist who constantly mocks religion as well as the wealthy lifestyle of Najwa. Anwar was also in favor of her father's arrest. When she is

forced to leave Sudan, Najwa finds herself unarmed against all the things that happened after her father's murder and so she begins to seek a solid faith.

Still, with being overwhelmed by her fragmented sense of belonging and being lost and lonely, Najwa meets Anwar again in London when and eventually starts an affair with him and this is her first and only sexual experience. However, after realizing Anwar had no plan of marrying her, she finds the courage to make an end to their affair and cuts him off for good. Later, Her bond with a group of women at the Regent's Park mosque along and as her anger with Anwar grows, she decides to find faith and get back to the essence of religion which Anwar used to call it conservative, rigid and pointless.

### **1.2.2 Cultural Identity and belonging**

According to Lahrech and Serir, Islam is the prominent feature in the female protagonist's self-identity in Leila Aboulela's *Minaret*, and that from the beginning of the novel we sense a tone of resignation "I've come down in the world. I've slid into a place where the ceiling is low and there isn't much room to move. Most of the time I'm used to it. Most of the time I'm good" (1). (494).

Lahrech and Serir emphasize : "Marta Cariello suggests that this extract showcase a "traumatic interruption of time" (340), and follows up on representing Najwa's migrant experience's trauma narrative ... it seems that Najwa is talking about her new job as a maid in Lamya's house but it signals more a loss of identity. She became confused and indecisive about how to identify herself "How many times have I lied and said I am Eritrean or Somali?" (71), she continues on stating: "I become fragmented and deflated in discussions; I never know which point of view I support. I find myself agreeing with whoever is speaking or with the one I like

best” (79). In other words she sees everyone else as “unperturbed and grounded, never displaced, never confused” (174).” (494)

A sense of loss and unbelonging is rooted most of the time within a migrant’s journey from his native home to an unknown land. Minaret’s main character, Najwa, is constantly struggling between her past in her native Khartoum and her life as a refugee in London. (Lahrech and Serir 493) .This hesitation that lies within the character’s decisions shows how much her identity is fragmented and inclined to adopt whatever attitudes, customs and lifestyles the society throws at her.

### **1.2.3 Loss and Resilience**

As Lahrech and Serir mentioned before, the sense of loss and unbelonging is rooted most of the time within a migrant’s journey from his native home to an unknown land. (493) . Notably, Najwa experiences multiple types of loss, mainly, the death of her father, the loss of innocence and the loss of cultural identity.

The sudden death of Najwa’s father drives her whole family into grief. It also causes a deep wound to Najwa that affects her life in all manners. Moreover, this loss leads Najwa to explore new ways to cope with the new western society, there where she meets Anwar , gives herself away, has an affair with him and loses her innocence and virginity . Finally, her family live in a foreign country, which put her into many challenges and hardships to cope with cultural differences and feelings of displacement because of the loss of her Arab Muslim identity. "They never really belonged. They were the 'foreigners,' the 'immigrants.'”

However, loss is a central event and a driving motive that sets the stage for Najwa to rise from ashes and start over.



The protagonist Najwa starts coping with grief by joining the Regent's Park Mosque courses. Tremendously, a religious practice like Quran recitation provides her with a sense of security and guidance during her time of grief and despair. It is also important to recognize the crucial role education plays in self-development and is considered as a healthy coping mechanism.

### **3 Literary movements and their cultural influences within Aboulela's works and Islamic literature**

#### **3.1 Post colonialism**

Post colonialism is a critical framework that examines the impact and legacy of colonialism and imperialism on cultures and societies. It explores the power dynamics and cultural exchanges between the colonizers and the colonized, often focusing on how these historical interactions have shaped the identities, literatures, and politics of postcolonial societies. (Wilkens)

In the context of literature, post colonialism often investigates how narratives and characters reflect the complexities of postcolonial identity, displacement, and cultural hybridity. It also looks at how literature can challenge and subvert colonial narratives, offering alternative perspectives and voices that were previously marginalized. Major figures that pioneered the post-colonial studies are: Chinua Achebe, Edward Said and Frantz Fanon.

The novel “*Minaret*” by Leila Aboulela is an example of postcolonial literature. It discusses the themes of identity, space, and religion, particularly how the protagonist, Najwa, navigates her fragmented identity after migrating from Khartoum to London. The novel illustrates the effects of cultural trauma and the seeking for belonging in a new place, emphasizing the role of religion and personal space in the process of healing and self-discovery.

Moreover, “*Minaret*” by Leila Aboulela depicts the experiences of its protagonist, Najwa, a Muslim immigrant in Britain within a post-colonial framework that discusses related features such as: double identity, racism, power dynamics etc.

### **3.1.1 Identity and Hybridity**

Najwa hesitates with her identity as she was torn between the demands of both cultural and religious Sudanese heritage (native country) and her life in the West (Britain). The novel explores the complexities of maintaining one’s cultural roots while adapting to a new society. Akhter et al. argues that: “in this manner, Aboulela examines the identity crisis, confusion and struggle of Najwa over Western modernity and traditional Arab cultures. This conflict may threaten Najwa’s identity on the one hand, and help her achieve hybrid identity and live successfully in the West on the other. Najwa overcomes this crisis, through hybridity and the third space to achieve cultural hybridity that is a blend of the new culture of the adopted Western homeland and traditional Arab culture.”

### **3.1.2 Islamophobia and Racism**

Aboulela challenges the Islamophobic Western discourses on Islam, Muslims and Muslim women to counter the misrepresentation of them in the Islamophobia writings of the Western authors. She portrays a picture of immigrant Muslims and Islamic lifestyle through the sympathetic illustrations of believing in Islam. (Akhter, Zaidi and Mohammad 74) , mainly because the narrative addresses the challenges faced by Muslim immigrants in the West as well as the pre judgements and Islamophobia and exposes their bad impact on the Muslim individuals , especially if that one was a Muslim black woman .

Aboulela shows to what extent the Islamophobia and racism can be an immense obstacle to prevent the Najwa from having a normal peaceful life and be integrated and accepted as one citizen of the Western societies.

### **3.1.3 Cultural Representation (non-Muslims portrayal of Islam)**

In her comparison of both “ *The translator*” and “ *Minaret*” novel, Aboulela describes how much Both novels make use of favored tropes of postcolonial literary arrival and are liberally littered with immigrant trauma, culture shock, and references to the inadequacy of English in rendering bicultural experience. In both, Islam provides comfort, community, and access to identity. Aboulela’s is a vision that refracts Monica Ali through Syed Qutb, a vision that takes traditions of domestic multicultural romance and filters them through contemporary right-wing Islamism. ( ABBAS 445)

Hence, through its characters and their diverse stands about migration, “Minaret” critiques the rigid portrayal of Muslims and Islam in the West, claiming for a more understanding and adopting an open minded perspective about things of different angles and experiences , mainly the Muslim diaspora. In order to aspire for a multicultural world, it is significant that people of different cultures are tolerated and respected.

## **3.2 Feminism**

Literary feminism is a critical approach that examines how literature both reflects and shapes cultural assumptions and stereotypes related to gender. It focuses on analyzing works of literature through a feminist lens, exploring how they either reinforce or challenge patriarchal attitudes. (Napikoski)

Literature has played a significant role in encouraging patriarchal norms throughout history. Many classic works of literature have reinforced traditional gender roles and power dynamics that

made men in central position and as superior to women and the primary source of a woman's self-worth and social status. According to Napikoski, literary feminism theory seeks to focus on particularly how literature support or challenges patriarchal norms and the traditional power systems that glorify the role of men as the merely source to women's power and status.

### **3.2.1 Islamic Feminism**

In “Minaret”, Aboulela focused on the struggle of women using Islamic symbols, depicting the situation from an Islamic perspective. This is known as “Islamic feminism”.

“Islamic feminism, with its call for ijitihad, does not mean to attack Islam, but to lash out at those who misinterpret the Tafseer (exegesis) of some religious sources according to their patriarchal experiences for assuming absolute domination.” (Zidan 32) . This is to redirect women's efforts to reinterpret religious sources, advocating for women's rights and equality within an Islamic framework.

### **3.2.2 Islamic Feminism in Literature: Characteristics and Features**

#### **3.2.2.1 The value of Hijab**

Islamic feminism explores the “hijab”, emphasizing personal freedom and challenging stereotypes associated with veiling and Islamic dress code for women specially. Ahmed Saeed argues that: “Aboulela agrees with Islamic feminists that the state should not enforce Sharia or impose hijab, because this enforcement conveys invisibility, erasing old binaries, barbarity and personal freedom.” (32). Still, Hijab is prominently the most defining dress of Muslim women's identity and their distinctive culture.

#### **3.2.2.2 Cultural Identity**

One of prominent women who dedicated her writing for a nuanced understanding about cultural identity and Islam was Leila Aboulela .Aboulela’s work is noted for addressing cultural identity and estimating the social conditions from the past to construct a contemporary identity.

### **3.2.2.3 Patriarchy and Colonization**

Since patriarchy and colonization have influenced the misinterpretation of Islam and the representation of Eastern women, leaving them as merely objects and inferior to men , Zidan claims that many female Arab writers have devoted their writings for a massive change, like “ Aboulela's works [which ] always deconstruct and devalue the concept of patriarchy...this patriarchal fanaticism stresses that both women and children are in dire need of essential orientation and absolute guardianship” (33).

Finally, as in Zidan’s article, Islamic feminism defends women's rights, equality between the sexes, social justice; it also fights patriarchal family laws that are falsely innovated and illusively immortalized by some clerics, not by Islam. This new trend has naturally encountered some challenges including: entrenched religion, capitalism, male domination and acrimonious customs and habits. Therefore, women have to fight fundamentalism and orthodoxy by adopting progressive approaches for democracy, decolonization, polycentrism and equality.” for a more nuanced understanding. (32)

## **3.3 Thing Theory: its Roots, Origins and Role in Literature**

Primarily, this research highlights the subject-object relationship in Minaret which was significant in the protagonist’s “Nadjwa” life .Hence, cultivating knowledge about thing theory roots, origins and role is required.

### **3.3.1 Bill Brown**

Bill Brown is a distinguished professor of English and the visual arts at the University of Chicago. He is the author of several books like *Other Things* (2015). His major work in terms of theory was Thing theory. Bill Brown looks at the role of objects in the light of thing theory as different from our common perception of them ,that they have more value to them and they make an exclusive relationship with people (Yogesh 32).

### **3.3.2 Roots and Origins of Thing Theory**

In his article, Yogesh claims that:

'thing theory' can be traced back to T.S. Eliot's Objective Correlative, Marx's commodity fetish via German and Soviet materialism, and in the French context, the work of Baudrillard on the everyday and consumption, the 'thing theory' was largely created by Bill Brown, in his influential essay 'Things theory' (2001), who edited a special issue of *Critical Inquiry* on it in 2001 and published a monograph on the subject entitled *A Sense of Things*.

(32)

### **3.3.3 Self-worth and the Agency of Objects (power of objects)**

According to Yogesh, Thing theorists treat things as elements that are equipped with power, agency, meaning, and even qualities we tend to attach and associate with subjects rather than objects. (34). Thing theorists differ the “thing” from the object because “thing” is naturally more autonomous and can stand in isolation. Things have come to shape attitudes and experiences such as independence and resistance. In this sense, an “object” which has agency to stand apart and is possessive of its owner can be called a “thing” (34)

In this occasion, human beings are more often defined or characterized by their things. In his article, Yogesh clarifies the influence of things on one's self-definition and argues that Bill Brown's Thing Theory seeks to prove that the present generation not only possesses the material things but also is possessed by them. Technically, the latter information is valid reason why generally people tend to make a lot of efforts in order to obtain, accumulate and keep different things. Apparently, the fact that things play a great role in shaping our self-worth is controversial (36).

Brown makes effort to show how object world transforms human beings world. He tries to prove how material environment shapes us and that the value of things is not merely symbolic and that its influence is can extend to cover psychological, social, economic and religious aspects.

### **3.3.4 The Role of Adopting Thing Theory in Literature**

Certainly, Thing Theory provides a framework for understanding the significance of objects in the literary works. It considers the objects as not just passive but as active participants in shaping human experience and culture. The role of thing theory can be fundamental in literature.

First, thing theory has inspired literary scholars to adopt methods from anthropology, archaeology, and art history. Thus, it is an interdisciplinary field of a large Influence on many literary fields. This cannot only serve in unveiling the relationship between things and subjects, but also analyze the deeper meanings things hold based on historical analysis and socio-cultural studies.

Second, it involves tracing the material histories of objects within books and the history of the book as a material object. Tracing how books move through different hands, institutions, and contexts reflects their use and value and can reveal information about their social and cultural significance. This is commonly beneficial in material culture studies.

The theory raises questions about certain matters and the agency of things and their relationship with humans, urging interdisciplinary work that crosses traditional academic boundaries. First, it investigates how the literary movements like realism do and postmodernism and literary periods (i.e. Victorian, twentieth-century) stage and treat “things” differently as well as where can these things lead and affect us today on many levels.



# **Chapter Two**



# 1 Exploring the Representation of gender roles through Character's Objects

## 1.1 The Veil (Hijab)

Thing theory implies that objects are neither neutral nor passive. They hold meaning and are influential according to history and culture. In this context, “the hijab” represents more than just a piece of clothing. It's a “**thing**” that is loaded with meaning and can even impact the decisions and options of women who wear Hijab specially. In an Islamic perspective, Hijab is considered to be a protection for women from any possible unwanted harassment. In the other hand, other non-Muslim societies see it as a barrier that can pressure women as it offers them limited opportunities and opens a space for judgements. In order to explore the mystery behind Hijab and its prominent power to affect the characters in “*Minaret*”, it is important to consider some key points.

First, the portrayal of the hijab is variable to the characters in the novel. It is important to consider how it has different meanings for different female characters in the story, giving the fact that women are different in terms of age, class and personality. In this sense, it is best to identify the female characters that wear Hijab (specifically Najwa) and see how they are portrayed, developed or reduced or addressed in the text.

Moreover, defining the degree of agency and autonomy of Hijab is essential to see how the presence/absence of it empowers or constrains female characters addressed in the text. This can be very helpful in measuring the amount of control women in the story have over their own destinies, faith and religious practices, as see whether these characters are themselves subject to patriarchal control and societal expectations and norms or not.

Also, Hijab contributes to the matter of intersectionality. As Hijab can affect women of different ages, classes and colors in various degrees, it can add on more forms of oppression or privilege to the characters variably, especially the ones who experience the intersection of gender, race and class like Najwa.

Finally, Instances where the hijab interacts with other objects in the novel are the essential part for analysis since these interactions reveal a lot about Najwa's character or other women relationship with their veils.

Applying thing theory in “*Minaret*” demands a degree of deep understanding to which Hijab is a tool for identifying oneself and so behaving in such way because of it. In the novel, Najwa’s decision to wear or remove the hijab reflects her evolving self-awareness. Hijab also makes her feel more compassionate and modest. In fact, her source of strength or sense of insecurity sometimes can be a result of how Najwa's relationship with the hijab changes throughout the story. Hijab then can extend to more than a dress code or symbolic object.

### **1.1.1 Hijab as a religious dress code**

Aboulela makes the word “Hijab” as essential in the story not only for the protagonist Najwa but also for the rest of the characters. Hijab serves as an epitome of faith and commitments. Sometimes, the characters in the story proceeds to take decisions based on it. When Najwa is wandering in the library, she gets haunted by the view of the two girls who are wearing “Tobe”, a national Sudanese dress that resembles Hijab:

Many girls dressed like me, so I was not unusual. Yet these provincial girls made me feel awkward. I was conscious of their modest grace, of the tobés that covered their slimness - pure white cotton covering their arms and hair.

(Aboulela 20)

This quote shows that Najwa's feelings towards Hijab because of the notable veiled girls crossing her, Najwa starts seeing her feminine style of clothing as abnormal and accordingly describing them as modest and graceful. For Najwa, Hijab is responsible for her self-image and anybody would see her as different if she wears it.

Similarly, Tamer is Najwa's employer in London. He lived most of his time in Britain, but he is well committed to his faith and makes sure he is recognizable as Muslim. When Tamer Chats with Najwa, he says: "Oh, I would only marry someone who was devout. And she would have to wear hijab" (Aboulela 189). When it comes to a value like "devotion", Tamer uses the term "Hijab" as a way to achieve it. This stereotypical thought depicts the massive influence Hijab makes on Tamer's mind, which even extends to effect his decision making.

### **1.1.2 Hijab: an object that can be telling of women's faith**

In "Minaret", whenever Najwa has an internal monologue with herself about faith, she is always accompanying it with Hijab: "Not everyone prayed. Girls like me who didn't wear topes or hijab weren't praying and you could tell which ones were members of the Front, because they weren't praying". Apparently for her, Najwa's only source of change would rely so heavily on Hijab which extends beyond a piece of fabric. Najwa has been hoping Anwar would change like she has been when she started wearing Hijab. It is for her the object that can reveal facts about to what extent her faith as a woman is true, and how her efforts to repent her sins are confidential.

However, Aboulela tries to keep the relationship with some characters and Hijab slightly shallow, as if her focus is shed on Najwa/Hijab dramatic relations. When Aboulela says: "This one looks Indian, as if the hijab had made me forget she was Indian and now she is reminding me - in the sari with her flowing hair and jewellery, she is relaxed, traditional" (Aboulela 176), it is

noticeable Hijab does not reveal anything about the Indian women's nationality until she's without it. The fact that Hijab can hide her culture and she is completely unrecognizable without it tells how her relationship with it is just periodical and at times of doing religious practices.

Similarly, when she sees the girl: "I walked into the lecture room and, instead of emptiness, found a girl wearing hijab sitting filing her nails" (Aboulela 50); it is clear in this instance how the girl is taking her liberties to do her nails, not paying attention to any difference between western girls and girls who wear Hijab. For the girl, her purpose is to feel pretty about herself no matter her faith was. In fact, she was autonomous and Hijab here can be seen as passive object.

Despite the fact that Najwa is bound to her Hijab throughout the novel, she claims that "But it is as if the hijab is a uniform, the official, outdoor version of us. Without it, our nature is exposed". No matter this "veil" is central in her life, it can't really expose the true faith.

### **1.1.3 Hijab, Blackness and class**

When Najwa tries to be close to Lamya (her employer), she frequently gets rejected by Lamya's family, especially Lamya who keeps a distance from her. In this respect, Najwa hopes that:

I had hoped to come close to her or at least get her to chat with me like her mother did. Now I know that she will never do that. She will always see my hijab, my dependence on the salary she gives me, my skin colour, which is a shade darker than hers. She will see these things and these things only; she will never look beyond them

(Aboulela 115).

No matter goodness Najwa offers to Lamya, for her the hijab represents Najwa's internal conflict. The latter lies between her expressing her true self, and the pressure from Lamya's

family and British society; because Najwa is a poor black woman in London, she thinks Hijab adds on more forms of struggle that affects her interactions with others. It creates more barriers to feel a sense of community. This material object connects to Najwa's feelings, yet it creates a restriction for her outside Sudan. Understanding the discrimination which Najwa suffers from based on the intersectionality of class, race, gender and identity factors is crucial to address all the challenges and emotions she has towards Hijab.

### **1.1.4 Hijab and stereotypes**

According to Cambridge Dictionary, the word "stereotype" means a set idea that people have about what someone or something is like, especially an idea that is wrong. It can be used as bad connotation in some contexts. While Najwa is freeing her mind from his constant judgements and chooses to be faithful to her religion, Anwar continues to transmit the idea that women who wear Hijab are only there to reproduce: "So many of them are Islamists. You know the type, the wife in hijab having one baby after the other". Anwar is influenced by the western media in which he thinks those women are less important and cannot have a creative mindset out of the household field.

Anwar's relationship with Hijab is clear and final. Hijab does not inspire his liberal projects and atheist perspectives. Additionally, he is even more misogynistic when comes to the veil: "We passed a couple of Arab women dressed in black from head to foot; their faces were veiled. Anwar made a face and, when they were out of earshot, he said, 'It's disgusting, what a depressing sight!'" (Aboulela 161)

Hence, choosing to wear the hijab not only can be considered as an act of agency, but also the Hijab has the agency to change the human conviction and beliefs.

## **1.2 Make-up**

Aboulela used a remarkable packed description in the favor of female characters in the novel. Aboulela would often use the word “makeup” when describing the female characters looks. “Makeup” in “*Minaret*” then, has a significant role to compliment/shame the perception of women by themselves or others and; so we can extract the relationship between this thing (Make-up) and the female characters in the story.

To find out how make up cultivates the feeling of happiness, integration or security, it is important to discover the influence of Make-up as a “thing” on the female characters as “subjects” through close reading between the story lines.

### **1.2.1 Make-up and Najwa: Gender, Race and Class**

The role of makeup in the novel's setting is important. It can be associated with Western beauty customs as an indirect colonial influence, but it is more likely an object for women to use and feel pretty with. It is not confined to the white women, the Arab or the black ones, yet the experience of the female characters with Make-up makes them feel equally more approachable and appealing: “We are pleased to see each other without our hijabs and all dressed up for the party, delighted by the rare sight of each other's hair, the skin on our necks, the way make-up brightens a face. We look at each and smile in surprise. It is not only the party clothes; some of us are transformed without our hijabs”. (Aboulela 175)

Throughout the novel, it is clear how the object can have a great transformational effect on both women’s looks and moods ; no matter the application process or the colors used, the effect it has on Najwa or others contributes to evolution of Najwa's character and there experience in London as female immigrants.

In addition to being a thing, Make-up can be classified as a “commodity” that reflects the power dynamics between characters. When Najwa is a maid in Lamya’s house, she notices her



friends who come for visit: “The curtains are drawn, the doorbell rings and it all starts. The guests are Sudanese and Arab girls in their twenties, wearing the same type of clothes as Lamya, the same makeup” (Aboulela 209). Najwa not only makes a distinction between clothes but also the type of “Make-up” she puts on and the type women of the upper class apply. Whether its different way of application or the brands used, Make-up then can serve as a marker of social status, and even a status symbol for the rich women.

Although Make-up is influencing to most females in the story, sometimes its role is diminished and of no necessity for women. Najwa describes the women in her mother’s funeral as: “It was like that at the funeral parlour when the four women came from the mosque to wash my mother. They all wore hijab and long dark coats, their faces plain without makeup”. (Aboulela 132). Similarly, Najwa describes Tamer’s mother as: “She listened to them quietly and I helped her serve coffee and tea. Her face was harsh without makeup, her hair out of the way in a bun because she no longer went to the hairdresser; the jumpers she wore under her tobe were in sombre colours”. (Aboulela 61)

In these two contexts, Make-up is neither considered as a luxury or a necessity for these women the same as Najwa sees it ; this draws the attention to the unique relationship Najwa has with Make-up considering it as one of the tools to build up with her character.

### **1.3 Hair and Psychoanalysis**

As it has been said earlier, objects have agency and can influence human emotions, behaviors and experiences. “*Minaret*” is unique in the way it was written by a woman about woman matters. Clearly, talking about the role of “hair” for the female characters in the story cannot go unnoticed or trivial. Thus, for many women the hair can serve as an object to impact their physical shape; as well as boost their sense of self and sometimes their social status. In order

to discover the exclusive relationship between this “thing” and the female characters (Najwa specially), it is important to take some notes into consideration.

First, hair as an object can interact with Najwa or any other female character in the story. It has a strong effect on them as well as an exclusive relationship, considering the type of hair and how it does affect these female characters based on their shape, color or type. In turn, it is important to investigate how Najwa manipulates her hair to express herself in the presence of the hair. To explore the materiality and active role of the hair on the characters, it is more convenient to exhibit instances from “Minaret” and closely extract the relationship between the subject (female characters) and the object (hair).

## **Najwa**

In the car, Najwa says: "I rolled up the window of the car so that dust wouldn't come in and the hot wind wouldn't mess up my hair." (Aboulela 16). This instance highlights how the Najwa views her hair as an extension of herself as if it is a small baby who needs to be carefully touched and protected. The hair is a "thing" that Najwa must take control over, treating it as a fragile thing that could be messed or damaged by external forces like wind and dust. This shows the importance Najwa's hair holds to her and how it serves as a material representation of the subject's desire to maintain a certain feminine appearance or class.

## **Other Female Characters with their hair**

In her description of the hair's role in elevating women's confidence, Najwa describes the Indian woman: "Her black straight hair swung all the way down to her waist and when she turned it flew up and fell down." (Aboulela 30). This quote provides a vivid description of Sundari's hair long black hair during the dance. The hair seems to make her autonomous and bold in her dance moves. This relationship between the subject (Sundari) and her object (hair) is energetic and

lively in which the young Indian lady seems to take care of her hair, mainly to show off her internal strength and interior unlimited motives.

However, Aboulela changes the way of describing the hair when it comes to the Tamer's mother, in which she declares "Her hair is short and severely cut, but softened with the colours of henna." (70). The thing about the Doctora Zeinab's hair being short, severely cut, and softened with the colours of henna" shows that this subject has a hard time in her life that was reflected in her hair. The cut can indicate an act of cruelty and resistance to feminine features in the presence of her family issues and concerns. Yet, she tries to keep her feminine side by using "the henna" that softens and adds more glamour to the damaged hair. This interaction between Zeinab and her hair can reveal so much about her self-concept.

## **Anwar**

Earlier, we have seen how Anwar is critical of hijab and women who put it on; however, Anwar looks more open to the idea of showing the hair and thinks it serves women's interests. Najwa narrates her conversation with Anwar: "he said, `covering their hair and acting coy, but all that is hypocrisy, social pressure." (Aboulela 168). Clearly, Anwar's relationship with the female's hair is explicitly linked to the practice of hijab and the religious norms of women. The hair to Anwar is a thing that should not be concealed in all its shapes. It is a manifestation of women's femininity and freedom. Hence, any attempt to cover it for Anwar, is an attempt to hide women's identity and individuality.

## **Lamya**

Lamya is the Najwa's employer in London. She is a rich single mom who lives with her mother, brother and daughter. As a working woman, Lamya tries to ignore her family issues

when leaving the house for work, dressing properly and doing a good hairstyle to quit feeling helpless without her husband. In describing Lamya, Aboulela says:

In the afternoon Lamya returns with fluffy hair and a carrier bag with Knights Bridge and a designer's name written on it...Lamya will be furious, not because of the loss but because of the inconvenient scattering of glass, the disruption. She is dancing now, striking in her new dress, her hair done up.

(207)

Here, Lamya's "fluffy hair" is a state of hair that signifies messiness and tiredness. Lamya's chase after her job and skipping depression is reflected in the shape of her hair even though; the hair is an object that is supposed to elevate Lamya's sense of softness or youthfulness as a high class member. However, Lamya's "hair done up" compliments her overall feminine looks, showing her lavish outward appearance around her friends along with expressing her deep sense of self-confidence and pride.

### **Najwa's Mother**

Throughout the story, Najwa's mother seems to be a lively and elegant woman, treating herself with care and elegance. In comparison to Najwa's hair, Najwa praises her mother's generously and says:

Mama said. She had just come back from the hairdresser and her hair curled over her shoulder. I could smell her hairspray and cigarettes. I wished I were as glamorous as her, open and generous, always saying the right things, laughing at the right time. One day I would be.

(Aboulela 22)

This quote explains how the hair is not just a static feature in Najwa's body, but rather something dynamic, active and expressive. The hair then becomes a "thing" that draws Najwa's senses as if she can still smell the hairspray fixing her mother's hair. The hair which is curling over the mother's shoulder gives it a sense of movement and lively effect that makes her mother look strong and active during the day and special occasions, which Najwa lacks because of her wavy hair and so she feels less important in public gatherings. The hair is not just a physical feature, but also a thing which adds more weight to Najwa's mother style, confidence and social status. Then, the relationship is an integral and a key to the both Najwa and her mom's personality.

Additionally, the hairstyle itself can signify an internal change in the subject's hair. Najwa says:

"I pictured her coming back from the hairdresser in Khartoum, her hair soft and straightened, with a bit of static in it and the deep smell of hairspray. On such days, her robe would barely cover her hair and she would gladly let the material slip. When I was very young I liked to stroke her straightened hair, enjoy its temporary smoothness. 'Your hands better be clean!' she would say. A drop of water or perspiration would restore a strand of hair to its original curl and on a day like that she would be going out to somewhere special where she would shine and make heads turn. But in sombre times, when her hair was not done, she would hold it back in a bun and not let the material of her robe slip."

(Aboulela 232)

In this rich instance, Najwa's mother's hair is described in vivid detail. It holds deep personal and psychological impact. The hair of the mother is something sacred and beautiful to Najwa, because it conveys emotions of nostalgia to her. Additionally, the hair's transformation from

straightened to curled is a marker of change in the mother's mood. Probably, the straightened or her regular hair is more about being herself, and the curly hair serves to unveil her and confidence boldness in special occasions.

## **Tamer**

Najwa talks about her brother hair style and describes it over time:

In a campus where most were scruffy, he always wore clean shirts, was clean-shaven and his hair was cut short even though longer hairstyles were in fashion. Omar had his hair just like Michael Jackson on the album cover of Off the Wall...Over the years his hair has thinned, his hairline receded. Now he is almost bald and I can remember luxuriant curls greased in imitation of Michael Jackson on the cover of Off the Wall...Over the years his hair has thinned, his hairline receded.

(Aboulela 17)

Although the subject here is not a woman, Tamer's is clearly affected by his hair in which he carefully adopts a hairstyle that is contrasted with the "scruffy" appearances of his peers. The short, Michael Jackson haircut in the quote is a "thing" that sets the character apart and speaks of his sense of style and conformity to the trend at that time. This hair style helps Tamer to exhibit a certain desirable image. It is a thing shaped Tamer's identity and helps him to fit within his campus environment.

However, Omar's changing hairstyle over time is used to mark the passage of years and the subject's physical aging. It is like hair changes accordingly with Omar's identity and his lived experience. The receding hairline is a marker of the Tamer's physical change in the prison and his inhibited traumas and sadness. It can also denote a marker of wisdom and maturing up. The hair can be classified as more active object than the uniform as it shows wisdom in its own

unique presence. For Tamer, hair is not just a passive tool but more a time machine that helps him to see where he stands in the matter of time and age.

Across these instances, “hair” is consistently portrayed as an active material "thing" that holds deep symbolic, personal, and psychological significance for the subjects. Whether it is a source of frustration, transformation, aging or self-concept, the hair is always powerful to explore and explain the complex emotions and traumas of people and looking to their lived experiences in a more understandable way.

## **2 Subject-Object Relations and Post-colonialism: Exploring the Representation of race through Character’s Objects**

### **2.1 The Quran**

As a devout Muslim, Najwa’s relationship with the Quran is central to her identity. The holy Quran provides a sense of belonging, guidance and purpose throughout her journey in the novel.

When joining Regent’s Park Mosque; a significant location in London, Najwa decides to repent her sins. The Call to Prayer (Azan), its beautiful call to prayer echoes and the sacred prayer rugs which is used for daily prayers, are reminding Najwa of her religious obligations to connect to her Muslim identity and faith.

The Quran, as the text reference of Islam, plays a fundamental role within the context of post colonialism as it is a book that characterizes the Muslim identity. One of the important relationships in “Minaret” is Quran/Najwa relationship. The latter is complex and extraordinary.

#### **2.1.1 Cultural Identity and Resistance:**

Since the early age, the Quran is seen as a fundamental code of Muslim cultural identity, especially in the face of colonial pressures that attempts to repress the traditional beliefs and

religious practices. The act of preserving, interpreting, and reading the Quran can be a form of cultural resistance against the hegemony of Western ideology. Najwa decides to repent and set the ground for a new beginning as a true Muslim in London. One of the main things that helps her to achieve that is “the Quran”.

Najwa visits her brother in jail. She realizes how much he is away from God now. Najwa tells him to stop the drugs and get back to his faith: “I tell him he should read the Qur'an.” (Aboulela 95). Najwa’s emphasis on Quran depicts her desires for equality, justice for the marginalized and oppressed people. For Najwa, The Quran is a source of Islamic and decolonizing knowledge and spiritual guidance that represents a final solution that challenges the hegemony of Britain and their racist treatment towards the indigenous groups as known as “othering” .The Quran for Najwa is the source of safety and serenity and her escape from the unfamiliar western world .

### **2.1.2 Quran Representation and Stereotyping:**

The Quran and its associated religious and cultural practices like Tajweed and interpretation have often been criticized and misrepresented; this is known as the negative stereotyping which describes Islam as regressive and violent the Euro-centric discourses and narratives.

Najwa’s efforts to counter these problematic representations in London are worth recognition. Because the Quran’s role in Muslim societies is crucial, Najwa works hard to read it properly: “I want to read the Qur'an in a beautiful way” (Aboulela 82). She even takes Quran as a habit and it becomes a part of her identity as a Muslim: “It being a Monday, I have my Qur'an Tajweed class at the mosque.”

## **2.2 The Minaret**



Through her storytelling, Aboulela sheds light on the challenges faced by immigrants in London. Her novel depicts the diasporic journey of characters who suffered with their hybrid identities and fitting in the new environment (Europe). In “*Minaret*”, Najwa’s sense of self and her relationships with others is often memorized by her belongings in Sudan. One of the objects that affect her identity is the “Minaret”.

### **2.2.1 The Minaret: Its Material Presence, Symbolic Power and Religious Significance**

The mosque minaret is a towering architectural structure that has a strong material presence and attracts the attention as an epitome of the Islamic religious and cultural identity. As a "thing," the minaret also embodies the symbolic power of the mosque and Islam, acting as a physical manifestation of spiritual and communal belonging. For Najwa, the minaret sets Najwa’s mind into relief. Being in London does only familiar when she sees the minaret: “I look up and see the minaret of Regent's Park mosque visible above the trees.” (Aboulela 8)

For Najwa, the minaret is intimately tied to the regular practices of the Muslim community, such as the call to prayer (Azan) and the act of reciting it for the purpose of worship and prayers. These rituals and practices supply the minaret with a deep sense of material and rich cultural meaning. The minaret then is considered as a thing that is actively engaged with and Najwa’s experiences and integrated within her identity.

### **2.2.2 The Minaret as a form of Resistance for the Diasporic Identities (immigrating subjects)**

In many postcolonial narratives, the unique design and style of mosque minarets have witnessed many transformations, revealing both traditional Islamic elements and colonial impact. This hybridity of the minaret as a "thing" reflects resistance of the cultural identities and the ways

in which this thing in all its forms can be in challenging of the colonial legacies. In fact, the building and location of the minaret have been the center of attraction as it is considered as a sharp resistance against colonial efforts to wipe and marginalize the rich Muslim heritage.

The characters in Aboulela's novel undergo many issues pertinent to belonging, religion, and hybridity as they try to bridge the line between their native culture and the life in diaspora. In "Minaret", Najwa uses the mosque minaret as a worthy cause to stay and handle her diasporic sense of unbelonging: "I remember the fresh bare trees, the cleanliness of a cold morning. Now I look up to see the minaret of the mosque above the trees. I might not see it again from this particular angle." (Aboulela 255)

The mosque minaret, as a recognizable thing for Najwa, can serve as a powerful tool of her Muslim identity and the community she left in Sudan, as well as providing her with a feeling of belonging and neglecting the forced geographical boundaries between Britain and Sudan. Then, the minaret is connecting Najwa to her diasporic self instead of making her run from it.

## **2.3 Photographs**

Photographs can be considered as powerful "thing" which play a significant role in the subject of post colonialism when explored through the lens of thing theory. Photographs can work as a dynamic thing that challenges the colonial power systems, while also expressing native histories and identities.

Old photographs evoke memories of Najwa's complex past and hard moments which are mixed with joy, sadness and nostalgia. Those photographs efficiently help Najwa to remember and shape the true story of her former life in both Khartoum and London.

For Najwa, the influence of pictures on her was positive. She does not depict any scene of being oppressed in any form. In Sudan, the life is flawless and free, represented by the people

Najwa had pictures and memories with: “In the bedroom the bed was covered with photographs, black and white, coloured, in different sizes” (Aboulela 138)

However, Najwa uses the photographs as a strong tool for resisting the dominant colonial legacies in London. Najwa says: “I remembered things I had left behind in Khartoum: a pair of beige sandals, a poster of Bonet’ NI, my schoolbooks and photos” (Aboulela 170)and “I found a photo of both of us at school, wearing identical uniforms - the navy pinafore and white belt” (Aboulela 34). The Photos which has the embodiment of her relatives and friends become a link through which marginalized Najwa can exhibit her own agency, stories, and perspectives, regardless of her life as maid in Lamia’s house and her downgraded judgements as the photos are the proof Najwa was a rich lady one day.

Similarly to other characters in the novel, these family albums and personal photographs become a repertoire of collective memories and cultural richness that ensure cultural identity of indigenous people. In describing Shahinaz’s house, Najwa says “It is rare to have Shahinaz in my living room. I prefer to go to her house, to be surrounded by her four children, her mother-in-law, the photos of cousins and uncles on the shelves”. When Najwa draws the attention to the pictures in the shelves, it is as she tries to remind Shahinaz of her blessings since Shahinaz would sometimes feel disappointed by the fact she is just a housewife.

Finally, photographs not only can serve as things that help to construct and preserve cultural identity for displaced or diasporic people, but also own the potential to make political actions, raise awareness, and create connections between the displaced communities.

# **General Conclusion**

Through rich, evocative prose, Leila Aboulela captures the readers' attentions to have a deep look inside the human experiences, dealing with matters of love, race, loss, and the burning desire to belong to a foreign land. Through the novel of "Minaret", Aboulela thrives in depicting the life of the young Sudanese Najwa in diaspora. Ultimately, her forced experience in London for brings about cherishing some of the old things she left in Sudan.

Things like the Minaret and Hijab are material possessions which Najwa is attached to. The minaret helps Najwa to feel a sense of belonging to the Islamic identity. Hijab also reminds her of her old life in Sudan and promotes her pride in being an Arab Muslim who she was missing before she starts taking classes in the mosque. Thus, the subjects are influenced by their objects.

Subject and object are strongly linked whether in real life or fictional life. The "things" according to Bill Brown are interesting entities that can stand on their own, displaying a considerable change and effect on people. In this respect, the novel *Minaret* represents this relationship between characters as subjects and their things which surround them.

The dynamic thread between subjects and objects helps Najwa in her journey as a subject to discover herself spiritually through tangible things. Things like "the minaret" and "the hijab" contributes to evolving themes like identity, agency and religion. Najwa the subject is linked to the thing "Minaret" which is a building that symbolizes Islam and the highest thing in Arab countries.

Generally, this research explores the relationship between the characters and the objects in *Minaret*, explaining the significant role our things can play in shaping our understanding around the world.

## **Abstract**

The human being is a complex entity that lives in the tangible world and interacts with the rest of the beings. Objects and materials has been there for humans to use and consume starting from the early civilizations till today's modern technology. The human being has used these objects as possessions and means to many ends which can be listed as: using objects can facilitate our challenging environmental conditions, help us to communicate our vital needs, express our inhibited self needs through letters, be a symbol that represent our distinctive identity to the world like status and money and can insanelly evoke internal emotions like need, joy or nostalgia.

The latter leads to discover the intimate relationship between humans and the external objects. In this sense, this research paper aims at discovering the relationship between certain objects with the subjects in Leila Aboulela's novel "Minaret".

## **Resume**

L'être humain est une entité complexe qui vit dans le monde tangible et interagit avec le reste des êtres. Les objets et les matériaux ont été présents pour que les humains les utilisent et les consomment, depuis les premières civilisations jusqu'à la technologie moderne d'aujourd'hui. L'être humain a utilisé ces objets comme possessions et moyens pour atteindre de nombreux objectifs, que l'on peut énumérer ainsi : utiliser des objets peut faciliter nos conditions environnementales difficiles, nous aider à communiquer nos besoins vitaux, exprimer nos besoins réprimés à travers des lettres, être un symbole représentant notre identité distinctive au monde comme le statut et l'argent, et peut follement évoquer des émotions internes telles que le besoin, la joie ou la nostalgie.

Ce dernier point conduit à découvrir la relation intime entre les humains et les objets extérieurs. En ce sens, ce travail de recherche vise à découvrir la relation entre certains objets et les sujets dans le roman "Minaret" de Leila Aboulela.

## ملخص

ان الإنسان كيان معقد يعيش في العالم الملموس ويتفاعل مع بقية الكائنات. لقد كانت الأشياء والمواد موجودة ليستخدمها البشر ويستهلكها بدءًا من الحضارات المبكرة وحتى التكنولوجيا الحديثة اليوم. لقد استخدم الإنسان هذه الأشياء كملكات ووسائل لتحقيق العديد من الأغراض التي يمكن إدراجها على النحو التالي: استخدام الأشياء يمكن أن يسهل ظروفنا البيئية الصعبة، ويساعدنا على إيصال احتياجاتنا الحيوية، والتعبير عن احتياجاتنا الذاتية المكتوبة من خلال الحروف، ويكون رمزًا يمثل هويتنا المميزة للعالم مثل المكانة والمال ويمكن أن تثير مشاعر داخلية بجنون مثل الحاجة أو الفرح أو الحنين.

هذا الأخير يؤدي إلى اكتشاف العلاقة الحميمة بين الإنسان والأشياء الخارجية. ومن هذا المنطلق، تهدف هذه الورقة البحثية إلى اكتشاف العلاقة بين أشياء معينة وموضوعات رواية "المؤذنة" للكاتبة ليلي أبو العلا.

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