



**A Syrian Refugee's Trauma:
A Journey of Involuntary Dislocation
in Layla Al Ammar's
Silence Is a Sense (2021)**

By

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Abstract:

The Syrian refugee crisis is one of the most urgent problems that came to the forefront ten years ago, specifically in March 2011. At that time, the Arab Spring revolts had taken place in the Middle East in 2010 and to some extent achieved success in Tunisia and Egypt in 2011, so the Syrians believed they too could get rid of their authoritarian regime. Unfortunately, the protests in Syria have led to a civil war from which they are still suffering. Most protesters were either imprisoned or killed, and others ran for their lives and left Syria while the rest remained under inhuman conditions. This paper aims to use the pluralistic model of trauma in Layla Al Ammar's, a Kuwaiti novelist, *Silence is a Sense* (2021) to understand the traumatic event and its impact on a Syrian refugee. Furthermore, the paper applies Renos K. Papadopoulos's framework of involuntary dislocation to analyse and describe the journey and experience of that traumatised Syrian refugee.

Keywords: refugees, Syria, trauma, pluralistic model, involuntary dislocation

ملخص :

صدمة لأجنة سورية: رحلة النزوح القسري في رواية "للصمت معاني" ٢٠٢١
للكاتبة ليلى العمار

تصدرت أزمة اللاجئين السوريين مقدمة الأحداث العالمية منذ عشر سنوات، وتحديداً في مارس ٢٠١١. حيث اندلعت ثورات الربيع العربي في منطقة الشرق الأوسط في أثناء عام ٢٠١٠، وحققت هذه الثورات نجاحاً نسبياً في تونس ومصر عام ٢٠١١، لذلك اعتقد السوريون أنهم قادرون أيضاً على التخلص من نظامهم الاستبدادي. لكن لسوء الحظ، أدت الاحتجاجات في سوريا إلى حرب أهلية لا يزال يعاني منها السوريون. تم سجن أو قتل معظم المتظاهرين وفر آخرون للنجاة بحياتهم وغادروا سوريا بينما ظل الباقون يعيشون في ظروف غير إنسانية، ويهدف هذا البحث إلى استخدام النموذج التعددي للصدمة في رواية "للصمت معاني" ٢٠٢١ للكاتبة الكويتية ليلى العمار لفهم هذه التجربة المؤلمة وتأثيرها على اللاجئين السورية، بالإضافة إلى تطبيق مفهوم رينوس ك. بابادوبولوس للنزوح القسري لوصف رحلة وتجربة هذه اللاجئين السورية المصابة بصدمة نفسية.

A Syrian Refugee's Trauma: A Journey of Involuntary Dislocation in Layla Al Ammar's *Silence Is a Sense* (2021)

The Syrian civil war is a perpetual crisis; it started out in March 2011 as it was instigated by the Arab Spring which had already taken place in Tunisia and Egypt the same year. The Arab Spring aimed to call for reform in political, economic, and social fields. So, Syrian teenagers were inspired by the Arab Spring and wrote graffiti condemning al-Assad's government which responded brutally by arresting and killing protesters. Consequently, most of the Syrians were angry and called for the deposal of Bashar al-Assad. The disturbance escalated into war between al-Assad's supporters and opponents. What made matters worse, Julie Marks (2018) writes, is the interference of other parties in the conflict. Russia, Iran, and Hezbollah supported al-Assad's regime, while the United States, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey, and other countries supported moderate insurgents. Moreover, terrorist organisation such as ISIS and al-Qaeda took part in the conflict. In brief, Syria became a war zone, resulting in a refugee crisis. According to the UN Refugee Agency, "Syria remains the world's largest refugee crisis. More than 6.6 million Syrians have been forced to flee their country since 2011 and another 6.7 million people remain internally displaced" (UNHCR, 2021).

Layla Al Ammar's *Silence Is a Sense* (2021) is about the traumatic experience and journey of a Syrian refugee who refuses to reveal her name until the end of the novel. Through the

pluralistic model of trauma and Renos K. Papadopoulos's framework of involuntary dislocation, the traumatic experience and journey of the Syrian refugee will be highlighted and analysed. The story begins with the Syrian refugee, the protagonist, in her flat watching her neighbours. She writes for a British magazine under the pseudonym of *The Voiceless*. She has chosen to remain silent throughout the story. Her silence is not a pathological symptom. She is conscious of her traumatic experience, but she is unable to cope with it. The Syrian refugee refers to a catastrophic event, the Syrian Civil War. Al Ammar sheds light on the devastating war and its traumatic impact. The Syrian refugee delivers messages concerning her traumatic experience, cultural background, and ideological ideas.

Trauma

Trauma, simply, is “a Greek word (τό τραῦμα) that refers to bodily injury or wound” (Papadopoulos, 2021, p. 211). There are many definitions presented to explain trauma. Colin Davis and Hanna Meretoja (2020) state trauma “refers to psychological injury, lasting damage done to individuals or communities by tragic events or severe distress” (p.1). Additionally, Cathy Caruth considers trauma:

to be much more than a pathology, or the simple illness of a wounded psyche: it is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available. This truth, in its delayed appearance and its belated address, cannot be linked only to

what is known, but also to what remains unknown in our very actions and our language. (1996, p. 4)

Also, Michelle Balaev (2014) declares trauma “causes a disruption and reorientation of consciousness, but the values attached to this experience are influenced by a variety of individual and cultural factors that change over time” (p. 4). In a nutshell, trauma, according to Renos K. Papadopoulos, can refer to

an image that evokes a host of emotional responses, as a phenomenon with manifold contributing factors and consequences, well beyond psychology and psychiatry. In effect, trauma constitutes a discourse that permeates perceptions and conceptualisations and bestows identities on people within wider socio - political contexts. (2021, p. 210)

However, due to the increasing numbers of studies about trauma, it has been given a different definition according to the field it is associated with. In literature, there is no such great controversy over the definition and representation of trauma due to the presence of the psychological model of trauma that literary critics call the traditional model.

The psychological or traditional model believes memory does not capture the traumatic experience as it is, so one’s consciousness will not comprehend the event, resulting in fragmentation of the self. Furthermore, memory will show pathological signs, which keeps the traumatic experience locked and nearly impossible to represent. The only way to gain access to

this experience is through recollection of emotions. However, another model depends on many psychological theories by Laurence Kirmayer, Frederic Bartlett, Craig Piers, and Colin Ross. It is called the pluralistic model that considers other aspects of trauma and its unrepresentable feature supported by the traditional model by psychologists such as Jean-Martin Charcot, Sigmund Freud, Pierre Janet, and Josef Breuer (Balaev, 2012).

The pluralistic model, according to Balaev (2012), “describes the multifaceted functions and effects of a traumatic experience in terms that extend past essentialist notions of identity, experience, and remembering found within the traditional model because it conceptualises memory differently” (p. xiii-xiv). Memory is flexible and chooses certain incidents to interpret; it does not recall incidents exactly as they occur. Thus, many factors, external and internal, can affect remembering, giving an experience a specific meaning. These factors are “individual personality traits, family history, culture, geographic location, place, and historical period” (p. xiv). This model focuses on how the memory process is recognized and how the traumatic experience is perceived and given value. The process of remembering is influenced by time as a person incessantly goes over his/ her memories, even those concerning the traumatic experience, each time he/she remembers something. Recalling a traumatic incident is considered a creative process because both social narratives and personal characteristics influence it. Thus, to understand trauma, focus must be on the traumatic incident and the process of remembering that adds more meaning to the traumatic incident than just having an injured

memory and an inability to represent the experience. Since multiple factors influence trauma, it is envisioned as unpredictable and temporary not just causing dissociation to the person who suffers from mental instability (Balaev, 2012).

Concentrating on the contextual factors of place and social setting helps in comprehending the conditions that result in traumatic events. The importance of place plays a powerful role in the pluralistic model since place is considered a setting with many aspects and features that depict the essence of trauma. Places have personal and cultural aspects that shape understanding of “loss, pain, belonging, and healing” (Balaev, 2012, p.38). Thus, Papadopoulos focuses on the significance of place and social setting by introducing and defining involuntary dislocation in his book *Involuntary Dislocation: Home, Trauma, Resilience, and Adversity- Activated Development* as:

A descriptive, phenomenological term that merely ascertains the fact that persons, due to various forms of adversity, (a) have been made to experience their intimate spaces no longer as viable homes and, consequently, (b) were compelled to move away from these spaces and seek new, more viable ones; further, it suggests that (c) if they were to have a genuine choice, they would not have abandoned these spaces. (2021, p. 38)

He mentions there are six categories of upheavals that cause involuntary dislocation: “political, criminality, climatic,

environmental, socio-economic, 'psychosocial marginalisation' and 'psychological exile'" (p. 46 -51). What caused the involuntary dislocation of the Syrian refugee is a political upheaval which includes different types of "political marginalisation, discrimination, victimisation, brutalisation, and persecution as well as imprisonment and torture" (p. 48). The Syrian refugee has suffered tremendously.

As Papadopoulos (2021) mentions, involuntary dislocation focuses on two aspects of dislocation: internal and external. The internal dislocation occurs when a person, a family, or a community feels their home is not theirs; things are not what they used to be. The Syrian refugee describes the terrifying conditions in Syria, her home, before she decides to leave: "Those bombardments of hell that lay waste to your home, your corner shop, your school, and scatter to the wind thousands of people into a hundred thousand infinite parts. Snipers on the roof of your mother or father's workplace" (Al Ammar, 2021, p. 139). In addition, the external dislocation involves leaving home not only physically and geographically but also psychologically and culturally because the sense of being home is lost and destroyed. The Syrian refugee is also externally dislocated. She thinks of Syria when meditating upon the weather conditions in England: "But I mustn't think of it as home. It's not home. This is. This small city with its two-hundred-year-old buildings – almost no history at all, really – and its church spires and sprawling parks. This is home now" (Al Ammar, 2021, p. 57). Later on, she dreams of her pleasant life back in Syria before the war, but then wakes to

the reality of Syria being a war zone: “There is no glory there, no home, and my mind cannot bring it back. I cannot, even in my own mind, make it whole again” (Al Ammar, 2021, p. 174). The Syrian refugee is both internally and externally dislocated.

The significance of the concept of involuntary dislocation, according to Papadopoulos, is it has two possible meanings, which are not wanting to do a particular action or unconsciously doing that action. For example, when people decide to leave their homes to avoid war for a while, they find themselves unable to return. As a result, they become refugees though it was not their plan. The word ‘involuntary’ describes the internal conflict inside the refugees; they choose to be dislocated despite it is not the best option (2021). The Syrian refugee describes the hazardous journey to England and her choice to be dislocated:

Turkey on an overnight bus, then a raft skirting the Greek Isles ... then a bigger boat further up the coast, then more buses to cross into Macedonia, then walking and walking until my shoes filled with blood and the word ‘pain’ lost meaning.

Can you imagine what the conditions of home must be to render such an ordeal not only tolerable, but desirable? (Al Ammar, 2021, p. 122)

The word ‘involuntary’ emphasizes the importance of human experience, not just the pressure of external forces. Papadopoulos prefers the term ‘dislocation’ to other words such as

'migration' or 'displacement' because it focuses on the people and their experiences at home (2021, p. 41). Dislocation does not just occur physically and geographically but within all aspects of life. He explains the refugee's journey from dislocation to relocation passes through four phases: "Anticipation, Devastating Events, Survival, and Adjustment" (2021, p. 253). The Syrian refugee passes through these four phases.

Anticipation

The first phase focuses on the incidents that take place before people decide to leave their homelands. At this point, people feel danger is near them, and they are worried about themselves, their families and friends, their possessions besides being stressed over making the right decision regarding their future (Papadopoulos, 2021, p. 253). The Syrian refugee describes the insecurity of Syrians; she explains how her boyfriend, Khaled, was suspicious of his surroundings: "Khaled looked up from the book he held, dark eyes flitting around the room as though we weren't alone. He was always watching doors, anticipating knocks and shouts and the men who take you away. There are eyes everywhere" (Al Ammar, 2021, p. 53). Furthermore, these people are tormented by the uncertainty of their future like, for example, if they leave, will they return? Should they all leave or leave some family members to look after their possessions? Where should they head to? Is that place safe?

The Anticipation phase consists of two sub-phases which are 1. feeling home is no longer a safe place, 2. their response to

accepting their initial dislodgement (Papadopoulos, 2021). The Syrians see there is no way out of their dilemma soon. Khaled says, “None of us is going back to school next year. Perhaps not ever. The war is here. The fighting will come closer. It’ll get worse. People will die” (p. 104). The Syrian refugee emphasises the stress they are exposed to before deciding to leave their homes: “Already Mama was thinking of how to leave, planning it, contacting distant relatives in Latakia and Beirut and Alexandria, looking for a safe haven, even while Baba counselled patience” (Al Ammar, 2021, p. 55). As incidents escalate, her father begins to change his mind: “My father searches frantically now, for a way out. Do we risk the drive to Damascus ... Or would it be safer to head to Latakia and fly from there? Or, worst case (ha!), a boat to Alexandria?” (Al Ammar, 2021, p. 141). This phase depicts the hesitancy of the refugees and how they are involuntarily dislocated.

Devastating Events

The second phase involves what takes place when the fears of insecurity in the Anticipation phase become a fact. Homeland becomes hell: violence, savagery, murder, and inhumanity overwhelm the place. Staying home is not an option for most of the people because their lives are threatened either by being murdered or persecuted or raped or having their possessions destroyed. The things that occur during this phase are calamitous, so they have a clear influence on people. These things are “clearly identified, documented, and consequently characterized and condemned as criminal, as violations of human rights, as

inhuman” (Papadopoulos, 2021, p. 254). The Syrian refugee portrays the horror, crimes and violence that take place:

Outside, *malak almawt* hovers over the streets of Aleppo, the Angel of Death flapping his mighty wings like a shroud caught in a strong wind. He touches down often, so that death, instead of rain, falls from the sky. Death stains every household, every soul. Each arrest, each detainment, each rape, each death is the snuffing out of a candle. The land is going dark, and soon there will be nothing here at all. (Al Ammar, 2021, p. 81)

Syrians are traumatized due to their continuous exposure to violence.

The Devastating Events phase is known as “‘the trauma’ or the phase of the ‘traumatic events.’” What is told and reported during this phase elucidates the events and experiences the people go through. In brief, it is the ‘trauma story’, and these events and experiences reflect the people’s predicament (Papadopoulos, 2021, p. 254). This story shapes the identity of the person at this phase. The Syrian refugee mentions the existing conditions in Syria: “In that other place, my other life, there were limits everywhere. One wrong word could land someone in jail, though more often than not they were just gone ... There was peril, tremendous peril, everywhere (Al Ammar, 2021, p. 32). Her traumatic experience can also be seen when she writes about her journey till she reaches England, but does not want to tell her

editor about Syria because she is unable to narrate the pain she experienced there:

I wrote about guns to my head in front of the open backs of freezing trucks and that afternoon when we swallowed tear gas and dodged rubber bullets ... I still have not, cannot, will not, tell her about Syria. (Al Almmar, 2021, p. 140)

Talking about the horror she witnessed in her homeland and the death of her beloved ones is not an easy thing because “the weight of damaging memories is overwhelming and paralysing”(Meretoja, 2020, p. 32). She is aware of her suffering and is trying to avoid it. The next phase she passes through is the Survival phase.

Survival

The third phase signals the end of the Devastating Events phase. People now feel secure and have managed to survive in the previous phase. However, the Survival phase is not so much a stable and comfortable phase because people are unsure what is to come next. They have left their homelands as they have been exposed to horrendous and calamitous events. The feeling of uncertainty overwhelms them. This phase can be considered the safety phase, where people are secured in a safe place like refugee camps though they have no control over their lives. They could remain there for a long time, not knowing where they are going to be sent. They have no information about their family members and friends. In brief, they experience a state of uncertainty (Papadopoulos,2021,p.255).In contrast to Papadopoulos’s point of

view, Kimberley De Decker (2018) mentions that refugees can be exposed to violence in the camps which do not provide safety in addition to shortage of food and water. The Syrian refugee survives the devastating conditions in Syria and reaches Serbia: "We're out of Sombor, finally. They kept us there for hours, me and the runaway families I attached myself to ... I camp beside these families. I don't have a tent, but some NGO-er gave me a tarpaulin" (Al Ammar, 2021, p. 68). Unfortunately, having no family with her, she is an easy prey and is raped by some men. It is true she indeed survived the devastating conditions in Syria, but she is still exposed to traumatic incidents. After the Survival phase comes the Adjustment phase.

Adjustment

The last phase refers to the whole period of the refugees' settlement in a new place that is supposed to be their new home for some time. During this phase, they have difficulties to overcome which are their inability to understand

the realities of their new place, new ways of being, new language, new codes of interpersonal relating, new status, etc. while struggling to hold all these together in the context of a coherent sense of self, to digest what they have endured, and to plan for their future. (Papadopoulos, 2021, p. 255).

They will have to exert great effort to interact with their new surroundings in relation to the geography of the place, culture, education etc., besides handling their previous and current issues (Papadopoulos, 2021). The Syrian refugee faces many difficulties

to adjust to her new surroundings in England. She describes her shock upon reaching England because she has thought she will be well received: “I thought they would do more for us I was mocked on arrival, pushed around, poked and prodded” (Al Almmar, 2021, p. 122). As if her traumatic experience is not enough to finish her off, she is not welcomed in England.

One of the significant problems the Syrian refugee is facing is trying to assimilate: “I try to fit in. Americans call it assimilation. ... I am also attempting to be similar to you. In many ways I feel I already am. I left the *hijab* in Syria” (Al Almmar, 2021, p.122). She explains how they are not welcomed:

They don't want refugees clogging up London - that's how the lady at the centre phrased it, as though we were clumps of dirt or hair stopping up a drain ... spreading us out so as not to frighten the country with an unmanageable horde of displaced persons. (Al Almmar, 2021, p. 99)

Moreover, being an Arab Muslim hinders the process of assimilation. She is harassed by one of her neighbors who calls her “ISIS bitch” and believes refugees “don't belong here. Coming here to take what's ours” (Al Almmar, 2021, p. 156). Papadopoulos refers to the problem of refugees being unwelcomed though they are the ones trying to fit in. He adds there should be mutual efforts from both the refugees and the countries receiving them. He suggests using the word ‘integration’ rather than ‘assimilation’ (2021). In addition, Marten W. de Vries (2007) elaborates on the importance of culture and its influence upon the

person. Culture should provide a positive context and social support which help the traumatized person to overcome his/ her horrifying experiences. The Syrian refugee fails to get over her trauma because most of her experiences in England are devastating.

The pluralistic model of trauma shows that memory changes with time. The traumatic experience and the process of remembering reshape the Syrian refugee's perception of herself. She says to herself when her editor demands stories about her traumatic experience, "There is a kind of deceit to memories, where you're never entirely sure something happened the way you remember. ... There are memories born of repetition of certain acts" (Al Almmar, 2021, p. 23). After her editor's request, she opens a suitcase where she stores her mental and psychological health reports: "What dark things lie here, I'm not sure. Much of it is gone from my waking mind, held only in my nervous system—the beating of my heart, numbness in my extremities, feelings of impending doom" (Al Almmar, 2021, p. 63). B. A. Van der Kolk (2007) points out traumatic experiences are either remembered authentically or refuse to be integrated, and reports in some cases the traumatized person could combine both. The Syrian refugee has memories that she recalls exactly and other memories that refuse to be integrated.

The Syrian Refugee's presence in England influences the process of remembering the traumatic experience. She witnesses violence once again, which interferes with her past traumatic

experience. There has been an attack on a mosque courtyard during her presence. As the fight intensifies, she runs away and depicts her response to the violence: “Bile coats the back of the throat, saliva a sticky web between trembling fingers. Tears leak from two black eyes, but they aren’t on account of sadness or anger or despair” (Al Ammar, 2021, p. 48). Later, she faces another horrifying incident of violence when she witnesses the murder of Hasan, the supermarket owner, and is angry with herself for not being able to help him. She is unable to move as if she is frozen in her place. She develops an immobility response which “involves a psychological shutdown, including feelings such as intense, despair, defeat, resignation, and helplessness, and depersonalisation, realisation, and dissociative fragmentation of the self” (Ford & Courtois, 2020, p. 9). Unfortunately, she develops complex trauma syndrome. According to B. A. Van der Kolk (2005), complex trauma refers to “the experience of multiple, chronic and prolonged, developmentally adverse traumatic events” (p. 402). It occurs in cases such as “the displacement of populations through ethnic cleansing, refugee status, and relocation and through human trafficking and prostitution” (Courtois, 2004, p. 412). The Syrian refugee is extremely terrified, helpless, and lonely.

The English society cannot completely comprehend what refugees go through. The Syrian refugee is trying to convey her

traumatic experience to Western society, but they have doubts about her story. They believe she exaggerates and makes it up as no one could be exposed to such terror. Moreover, when she explains to her readers issues concerning Islamophobia and refugees, her editor, Josie, thinks she does not care about the violence that has been taking place and carried out by Muslim refugees in England; Josie writes, “*Real people are dying*” (Al Ammar, 2021, p. 110). This remark confuses the Syrian refugee in relation to what she has been suffering:

I find it ironic that this incident is what breaks Josie. Seven or eight dead. In the war at home, some five hundred thousand have died. But I suppose there is a critical threshold after which numbers cease to have any meaning and people stop being ‘real’. (Al Ammar, 2021, p. 110)

Davis and Meretoja (2020) confirm this distrusting point of view about refugees referring to asylum seekers who “are still treated with suspicion and their traumatic experience are not readily acknowledged as those of Western citizens who are victims of accidents, violent attacks or natural disasters” (p. 5). However, the Syrian refugee probably continues to write to let out the repressed emotions as Isabel Fraile Murlanch (2014) says, “Narrative itself seems ... to be both revealing and healing” (p. 120). These four phases show how the refugee suffers, and suffering is not just present in one phase; any phase could have a traumatising effect. Each phase has its own borders in which the affected people go

through different experiences that shape their identity which changes from one phase to another (Papadopoulos, 2021, p. 256). Unfortunately, the Syrian refugee is exposed to traumatic experiences in each phase.

Al Ammar uses narrative dissociation as a narrative technique. Narrative dissociation “defines the literary representation of an altered state of consciousness that disrupts and reorients a character’s perceptions.” Among the methods that represent dissociation are “the disjunction of time through the use of repetition and negation; imagistic scenes of violence that lack emotional description; syntactical subversion and rearrangement; atemporality; and a doubled consciousness or point of view” (Balaev, 2012, p. xvi). When the Syrian refugee witnesses the murder of Hasan by a racist, she goes into a state of severe panic:

I was supposed to be safe here. I was supposed to be safe here. I was supposed to be safe here. I was supposed to be safe here. Safe here. I was supposed to be safe here. I was supposed to be safe here. I was supposed to be safe here. I was supposed to be safe here. I was supposed to be safe here. I was supposed to be safe here. I was supposed to be safe here. (Al Ammar, 2021, p. 177)

Narrative dissociation represents two states of consciousness which are in conflict as the trauma in the past interferes with the present state. This technique can juxtapose two different opinions within the present situation to describe the character’s

attempt to disengage himself/herself from the current moment of pain and injury. It shows the dissociation of emotions (Balaev, 2012). The Syrian refugee is suffering tremendously.

The Syrian refugee has experienced extreme violence in Syria and is traumatised; she is unable to bear more violence. She is struggling and is in an urgent need to isolate herself from any source of danger. According to B. T. Reuther (2012), "Confrontation with a traumatic event shatters how individuals engage with the world and ruin their orientation to it" (p. 439). Though it has been seven years since she left Syria, her traumatic experience is still fresh, and she is unable to get over it. She exclaims, "Is there any such thing as recovery? When life has been nothing but cumulative, recurring trauma— thirst, hunger, cold, poor, weak, hot, ill, battered, bruised, broken limbs, blood, blood, blood— can recovery ever happen in any meaningful way" (Al Ammar, 2021, p. 197). Unfortunately, coping with trauma is a complicated process and takes time.

Conclusion

The Syrian Civil War has catastrophic consequences. The most significant is the Syrian refugee crisis which has resulted in the involuntary dislocation of millions of Syrians. Al Ammar portrays the savage conditions in Syria besides the traumatic experience of the Syrian refugee and her journey to Europe. She probably chooses not to mention the name of the Syrian refugee, the protagonist, until the very end to say her plight is not exclusively hers, but it is the plight of most Syrians who have involuntarily embarked on a journey of dislocation. The pluralistic model highlights the traumatic experience and the process of remembering, which is influenced by personal, geographical, and cultural factors. In addition, Papadopoulos's framework of involuntary dislocation is applied to understand the complex nature of the refugee's journey from involuntary dislocation to relocation. The Syrian refugee fails to relocate as the English society does not help her overcome her traumatic experience, but, on the contrary, she is exposed to more violence in addition to being alone without her family and not knowing their whereabouts. Furthermore, she suffers from complex trauma as she is exposed to trauma in each phase of involuntary dislocation. Al Ammar understands how trauma works and affects an individual. If she had chosen to concentrate only on depicting trauma as unrepresentable, it would have been hard to understand the refugees' traumatic experiences. She makes us see, feel, and understand the Syrian refugee crisis.

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