

Fiction in CONTEST with History? Faith, Resilience and the War on Terror in Aboulela's *The Kindness of Enemies*

Yousef Awad
The University of Jordan

Abstract: *This paper examines Arab British novelist Leila Aboulela's representation of the precarious position British Muslims occupy as a result of the introduction of Britain's counter-terrorism strategy (CONTEST). In The Kindness of Enemies (2015), Aboulela valorizes the horrendous experiences that members of a British Muslim family with roots in the Caucasus undergo as a result of an unsubstantiated terrorist-linked investigation. When the police arrest Oz, his mother, Malak, launches a campaign to secure the freedom of her son. During these hard times, she draws on the legacy of her great grandfather, Imam Shamil who spearheaded a Sufi Jihadist movement in the Caucasus against the Russians in the 19th century, for inspiration and solace. By drawing on history, Aboulela exposes the falsity of contemporary radical Islamist groups and presents Imam Shamil's movement as a bright example of a Jihadist movement that was never involved in terrorist acts. In addition, by depicting how Malak embraces her great grandfather's Sufi principles of self-control and endurance, the novel highlights the role Sufism could play in curbing radicalization among young Muslims in a hostile and McCarthyist post-9/11 and 7/7 era.*

“History could be milked out for this cause or that. We observed it always with hindsight, projecting onto it our modern convictions and anxieties”
(Leila Aboulela's *The Kindness of Enemies*, 41).

Keywords: historical fiction, Leila Aboulela, diasporic Arabic literature, British Muslims

1. Introduction

And so says Natasha, the narrator of Leila Aboulela's *The Kindness of Enemies* (2015). Natasha, the historian, asserts that history is a renewable resource for inspiration and reflection and that it can be appropriated for various causes. By the same token, one may look at recent events in Britain that are pertinent to Muslim communities and make some observations. On 7/7/2005, four Britain-born Muslims launched terrorist attacks on London's public transport system, killing 52 people and injuring more than 700. The attacks were considered by observers as one of the worst terrorist incidents in recent British history. Eleven years later, on 7/5/2016, Labour Party's candidate, Sadiq Khan, was sworn in Southwark Cathedral as London's first Muslim mayor. During the election campaign, Conservative Party's candidate, Zac Goldsmith, described Khan as a supporter of Muslim extremists. Between these two dates, legislations on anti-terrorism

strategies have been proposed, modified and passed by successive British governments. One milestone legislation that has greatly influenced the lives of millions of Muslims in Britain is CONTEST (an acronym that stands for Britain's counter-terrorism strategy) which, according to British government official documents, "address[es] not only immediate threat attacks but the longer term factors which enable terrorist groups to grow and flourish" (2011: 10).

Aboulela's novel shows the devastating repercussions of the haphazard implementation of CONTEST on British Muslims. The novel also attempts to reflect on history to find answers to pressing questions that confront both British Muslims and British security authorities. Aboulela draws on the history of a British Muslim family with roots in the Caucasus to present two different realities that Muslims have undergone over the past century and a half. In other words, Aboulela depicts how Muslims in Britain have become suspects and are deemed as a threat to the country's national security following the increasing terrorist attacks in the US, Europe and the rest of the world. Overall, Aboulela's novel valorizes the dilemma of British Muslims in a British-style McCarthy era.

Yet, the ending of the novel shows the need to learn from the past and deal with this dilemma within a British culture that is historically characterized by tolerance, ecumenism, open-mindedness and hospitality. It also valorizes the role faith, in this case Sufi principles of self-control and stoicism, plays in enduring and overcoming duress principally caused by socio-political circumstances that demonize and vilify British Muslims. This paper shows how the lives of Oz, Malak and Natasha have been negatively influenced by CONTEST and examines how the story of a 19th century Sufi Jihadist movement led by Imam Shamil fits in the novel as a foil to contemporary radical Islamist Jihadist movements.

Prior to this novel, Aboulela published three novels and a collection of short stories. Aboulela's fiction depicts the lives of Muslims in Britain and portrays how Islam plays a decisive role in shaping their identities. Her works have received a remarkable critical acclaim from critics like Geoffrey Nash (2002, 2007 & 2011), Claire Chambers (2009 & 2011), Wail Hassan (2008 & 2012), Marta Cariello (2009), Eva Hunter (2013), C. E. Rashid (2012 & 2014), Alexandra Rizzo (2012), Md Mahmudul Hasan (2015), Nadia Butt (2009), Brenda Cooper (2008), Ferial J. Ghazoul (2014), Yousef Awad (2012 & 2014), Amer Al-Adwan and Yousef Awad (2013) and Huda Ulayyan and Yousef Awad (2016). Critics have approached Aboulela's novels from different perspectives, but they have all positioned her works within the framework of burgeoning Arab and Muslim literature in diaspora. While Aboulela's first two novels, *The Translator* (1999) and *Minaret* (2005) depict contemporary events, her third novel, *Lyrics Alley* (2010), is a historical novel set during the days leading to Sudan's independence in 1956. *The Kindness of Enemies* oscillates between the past and the present and is set in contemporary Sudan and Britain and 19th century Russia and the Caucasus.

Natasha Wilson, born Natasha Hussein to a Sudanese father and a Georgian mother, is a successful early career historian at a Scottish university

with research interests in a 19th century Sufi Jihadist movement led by Imam Shamil against Russia. She befriends Malak Raja, an actress whose ancestry is traced back to Imam Shamil. During a visit to Malak's house, an anti-terrorism squad storms into the house and arrests Oz, Malak's son, on suspicion of radicalism. After a few days, Oz is released without charge but warned not to visit websites set up by radical Islamist groups. Oz eventually drops out of the university. The historical plot revolves around Imam Shamil's Jihadist campaign against the Russian army from 1839 to 1859. Eventually, Imam Shamil is defeated and is taken to Russia where he lives till the Russian emperor grants him permission to make a pilgrimage to Mecca in 1870 and he dies in 1871 in Madinah.

As the above plotline shows, there are strong links between the two plots and one may reasonably argue that one plot reflects the other. Natasha is the historian who puts the pieces together. At the same time, Malak and Oz's lineage, which is traced back to Imam Shamil, further connects the two narratives. On the one hand, the novel highlights the dilemma of British Muslims whose lives under recent anti-terrorist legislations have become under scrutiny in British-style McCarthyism. Oz's arrest does not only influence him psychologically, but it also has a bearing on his future as he drops out of university and considers leaving Britain to South Africa to live with his father. Similarly, Oz's mother is dragged into the investigation and feels isolated and tainted. Even Natasha, whose links with her Sudanese and Muslim heritage are tenuous, is questioned and interrogated by the police since she was present at Malak's house at the time of the raid and her research interests make her suspicious. On the other hand, while the novel depicts how contemporary radical Jihadist movements pose serious threats to world peace, the novel shows how a Sufi Jihadist group of the 19th century spearheaded by Imam Shamil accepted defeat at the hands of Russians and was never involved in terrorist assaults on civilians. Here, the novel highlights the importance of Sufi teachings and principles of self-control and endurance as Malak draws on her great grandfather's legacy to cope with a dilemma triggered by a false accusation to her son of involvement in terrorist acts.

2. Muslims in Britain: communities, challenges & anti-terrorism legislations

According to The 2011 Census figures, the Muslim population in England and Wales increased from 1.55 million in 2001 to 2.71 million in 2011, and hence, Muslims represent 4.8% of the population (Ali et al 2015: 16). In addition, there are 77,000 Muslims in Scotland and 3,800 in Northern Ireland, making Muslims population larger than all other non-Christian faith groups put together (16). About 47% of Muslims who live in Britain are actually UK-born (16). In her book, *Muslims in Britain: An Introduction*, Sophie Gilliat-Ray shows how perceptions of Islam in Britain date back to the eighth century (2010: 5). Gilliat-Ray examines perceptions on Islam and Muslims from early medieval period through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries till Muslim traders, seafarers, labourers and scholars began to settle in Britain from the 1840s (26). These early

settlers were mainly Indians, Yemenis and Somalis and they settled in ports like South Shields, Cardiff and Liverpool (28-32). As Robert J. Pauly, Jr. argues, “[t]he genesis of a substantial Islamic presence in the United Kingdom was rooted in the de-colonization of the British Empire” along with Britain’s “concentration on physical and industrial reconstruction” following the end of WWII (2004: 98). The post WWII era witnessed a discernible influx of male Muslim migrants to Britain, especially from the Indian subcontinent, who were later joined by their wives and children (44-48). The proliferation of family reunification, according to Pauly, fostered the development of a greater emphasis on Islam (99).

Muslims from other parts of the world followed suit. Their immigration from Turkey, Iran and Arab countries to Britain was propelled by various factors: they came as refugees, international traders and highly skilled professionals (Gilliat-Ray 50). Hence, one may argue that Muslim communities in Britain are heterogeneous and diverse. According to Gilliat-Ray, although Muslims in Britain share “a common religious identity, albeit characterized by a great deal of internal diversity” (51). While Muslim communities in Britain share with the greater British community some socioeconomic, cultural and political problems, they also have their own issues and matters. As Ron Geaves succinctly puts it, Muslims in Britain “have had to address citizenship, not only within the framework of the legal and political structures of their new home [. . .], but also in negotiating and harmonising that framework in terms of shari’a and Islamic state discourse” (2005: 66).

Pauly argues that the relationship between Muslim communities and the societal majority in Britain is “contentious” (95). He cites two episodes from recent British social history to support his argument. Pauly mentions the 1989 demonstrations that erupted in the city of Bradford in protest against the publication of Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses* since the novel was interpreted by some Muslim clerics as “a derogatory portrayal of Islam in general and the prophet Mohammad specifically” (95). The other episode that Pauly cites is “a series of riots pitting young South Asian Muslims and whites against each other and the police in several northern English cities between April and July 2001” (95). According to Pauly, these two incidents have “unwittingly buttressed a misperception in the United Kingdom of Islam as a monolithic fundamentalist faith universally at odds with Western societal norms” (95). The two incidents, Pauly asserts, have “highlighted the potential for social instability arising from conflict [. . .] between members of the societal mainstream and Muslims” (96).

In *Disorientation: Muslim Identity in Contemporary Anglophone Literature*, Esra Mirze Santesso highlights “an irony inherent in the British Muslim experience” which she outlines in the following lines:

[O]n the one hand, Muslim immigrants are drawn to their religious community as a way of countering their alienation from British society. Yet, as they identify with a transnational community, and that community grows in strength, the culture itself attracts ever-increasing hostility (2013: 9).

As will be illustrated later, Aboulela's Oz feels frustrated and alienated because of successive British governments' involvement and participation in wars against Muslim countries. As he identifies with the international Islamic *ummah*, he is arrested on suspicions of being involved in terrorist acts.

One of the main challenges encountering Muslim communities in Britain is the precarious position they occupy in the War on Terror. Following a series of terrorist attacks on various European metropolitan spaces in which Muslim extremists were involved, Muslim communities in Britain have come under pressure. In Britain, the introduction of CONTEST has deepened the grievances of British Muslims and intervened with their daily experiences as British citizens. CONTEST is organized around four workstreams, each comprising a number of key objectives: *Pursue, Prevent, Protect* and *Prepare*. Of the four, *Prevent* has a great immediate bearing on the daily lives of Muslims in Britain. In the foreword to the third edition of CONTEST which was presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for the Home Department in July 2011, Theresa May acknowledged that the *Prevent* program that was introduced in earlier versions "was flawed" (6). May promised that "[g]reater effort will be focused on responding to the ideological challenge and the threat from those who promote it" as the government "will work harder to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and ensure that they are given appropriate advice and support" (6). May insisted that the government would work with wider range of sectors where there are risks of radicalization to achieve its aims (6). Since July, 2015, teachers at schools have been legally obliged to report any suspected extremist behaviour among their students to police as part of the government's anti-radicalization strategy.

The Kindness of Enemies shows how British Muslim students have been placed under surveillance since CONTEST has been introduced. According to activists and human rights groups, *Prevent* is "a political program not an anti-terror strategy" (Mohammed & Siddiqui 2013: 6). CAGE, an independent advocacy organization working to empower communities impacted by the War on Terror, contends that:

Thus, PREVENT is a strategy that seeks to eliminate alternative political discourse about western foreign policy amongst Muslims, even amongst children. It is a policy to silence Muslims and pacify/de-politicise their faith. In short it criminalises political dissent or alternative political thought (7).

In its report, CAGE insists that *Prevent* "make[s] Muslims beliefs the subject of suspicion, surveillance, misrepresentation and prosecution," and therefore, it "can be rightly referred to as 21st century McCarthyism" (8). CAGE's report likens *Prevent* to policies implemented during the McCarthy era in the United States in the 1950s against those accused of having links, associations, beliefs or affiliations to communist ideas (10). Just like McCarthyism, *Prevent* stifles civil freedoms and impinges on particular people's rights the way McCarthyism had done so more than half a century ago.

As Muhammad Anwar puts it, since 9/11 and the emergence of terrorist group Al-Qaeda and its affiliates, “there has been an intensification of anti-Muslim attitudes in Britain that sometimes resulted in attacks on individuals and property, and also marked direct religious discrimination” (31). Anwar explains that “[f]or many [British] Muslims, religious and racial discrimination and violence is a fact of life” (40). In Britain, this prejudice has increased after 7/7 attacks on London’s public transport system in 2005. As Arun Kundnani argues, Islamophobia has become “a form of structural racism directed at Muslims [. . .] sustained through a symbiotic relationship with the official thinking and practices of the war on terror” (2014: 10-11). In other words, Islamophobia has generated individual prejudices, but more ominously, it has wider political consequences, particularly, “its enabling of systematic violations of the rights of Muslims and its demonization of actions taken to remedy those violations” (11).

3. Literary representations of historical events

In *The Kindness of Enemies*, Aboulela captures the sense of alienation that has resulted from prejudice against Muslims under the pretext of fighting terrorism. As Pauly puts it, “[t]he inaccurate perception of Islam as a radical religion [. . .] has consistently fostered deep divisions between the majority and Muslim minorities in the United Kingdom” (119). As the novel opens, Natasha, who is nominally a Muslim, states:

Many Muslims in Britain wished that no one knew they were Muslim. They would change their names if they could and dissolve into the mainstream, for it was not enough for them to openly condemn 9/11 and 7/7, not enough to walk against the wall, to raise a glass of champagne, to eat in the light of Ramadan and never step into a mosque or say the shahada or touch the Qur’an. All this was not enough, though most people were too polite to say it (6).

Natasha’s words encapsulate the dilemma of Muslims in a world that labels them as terrorists who are intent on destroying Western civilization. When British Muslims come under suspicion for reasons related to extremism and radicalization, South Asian British Muslim communities are usually affected since they are more visible than other British Muslim communities. Yet, as mentioned earlier, *Prevent* concerns nearly all aspects of Muslims’ lives, and therefore, Muslims are scrutinized and investigated regardless of their socioeconomic background, ethnic origins and their degrees of integration into the British social fabric and body politic.

Aboulela resorts to history to comment on the current situation in Britain. In a way, Aboulela follows the steps of American playwright, Arthur Miller, who in 1952 wrote *The Crucible* which is set during the Salem witchcraft trials of 1692. In the play, Miller likens the 1950s anti-communism McCarthyism to the Salem witchcraft hunting at the turn of the seventeenth century. In explaining his reasons for writing this play, Miller argues that he wanted “to respond to a phenomenon which [. . .] was drying up the habits of trust and toleration in public discourse”

(Miller 2000: 3). Miller maintains that the absurdity of the Salem witch-hunting “only helped relate it more to what we were going through” in the McCarthy era (28). Similarly, Aboulela incorporates history into her novel to differentiate between 21st century extremist groups and a 19th century Sufi Jihadist movement led by Imam Shamil in the Caucasus. While Aboulela’s contemporary plot portrays British-style McCarthyism that targets Muslims in Britain, the historical events in the novel show how Imam Shamil and his men refused to resort to terrorism and violence in the wake of their defeat. For instance, when Ghazi, Shamil’s son, entreats him to surrender to the Russians, Shamil gives in: “The longer Ghazi knelt before him, the more selfish martyrdom became; the longer Ghazi knelt the clearer it dawned that this was defeat and that defeat was Allah’s will. Instead of martyrdom, it was time for Shamil to accept his failure” (299-300). Shamil surrenders and spares the lives of his people.

Aboulela’s appropriation of historical events is quite interesting. The novel draws the reader’s attention to the fact that history repeats itself, and hence, one should learn lessons from it. In this context, Jerome De Groot argues that historical fictions of all kinds enable and suggest a number of epistemological positions. De Groot argues that historical fictions “allow a culture to think in new ways about what historical engagement, and the writing of the past, might actually be, and to rethink the terms of historical understanding” (2016: 2). De Groot insists that historical texts “contribute to the historical imaginary, having an almost pedagogical aspect in allowing a culture to ‘understand’ past moments” (2). Historical works, De Groot insists, “demand a shifting of imaginative time and, most particularly, a recognition of temporal otherness” (15). In this sense, they “inflect the historical or archival record through consideration of the personal, the individual, the written, the unseen, the unheard and unsaid” (20). Aboulela’s novel reflects on the past while it depicts the current situation of British Muslims. As a historical novel, *The Kindness of Enemies*, to borrow the words of Mariadele Boccardi on the genre of the historical novel, “conflate[s] the past with its representation in the present because both belong to the same linear, continuous, homogenous historical reality” (14). Boccardi insists that “past and present are not radically other but belong instead to the same metaphorical river” (15).

Aboulela’s novel contributes to the burgeoning oeuvres of contemporary British Muslim writers whose diverse ethnic, political, national and ideological differences cannot be emphasized enough. Yet, grouping these writers under such a category is plausible since these authors depict in their fictions the daily experiences of Muslim characters who live in Britain. Santesso investigates a number of novels written by Muslim women writers after 9/11 and argues that these novels do not foreground “masculine fundamentalism, as the inherent condition of Islam, [but] they aim to present a variety of depoliticised, or at least deradicalised ways of being Muslims” (53). Santesso focuses in her analysis on the experiences of female Muslim characters and asserts that they “often cope with more severe divide between the private and the public spheres, and their

bodies frequently become contested spaces through which to negotiate religious identity” (4).

One of the novels that Santesso discusses in her book is Aboulela’s second novel, *Minaret*, which depicts how the protagonist Najwa copes with a post-9/11 Islamophobic environment in Britain. Santesso maintains:

The impact of 9-11 (perhaps even more so than 7-7) on British society was significant: it officially identified the Muslim as a security threat, it initiated the “Global War on Terror” under the US leadership in which Britain became a capital ally, it raised awareness of the “home-grown terrorist,” and, perhaps most importantly, it signalled to many the failure of “multiculturalism” as a viable model for national cohesion. Under these conditions, Islamophobia [. . .] thrived” (10).

As the above quotation illustrates, British Muslims’ lives have become sites over which discourses of nationalism, multiculturalism, tolerance, integration among others converge as Santesso’s analysis of the four novels indicate.

Aboulela’s novel contributes to the representation of the dilemmas of British Muslims under anti-terrorist legislations and it vividly depicts this tension through dramatizing the experiences of Oz, Malak and Natasha. This does not come as a surprise if one takes into account Aboulela’s tendency in her novels to represent “the lives and dilemmas of ordinary Muslims” (Rashid 2012: 622). In an interview with C. E. Rashid, Aboulela insists that “[t]here are still very few examples of Muslims in contemporary literature and most of these examples are those of the ‘Islamic terrorist’, the ‘oppressed Muslim woman’ or [. . .] liberal Muslims whose lifestyles and ways of thinking are not different from non-Muslims” (622). True to her words, Aboulela foregrounds the experiences of ordinary Muslims who are not often represented in literary works. In *The Kindness of Enemies*, it is the Sufi Muslim who takes the central stage, represented by Malak in the contemporary plot and by Imam Shamil in the historical plot. Sufism is an Islamic approach that is largely inward looking, urging its followers to follow self-discipline and restraint.

Unfortunately, Sufism, as Itzhak Weismann explains, was eclipsed by perceptions on radicalized Islam. Weismann maintains:

The ongoing scholarly and public debate about the place of Islam in the emerging global reality is overshadowed by its fundamentalist brand, and by the international terror campaign carried out in its name. [. . .] Sufism [. . .] is as old as Islam itself, and throughout history it has satisfied the ethical and emotional needs of the spiritual elites and the masses alike (2015: 257).

Aboulela’s historical novel re-inscribes Sufism to the experiences of contemporary British Muslim characters. As Malak is overwhelmed by the magnitude of her son’s predicament, she is inspired by the Sufi teachings of restraint and self-discipline as exemplified by her great grandfather Imam Shamil. For Malak, Sufism is the lifeline that rescues her from despair, alienation and loss as will be illustrated in the following two sections.

4. *The Kindness of Enemies* as a Chronicler of 21st Century Anti-Muslim Bigotry

In the same interview with C. E. Rashid, Aboulela expresses her frustration at how Muslims in Britain are increasingly targeted by racism and bigotry. Aboulela maintains that “Muslims who are public about their faith are therefore opening themselves up to criticism” (623). In a way, this is what Aboulela tries to highlight at the start of the novel, i.e. the dilemma of Muslims in Britain post-9/11 and 7/7. Aboulela’s novel shows how *Prevent* makes Muslims’ lives hard as they are subjected to investigations and interrogations regularly. As Kundnani puts it, *Prevent* has placed Muslims in Britain under surveillance even without a reasonable suspicion of their active involvement in terrorism: “Prevent sought to draw professionals providing nonpolicing local services into routinely providing information to the counterterrorist police not just on individuals who might be about to commit a criminal offence, but also on the political and religious opinions and behaviors of young people” (175).

In Aboulela’s novel, the three main characters undergo horrible experiences of interrogation and investigation. What is quite significant here is that while Oz and his mother identify as Muslims, Natasha does not since she has severed her ties with her father, who is in fact a secularist Sudanese, long ago. The life style of Oz and his mother defies the stereotypical image of British Muslims in terms of ethnic origin, socioeconomic background, career and place of domicile. In a word, Oz and his mother can be described as thriving British Muslims who have successfully integrated into British social and cultural life. Yet, they find themselves suspects. The same applies to Natasha as will be illustrated in this section.

Oz and his mother’s lives turn upside down one December morning in 2010. An anti-terrorist squad storms into the family’s house. Natasha, who was present at the time of arrest, narrates:

They are everywhere now, lots of them, not two, with their shoes clomping, but Malak doesn’t say take your shoes off. They leap up the stairs, I catch a blur of dark uniform. Footsteps above me. Malak is calling Oz. This makes them angry. They think she is warning him off and two of them run, banging the bedroom door open (74).

Natasha’s description vividly portrays how this raid has turned the three characters’ lives upside down: they are traumatized, shocked and awed. While the police are searching the house, they leave the door open, and hence, “the house was freezing” (74) both metaphorically and literally. This is indeed a moment that decides the course of their lives and their future relationships with the greater British society. Hence, the characters and the house are frozen in time.

Natasha begins to tidy up once the police leave. Chaos has invaded the house: “I started to tidy up, putting everything back in its place. [. . .] I wanted everything to look and smell and feel like it had before they came” (75). Natasha’s desire to restore order is emphasized by her relentless effort to erase the

episode from existence which is highlighted in the last line of the above quotation. She insists that she “must forget their clomping shoes, their big faces and the invasion that had happened” (76). The immediate effects on the three characters are horrible. Even more horrendous are the long term impacts on the three of them. Each character undergoes a psychological torment with grave repercussions.

Although Oz is released without charge, he remains traumatized. The next morning’s news of Oz’s arrest made the headlines with embellishment. Natasha reads:

It was there, why shouldn’t it be, pared down, words standing up thin on the page like spikes. *A twenty-one-year old man is being held at a high-security area of Glasgow’s Govan police station after officers raided a property near Brechin on Thursday. His arrest is understood to be related to downloading radical Islamist material* (174, italics in original).

Natasha spots the prejudice in the version rendered in the newspaper as it vilifies Oz and presents him as convict who is involved in plotting a terrorist attack. Moreover, when Oz was released without charge a few days later, no newspaper mentions anything: “His arrest had been a news item; would his release also be one? There was nothing among the snow warning, cancelled flights and delayed trains” (212). Later on, Oz sends an e-mail to Natasha about how far-right websites portrayed the incident: “I clicked on the link and found myself in a far-right website under the heading *The Stain of Al-Qaeda has reached Scotland*. Even though he was not charged” (286). Oz is demonized, tainted and otherized. His sense of citizenship is washed away by being pushed to the margins of the nation. Overall, this incident has made Oz re-think and re-position his identity as a British Muslim and it even made him feel isolated and alienated from the greater society.

As a young British Muslim, Oz has come to realize the liminality, precariousness and tenuousness of the position he occupies within the nation. He is disgruntled because he is otherized in the very country in which he was born and grew up. In a way, Oz’s case parallels those of many young British Muslims who feel estranged in their own country because of their religious beliefs and outlooks. Since the 1990s, Kundnani argues, Islamic movements in Britain have become “a vehicle for a new kind of globalized Islamic identity” (37). Kundnani explains that young Muslims “felt alienated [. . .] from racism of the wider society [. . . and] the inward-looking mosque life of their parents, which concentrated on specific ethnic identities [. . .] and mingled Islam with [. . .] folk traditions” (37). For these young British Muslims, “the global *ummah* proved an attractive third alternative to either assimilating into a racist society or following the inherited religio-cultural traditions of their parents” (37). As Kundnani succinctly puts it, these new Islamic movements gave young British Muslims the opportunity to “carr[y] out their own globalization, transcending inherited ethnic and national belongings in favor of an allegiance to the global Islamic community” (37). Oz’s

identity is shaken: his random arrest has augmented his vulnerability. He does not feel secure and loses his sense of belonging to Britain.

Once released, Oz refuses neither to talk to his mother nor to eat (209). When Natasha comes over to see him, Oz looks haggard and humiliated: “Oz came down in his pyjamas, wrapped in a blanket. Unshaven, his hair greasy, streaks of dark skin under his eyes. He sat on the sofa, drew his feet up underneath him and bunched up under the blanket. He lowered his head” (211). Natasha tries to play down the horrible experience he has undergone, calling it “[e]xtenuating circumstances” (211) and tries to dissuade him from quitting his studies. But Oz feels humiliated and broken:

‘Oh yes, I was just pulled in for a whole ten days of fucking questions. One stupid question after another. They locked me up in a tiny room. I couldn’t even sleep. They were watching me every single minute of the day, writing things down, every little thing I said or did . . .’ He stopped abruptly and looked out of the window. A bird had flown past and made him nervous (211).

Oz’s belief in British values of freedom of speech, equality and justice are shattered. He cannot understand why he was arrested in the first place: “I shouldn’t have been there in the first place” (211). Here, one may refer to June Edmunds’ research on young British Muslims to contextualize Oz’s disgruntlement. Edmunds argues that “young British Muslims are [. . .] opposed to governments using the ‘Islamist threat’ to justify restrictions on freedom of religious and cultural practice which they uphold in the name of universal human-rights principles” (2010: 237).

As a young British Muslim, Oz is the scapegoat. He feels insecure and vulnerable. The novel highlights the fact that within the context of the ongoing War on Terror, Oz, as a British Muslim, is expected to bear the brunt of humiliation and degradation. Natasha contemplates:

Supposing Oz was neither completely guilty nor completely innocent. Suppose he had done something wrong but that something might not be what he was arrested for, might not be what he would be punished for. And at the end of the day we would all accept what was happening. We would all have a rationale for it, a way of putting it into perspective (177).

What Natasha is saying is that under such conditions and circumstances, Oz and other Muslims, have to accept to be victimized. In a way, Aboulela shows how Muslims’ rights are confiscated and scarified in the war against terrorism. Even Oz’s father refuses to come and see him, fearing that he might be dragged into the melee (178). Malak, too, indicts her son: “He’s involved. But I can’t be sure. [. . .] He’s ruined his life; how will he ever get out of this?” (176) Eventually, Oz drops out of school and this “passe[s] around the department with relief as if we were well rid of him” (309).

Oz’s mother is another victim of the War on Terror. Once her son is taken away, she is shocked and unable to handle the incident. Natasha narrates:

When I went downstairs, Malak was locked in the same spot, her knees bunched up, her face expressionless. When she finally spoke, her voice sounded strange. An accent had crept in. Shock did that to people, it hurtled them back to their mother tongue (309).

The fact that “[a]n accent had crept in her speech” shows that Malak has become an outsider; she no longer belongs to a nation she has thought for long that she is part of. Natasha describes how Malak has become a different person:

She looked pathetic huddled in her shawl. [. . .] That wobble added years to her age, a slip-up as if she had been acting all the time, playing the role of a London actor, a glamorous woman of the world and now this was her real self. One of those who don’t matter, who shuffle down the street, reeking of failure if not trouble, suspect and unwanted. One of those people I never wanted to be seen with (77).

The incident has transformed Malak’s identity and shaken her very self. She is no longer the affluent citizen who belongs to the nation’s elite. On the contrary, she is pushed to the margins of society and is excluded from the nation.

That Malak is no longer the person that people wish to socialize with is clearly evident in Natasha’s insistence to leave the house despite the fact that Malak implores her to stay: “But the warning said get away, don’t get dragged further into this – it’s bad enough that you’re already involved; save your skin” (77). Malak is alienated and isolated as the police investigate her and question her on the money she transfers to her relatives in Chechnya: “She put on an accent. ‘It better not be funding terrorism.’ She was more rattled about this than she was letting on. It was in the way she held her mug, the slight tremble of her lips before she bent her neck down to sip her latte” (214). She also explains how her career as an actress is negatively influenced: “Here she was saying, ‘I can see this unravelling. My dinner invitations drying up, even the offers of roles dwindling ever so slowly without knowing exactly why. Not much needs to be said, does it?’” (214-215). She even receives hate e-mails: “‘Serves you right for taking off your clothes just to entertain the British public.’ I don’t know what that’s about. I’ve never done a nude scene in my life!” (216) Overnight, Malak has become a pariah who lives on the fringes of society.

Just like Oz and Malak, Natasha is scrutinized and investigated. Initially, Natasha has volunteered to monitor Muslim students and received the required training at another university. Natasha reminisces: “The two consultants who led the workshop were ‘industry specialists’ and not academics. It was assumed that we agreed with the effectiveness of the strategy to prevent radicalisation and by extension another terrorist attack” (141). Later, Natasha applies what she has learnt at the course “and referred two students” (141). Ironically, Natasha, who has rendered services to anti-terrorism police, eventually becomes a suspect simply because she was present at Malak’s house when Oz was arrested for alleged terrorist links. Iain, the head of the department, admonishes her for failing to report Oz to the police as vulnerable to radicalization. Then, the police interrogate her:

In the afternoon, the police had come to the university and checked my desktop; they searched my office and asked me question after question. On the titles of my papers, *Royal Support for Jihad* and *Jihad as Resistance*; on my political opinions, on my other nationalities and, of course, on Oz (167).

Natasha feels humiliated and distraught: “To have your personal files examined, to reveal what is exceedingly intimate – a password and search engine history – felt a hundred times worse than having luggage examined at the airport” (167). Then, her colleagues at work shun her: “My colleagues [. . .] oscillated between sincere shows of solidarity against last week’s police search of my office and the natural instinct to keep their distance” (205).

Natasha reflects on how this episode has undermined her identity which she worked hard to construct since she has moved to England as a child:

Natasha Wilson denoted a person who was smeared by suspicion, tainted by crime. I might as well have stayed Natasha Hussein! [. . .] My voice became softer, my opinions muted, my actions tentative. I thought before I spoke, became wary of my students and, often, bowed my head down (310).

This is a subdued and humbled Natasha whose future is not as brilliant as she planned and worked hard for it to be. Just like Oz and Malak, she is pushed to the margins of the nation, isolated and alienated. She ends up as an outsider whose persistent attempts for assimilation have collapsed and gone with the wind. In response, Natasha feels that she needs to cement her ties with people from her homeland like her younger brother Mekki, her childhood lover Yasha and her mother’s friend Grusha: “I valued the sense of belonging they gave me, the certainty that I was not an isolated member of a species” (310). Affiliation with Sudanese people gives Natasha a feeling of content and satisfaction: “I relaxed without the need to prove, explain or distinguish myself. Nor squeeze to fit in” (310).

5. Resilience, activism, patience and faith

As the above section illustrates, people with ideological, ethnic, geographical and even academic links to Islam, no matter how tenuous they are, have become suspects under CONTEST. But the novel does not portray this as a deadlock. *The Kindness of Enemies* draws on recent history to show how Muslims were persecuted and forced to abandon their religion. Early in the novel, i. e. before Oz is arrested, Malak tells Natasha that her side of the family immigrated to the Ottoman Empire after the collapse of the Muslim rule in the Caucasus while those who stayed behind suffered:

Others stayed on and were deported by Stalin, and those who stayed struggled throughout Soviet rule. The mosques were shut down, it was forbidden to read or write Arabic and practising Islam had to be done in secret. Only the very tough could resist; most ordinary people lapsed (71).

At one point, Malak takes this opportunity to celebrate the freedom Muslims in the West enjoy: “We have the freedom to practice and teach and bring up our children in our own faith. Can you imagine, Oz, what it is like when generation after generation grows up with their Islamic teaching muddled up and pushed to the far side of memory?” (71).

Malak sings the praises of British multiculturalism. Notably, Malak makes these comments before Oz’s arrest. Even after Oz’s arrest, her belief in democracy and freedom of speech does not change an iota. She believes that what happened is just a mistake: “Malak sat on the bottom step hugging her knees. ‘It’s a mistake,’ she repeated. ‘They’ve mixed him up with someone else, I’m sure’” (75). Her unwavering belief in justice and democracy motivate her to campaign for the release of her son: “So I’m on my own now in this. But I know people in London. I know people in the media and in human rights groups and I am not going to take this lying down” (178). For Malak, this is the only way to respond to this extraordinary situation. Still, Malak expresses her disgruntlement and discomfort at the status quo. She tells Natasha that she is furious that her son is made a scapegoat: “But what about the others out there? The ones who are really guilty. What do I know about them? As long as the threat is there, there will always be suspects being pulled in” (215). Malak is at a crossroads and is unable to determine which path to take. On the one hand, she believes that British multiculturalism has opened doors for Muslims to worship freely; on the other hand, Malak is disappointed that Muslims are tainted and discriminated against during these hard times.

The situation highlights Malak’s dilemma. Naturally, Malak turns to her great grandfather’s legacy for inspiration. Imam Shamil, the Sufi leader of a 19th century Jihadist movement against the Russians, is the paragon whose wisdom and sagacity enlighten Malak’s path. Asked by Natasha “What would Shamil have done?” (215), Malak’s response is quite telling:

‘He would have seen through these militants – that they “fulfil neither a contract nor a covenant. That they call to the truth but they are not its people”. He would have gone after the hate preachers who say to the young men of this day and age, “go out and make jihad”’ (215).

Malak’s answer intrigues Natasha: “Interesting that, from her point of view, the leader of one of the longest and most significant jihads in modern history would, if he were alive today, be a supporter of the War on Terror” (215). This interpretation reflects the position that Shamil’s teacher, Jamal el-Din, advocates: “to reconcile, negotiate and forgive” (62).

The Kindness of Enemies advocates a version of Islam that is not militant. This is in fact the argument that Natasha intends to make at a conference on Suicide, Conflict and Peace Research. Natasha ponders:

I wanted to compare Shamil’s defeat and surrender, how he made peace with his enemies, with modern-day Islamic terrorism that promoted suicide bombings instead of accepting in Shamil’s words, ‘that

martyrdom is Allah's prerogative to bestow'. How did historical change in the very definition of jihad come about? (310)

Natasha here valorizes the fact that there are different versions of Jihadist movements. While Aboulela's novel upholds Imam Shamil for not resorting to violence and terrorism, it condemns contemporary Jihadist groups that terrorize civilians and slaughter them in the name of Islam. Shamil has found out that his defeat "was a command from the Almighty to stand aside and worship because the years were running out" (302). Indeed, Malak sums it up beautifully when she tells Natasha that Shamil "accepted defeat graciously and saw it as Allah's will" (3013-314).

As Geoffrey Nash puts it, in Aboulela's fiction, a "conservative and quietist" Islamic identity is articulated (2012: 48). And though her protagonists "may be marginalised and to some extent oppressed," they respond in a positive way and even win ideological battles for themselves and for individual Westerners who convert to Islam (48). Just like Sammer and Najwa, Aboulela's previous protagonists, Malak, too, believes in quietism and she resists socio-political and cultural pressures in her own way. She subverts marginalization by re-inscribing her identity as a British Muslim into the tapestry of a multicultural British society by fostering ties with the territory she lives on. She lives on British soil and strongly believes that she belongs to it and she also believes that no one has the right to strip her of her citizenship although she is pushed to the fringes. Towards the end of the novel, she informs Natasha that every day she goes somewhere different in Britain to pray and read a section of The Qur'an: "I've travelled up and down the country" (312-313). She also tells Natasha that she chooses spiritual places like Stonehenge, places where she has always sensed a powerful presence (312-313).

Seen from this perspective, one may argue that the novel shows us "how enmeshed Islam is in the life of Muslims and the kind of spiritual solace it gives" (Ghazoul 2014: 200). Some critics have criticized Aboulela's protagonists for their submissiveness, passivity and lack of political activism. For instance, Wail Hassan points out that there is a "rift between politics and spirituality [that] characterizes the particular brand of Islam informing the ideological worldview of Aboulela's fiction" (2011: 186). Hassan insists that in Aboulela's texts history is ever present "but only as a backdrop for spiritual struggles that are rarely seen, within her narrative discourse, as having political implications" (186). Hassan concludes that "Aboulela's Islamism and the fiction that embodies it ultimately remain reactive and in many ways regressive" (198). What Aboulela does in *The Kindness of Enemies* is a deviation from the pattern that Hassan outlines in her earlier fiction. As a British Muslim, Malak is making a political statement by refusing to be tossed out of British social, cultural, demographic and even geographical spaces. Malak rebuffs institutional and popular attempts to strip her of her citizenship simply because she is a Muslim.

Malak's travel up and down the country reading The Qur'an may be viewed as a way of cementing her relationship with the country she belongs to and refuses

to be detached from. She relishes her tour and speaks of it with great enthusiasm: “Yesterday I prayed further north. In the middle of a suburb which was so artificial and depressing that I almost couldn’t bear to be there. But I stuck it out, telling myself that I would be the first one there ever to say the word “Allah”” (312-313). When asked by Natasha on who heard her, Malak replies: “No one. I don’t want anyone to hear me. The trees, the wind, the angels. That’s enough for me” (312-313). She even invites Natasha to Orkney where they “could have zikr on the beach” (314). Malak identifies with her habitat, and therefore, she feels relaxed, content and satisfied. By doing so, she boosts her links and ties with her surroundings and deepens her roots in the British soil. Malak refuses to be a rootless plant that can be easily deracinated and blown away.

Malak’s stoicism is quite revealing. As a Sufi, Malak is determined to overcome destitution by patiently enduring it. As C. E. Rashid puts it, “[a]n assertion that Islam exfoliates the soul from its worldly immersion invests Aboulela’s fiction in a Sufi esotericism” (614). Asked by Rashid if she feels that Sufism is separate from the Qur’an and hadiths as a source of literary or religious inspiration, Aboulela states: “No, I see them both together as being one. [. . .] So if Sufism is aligned with the inside, and the shariah with the outside, then as Muslims we have to put the two sides together” (620). Aboulela illustrates that she tries to incorporate both in her fiction and for her the inner, moral development of her characters is not so much a Christian or secular paradigm as analogous with the plot of the Sufi traveller (621). When asked by Natasha, whether the police returned to her Shamil’s sword, which they confiscated on the day they arrested Oz, Malak highlights the fact that one has to be patient: “She shook her head. ‘I have no idea. But in a strange way I don’t mind waiting” (314). This seems to be what the novel suggests: patience and endurance are key factors to overcome hardships and sufferings.

In a way, Malak is true to a Sufi principle of attaining an elevated spiritual state through the “experience of hardship and trial (*balā’*)” (Ohlander 2015: 61). In “Sufism in the West,” Ron Geaves argues that the last twenty years have witnessed the arrival of several Sufi *ṭariqas* in Britain as more Muslims emigrated from countries where Sufism is practiced as a popular religion in the villages and towns (252). Yet, Geaves argues, “Sufism remains relatively invisible both to academics and the general public as other aspects of Muslim religious life have dominated the agenda for political and security reasons” (253). At the same time, Geaves asserts that Sufism in Britain is adapting to the new British environment. Geaves maintains:

The British Sufi scene now demonstrates marked attempts to carve out a new cultural and religious space that creatively interacts with the new environment of Britain. The *ṭariqas* have become more aware of the need to draw upon the transnational and trans-cultural nature of globalized memberships and to articulate the narrative of *tasawwuf* and traditional Islamic sciences in an intellectual environment, address both Muslims and non-Muslims in the lingua franca (254).

Geaves concludes that current Sufi scholars in Britain transcend ethnicity “to discover common cause in either a universal consciousness of *ummah* or the ideological belonging to traditional Islam” (255).

Through representing Malak’s deeds and thoughts, which are modelled on those of her great grandfather, Aboulela’s novel valorizes Sufi principles of self-control and discipline. Sufism is presented in the novel as an ecumenical philosophy that transcends racial and ethnic barriers and boundaries. Malak takes Natasha to a Sufi meeting in London:

Malak’s modern zikr was held in North London dance studio. Floor-to-ceiling mirrors, cushions on the sprung hardwood floor, a barre all the way round. [. . .] ‘The man in the navy jumper over there,’ Malak whispered, ‘is an aristocrat, closely related to the queen.’ She pointed out a well-known photographer, an architect and an aromatherapist. Dumpy Asian housewives, extravagantly handsome Nigerian men, hippies and New Agers. I wondered what Shamil would make of this lot. His legacy reaching Britain in this way, tame and undisciplined, capacious and gently accessible (216-217).

Natasha’s last sentences are quite significant because she comments on how Sufism has found ground in Britain and Europe. As Weismann succinctly puts it, Sufi movements in the West “tend to redraw themselves as a bridge between East and West, as an alternative to the exclusive Wahhabi-Salafi trend, and as part of overall human spirituality” (276). In the context of *The Kindness of Enemies*, Sufism is the counterpoint of radical Islam and extremist Muslim movements.

6. Conclusion

Aboulela’s *The Kindness of Enemies* oscillates between the past and the present and depicts how Muslims have historically undergone and survived hardships and troubles. By focussing on the experiences of a British Muslim family with roots in the Caucasus, Aboulela’s novel appropriates history to comment on the present. Malak, a 21st British Muslim, draws on the legacy of her great grandfather Imam Shamil, who spearheaded a 19th century Sufi Jihadist movement in the Caucasus. She is inspired by his insights and visions to cope with a British version of McCarthyism. Malak relies on Sufi teachings and principles of self-control and self-constraint to resist overwhelming and devastating socio-political hostilities in the wake of an anti-terror investigation that has involved her son and tainted her career as an upscale British citizen. By foregrounding how Sufism has helped Malak to endure horrible experiences, Aboulela brings to the contemporary scene a spiritual movement that has been “relegated to the margins of contemporary Muslim existence” (Weismann 264). At the same time, by presenting Imam Shamil’s story as a model to be followed and emulated, the novel, to borrow Weismann’s words, re-inscribes “[t]he leading role of past Sufi masters in the reform and jihad movements” (264). As Malak succinctly puts it, “‘If I didn’t have my faith, I would go mad. If I didn’t believe that I was following my destiny, I would . . .’ She stopped abruptly” (215).

Indeed, in *The Kindness of Enemies*, Sufism delves into the hidden truth behind the disguise” (314). Eventually, it is Malak’s faith that steers her out of trouble and guides her to serenity and quietude. Malak even becomes Natasha’s mentor: she helps her navigate a new reality. As the last few lines of the novel suggest, Natasha comes to terms with the fact that as all her attempts of assimilation have vanished into thin air, she should seek spiritual guidance:

I had come to her [Malak] today needing to connect, wanting to spend time in her company. Perhaps it was time to acknowledge that what I was after was spiritual. She was ready to be a guide and I would fight my weaknesses in order to follow (314).

Digging deep into the archives to reconstruct Shamil’s story along with her personal experiences following the arrest of Oz on suspicion of terrorist links have substantially influenced Natasha’s personality and made her re-think and re-evaluate her priorities:

Yes, it changed me. I might still not have reached home or settled where I belonged, but I was confident that there was a home, there, ahead of me. My homesickness wasn’t cured but it was, I was sure, propelling me in the right direction (314).

Yousef Awad (PhD)
Associate Professor
Department of English Language & Literature
University of Jordan
Amman, 11942
Jordan
E-mail: y.awad@ju.edu.jo

References

- Aboulela, Leila.** (2015). *The Kindness of Enemies*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.
- Al-Adwan, Amer and Yousef Awad.** (2013). ‘Translating Islam in Diaspora: Leila Aboulela’s *The Translator*.’ *Jordan Journal of Applied Science “Humanities Series”*, 15(2): 347-360.
- Anwar, Muhammad.** (2005). ‘Issues, Policy and Practice.’ In Tahir Abbas (ed.), *Muslim Britain: Communities under Pressure*, 31-46. London & New York: Zed Books.
- Awad, Yousef.** (2012). *The Arab Atlantic: Resistance, Diaspora, and Trans-cultural Dialogue in the Works of Arab British and Arab American Women Writers*. Saarbrücken: LAP Lambert Academic Publishing.
- (2014). ‘Writing from the Margins of the Nation: Leila Aboulela’s *Lyrics Alley*.’ *Arab World English Journal*, Special Issue on Literature, 2: 69-81.

- Boccardi, Maria.** (2009). *The Contemporary British Historical Novel: Representation, Nation, Empire*. Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- British Government Official Documents.** (2011). 'CONTEST: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism.'
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97995/strategy-contest.pdf, 1-123 (Retrieved on 20 February, 2016).
- Butt, Nadia.** (2009). 'Negotiating untranslatability and Islam in Leila Aboulela's *The Translator*.' In Elisabeth Beker, Sissy Helff, and Daniela Merolla (eds.), *Transcultural Modernities: Narrating Africa in Europe*, 167-180. New York: Rodopi.
- Cariello, Marta.** (2009). 'Searching for Room to Move: Producing and Negotiating Space, in Leila Aboulela's *Minaret*.' In Layla Al Maleh (ed.), *Arab Voices in Diaspora: Critical Perspectives on Anglophone Arab Literature*, 339-350. Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi.
- Chambers, Claire.** (2009). 'An Interview with Leila Aboulela'. *Contemporary Women's Writing*, 3(1): 86-102.
- (2011). *British Muslim Fictions: Interviews with Contemporary Writers*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cooper, Brenda.** (2008). *A New Generation of African Writers: Migration, Material Culture and Language*. Woodbridge and Scottville: James Currey and University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.
- De Groot, Jerome.** (2016). *The Past in Contemporary Historical Fiction*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Edmunds, June.** (2010). "'Elite" Young Muslims in Britain: from Transnational to Global Politics.' *Contemporary Islam*, 4: 215-238.
- Ghazoul, Ferial J.** (2014). 'Humanising Islam's Message and Messenger in Postcolonial Literature.' *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 16 (3): 196-215.
- Gilliat-Ray, Sophie.** (2010). *Muslims in Britain: An Introduction*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Geaves, Ron.** (2005). 'Negotiating British Citizenship and Muslim Identity.' In Tahir Abbas (ed.), *Muslim Britain: Communities under Pressure*, 66-77. London & New York: Zed Books.
- (2015). 'Sufism in the West.' In Lloyd Ridgeon (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Sufism*, 233-256. Cambridge: CUP.
- Hasan, Md Mahmudul.** (2015). 'Seeking Freedom in the "Third Space" of Diaspora: Muslim Women's Identity in Aboulela's *Minaret* and Janmohamed's *Love in a Headscarf*.' *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 35(1): 89-105.
- Hassan, Wal. S.** (2008). 'Leila Aboulela and the Ideology of Muslim Immigrant Fiction.' *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, 41 (2/3): 298-319.
- (2011). *Immigrant Narratives: Orientalism and Cultural Translation in Arab American and Arab British Literature*. Oxford & New York: OUP.

- Hunter, Eva.** (2013). 'The Muslim "Who Has Faith" in Leila Aboulela's Novels *Minaret* (2005) and *Lyrics Alley* (2009).' *Current Writing: Text and Reception in Southern Africa*, 21 (1): 88- 99.
- Mohammed, Jahangir & Adnan Siddiqui.** (2013). 'The Prevent Strategy: A Cradle to Grave Police-State.' http://www.cageuk.org/wp-content/uploads/A4_PREVENT_CAGE_REPORT_WEB.pdf. London: CAGE.
- Kundnani, Arun.** (2014). *The Muslims are Coming: Islamophobia, Extremism and the Domestic War on Terror*. London & New York: Verso.
- Ali, Sundas et al.** (2015). *British Muslims in Numbers A Demographic, Socio-economic and Health profile of Muslims in Britain Drawing on the 2011 Census*. London: MCB.
- Miller, Arthur.** (2000). *The Crucible in History and Other Essays*. London: Methuen.
- Nash, Geoffrey.** (2002). 'Re-siting Religion and Creating Feminised Space in the Fiction of Ahdaf Soueif and Leila Aboulela', *Wasafiri*, 35: 28-31.
- (2007). *The Anglo-Arab Encounter: Fiction and Autobiography by Arab Writers in English*. Oxford & Bern: Peter Lang.
- (2012). *Writing Muslim Identity*. London & New York: Continuum.
- Ohlander, Erik S.** (2015). 'Early Sufi Rituals, Beliefs and Hermeneutics.' In Lloyd Ridgeon (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Sufism*, 53-73. Cambridge, CUP.
- Pauly, Robert J., Jr.** (2004). *Islam in Europe: Integration of Modernization?.* Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Rashid, C. E.** (2012). 'Islamic Individualism and the Logic of the Narrative.' *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 14 (4): 613-624.
- (2014). 'Academia, Empathy and Faith: Leila Aboulela's *The Translator*.' In G. Nash, K. Kerr-Koch & S. E. Hackett (eds.), *Postcolonialism and Islam: Theory, Literature, Culture, Society and Film*, 131-141. London & New York: Routledge.
- Rizzo, Alexandra.** (2012). 'Leila Aboulela's *Lyrics Alley*: Crossing the Sudan, Egypt, and Britain.' *Textus*, 2: 165-181.
- Santesso, Esra Mirze.** (2013). *Disorientation: Muslim Identity in Contemporary Anglophone Literature*. Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ulayyan, Huda and Yousef Awad.** (2016). 'The Quest for Self-Discovery: A Study of the Journey Motif in Kahf's *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* and Aboulela's *The Translator*.' *International Journal of Arabic-English Studies*, 16: 27-42.
- Weismann, Itzhak.** (2015). 'Sufism in the Age of Globalization.' In Lloyd Ridgeon (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Sufism*, 257-281. Cambridge, CUP.