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UNVEILING HOMELESSNESS AND NOSTALGIA IN THE ISLAND OF MISSING TREES: A POSTCOLONIAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the themes of homelessness and nostalgia in *The Island of Missing Trees*, a postcolonial novel that portrays the protagonist's emotional journey of displacement and yearning for a lost homeland. Through a critical analysis of the narrative, the study unravels how the island symbolizes cultural identity and rootedness for the protagonist. The island's natural beauty and historical significance intensify the nostalgia for a past impacted by colonial forces. Characters' interactions with the landscape illuminate the influence of colonial legacies on their identities and sense of place. The metaphor of 'missing trees' represents lost memories and suppressed histories,

driving the protagonist's quest for self-discovery. The findings of the study indicate that the people in foreign land fall a prey to the sense of homelessness and nostalgia. The study, by highlighting themes of identity, memory, and cultural heritage within text of novel, proves a fruitful addition to the existing body of literature in field of post colonialism.

INTRODUCTION

Tiffen (1988) says that, Post-colonial refers to literary and reading practices that emerge from the colonial experiences of non-European regions as a result of European expansion and exploitation in these "other worlds." It encompasses writing and scholarship that critically engage with the legacies and repercussions of colonialism, focusing on the perspectives and voices of those who were colonized and subjugated by European powers. Diasporic experiences lead to the feeling of homelessness and nostalgia. Mota (2014) says that nostalgia has become "one of the most topical issues" (p. 1) in modern Literature. Turner (1987) points out that nostalgia is a pattern or "structure of feeling in Western modernity" (p. 147) Elif Shafak, a distinguished Turkish-British author, is acclaimed for her captivating narrative style and profound exploration of pressing issues, epitomized in her notable work, *The Island of Missing Trees*. Within this novel, Shafak (2021) masterfully delves into the themes of nostalgia and homelessness, portraying the emotional odyssey of individuals displaced from their homelands and yearning for a sense of belonging. Through skillful storytelling, she intertwines the complexities of Eastern and Western cultures, illuminating the roles of women in society and delving into pertinent human rights concerns. Richly developed characters and a vivid depiction of the island's ambiance allow Shafak to confront readers with profound reflections on identity, memory, and the profound significance of one's cultural heritage in this exquisitely poignant literary piece.

The story of *The Island of Missing Trees*, is set in Cyprus. The plot centers on the secret romance of Kostas and Defne, who break societal rules by seeking safety in the Happy Fig bar. The Turkish military invasion separates Kostas and Defne's fates, sending them on opposite roads and highlighting the great split between those who flee and those who remain in their nation. The narrative spans decades, shifting back and forth between their time in Cyprus and Kostas' present as a renowned botanist in the United Kingdom raising a daughter anxious to reconnect with her origins. The tale explores the cataclysms that reshape nations while showing their deep influence on everyday lives against the stormy historical canvas of Cyprus. The text of novel expertly weaves together many narrative strands, delving into the process of storytelling, the enduring force of commitment, and the complexities of meaning-making. A fig tree's distinctive narrative voice, as a silent observer and memory keeper, provides an ethereal and intriguing depth to the story. Shafak (2021) beautifully conveys the ideas of love, sorrow, and the irrepressible value of stories that linger long beyond the final page in this absorbing and evocative novel. For discerning readers willing to explore the braided threads of life's interconnection, the poetic appeal and thought-provoking explorations of identity, history, and the human experience make the novel a deeply satisfying and intriguing read.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How does *The Island of Missing Trees* depict the themes of homelessness and nostalgia in the context of postcolonial Cyprus?
2. How do the characters' experiences of displacement and yearning for a lost homeland reflect broader postcolonial concerns of identity, cultural heritage, and memory in the novel?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To analyze the narrative techniques and literary devices employed by Shafak in the novel to portray the experiences of homelessness and nostalgia among the characters in postcolonial Cyprus.
2. To examine the socio-political and historical context of Cyprus's postcolonial period and how it influences the characters' emotional journey and their sense of dislocation and longing for a place of belonging in the novel

DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study is focused on the themes of homelessness and nostalgia intersect with the characters' identities and experiences in the shadow of colonial legacies in the novel *The Island of Missing Trees*.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The emergence of post-colonial literature is a consequence of the rapid globalization facilitated by technological advancements and improved transportation, along with the growing multiculturalism in various countries, including our own. Shohat (1992) uncovers that 'post-colonial' indicates both transcending of "anti-colonial nationalist theory as well as a movement beyond a specific point in history that of colonialism and Third World nationalist struggles" (p. 4). Butt (2013) remarks that, 'Postcolonialism' offers a critical viewpoint on the continual, unresolved impact of decolonization rather than just telling the tale of "what happened after decolonization". (p. 6). Within the realm of post-colonial literature, one can identify diverse subheadings such as Nostalgic writing, Subaltern Studies, and Cosmopolitan writing. Focusing on nostalgic fiction as a sub-genre of post-colonial literature, it becomes evident that this category encompasses a vast and esteemed body of work that enjoys widespread readership and global acclaim. Swamy (2013) examines into the themes of immigrant identity and nostalgia as portrayed in the literary work of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. Through a perceptive analysis, the study explores how Divakaruni's novel, *The Vine of Desire*, captures the nuanced experiences of immigrants grappling with a sense of belonging to their adopted home while yearning for their distant homeland.

Mukherjee (2021) conducts an insightful exploration of the thematic elements of nostalgia, rootlessness, and identity crisis prevalent in the literary creations of contemporary Indian diaspora writers. Through critical examination of select literary texts, Mukherjee deftly unravels the emotional complexities experienced

by individuals living in the diaspora. Motahane and Makombe (2020) examine the theme of home and its displacement in No Violet Bulawayo's novel, *We Need New Names*. Through a critical analysis of the literary work, the authors delve into the notion of "the unhomely," exploring the experiences of characters grappling with the challenges of migrancy and cultural dislocation. The study sheds light on how the characters in the novel navigate the complexities of being "not at home in the world," portraying the emotional and psychological impacts of displacement.

Ramzan, Arif, Nusrat, and Shakir (2023) offer a comprehensive ecocritical analysis of Shafak's novel. Through a meticulous examination of the literary landscape, the scholars explore the intricate connections between humans and nature depicted in the novel. They delve into ecological themes, such as the impact of historical events on the island's environment, the symbolism of trees, and the portrayal of natural elements as potent symbols of memory and resilience. Similarly, Sutari (2022) conducts an in-depth analysis of anthropocentrism and its implications for the environment in the text of the Shafak's (2021) novel. Drawing on ecocritical perspectives, the study investigates how human-centered attitudes and actions depicted in the novel contribute to environmental degradation and ecological imbalance. Sutari examines the characters' interactions with the natural world, the exploitation of resources, and the consequences of prioritizing human interests over ecological well-being. There is need for a comprehensive examination of the interplay between homelessness and nostalgia in the context of postcolonial literature, focusing specifically on Shafak's novel. Existing studies do not cover the theme of homelessness and nostalgia in the selected text. Addressing this gap will provide valuable insights into the complexities of postcolonial experiences and the enduring effects of homelessness, nostalgia and yearning for belonging.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Postcolonial study explores into the relationship between nostalgia and homelessness, intertwined with concepts of hybridization, disintegration and the (re) emergence of memory. The diasporic journey, marked by navigating between multiple cultures and languages, amplifies the emotions of nostalgia and homelessness. Daniels (1985) remarks that the idea of "nostalgia" originates from two Greek roots: "nostos," which means "return to one's native land," and "algos," which means "pain, suffering, or grief." The earliest definition of nostalgia by (Sedikides, Wildschut, and Baden, 2004), can be understood as the psychological distress resulting from an intense longing "to return to one's homeland", (pp. 200-201). Lamiche and Belagraa (2020) say that nostalgia is a "result of displacement ... in order to stay connected with the original homeland" (p. 7). Lamiche and Belagraa (2020) further mentions that Refugees and displaced individuals transitioning into diasporas often find themselves torn between two cultures, languages, and conflicting identities, leaving them to grapple with traumatic consequences concerning nostalgia and the unattainable restoration of their past. Lamiche and Belagraa (2020) remark that being Homelessness is as "being unsafe and unstable when the person does not have any place to stay in" (p. 21). These themes shed light on the contemporary futility of imposing geographical borders as

constraints on the free circulation of ideas among civilized human races. The works in this genre serve as poignant reminders of the interconnectedness of diverse cultures and the shared experiences that transcend national boundaries.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology adopted for this postcolonial analysis of *The Island of Missing Trees* is qualitative, involving close reading and textual analysis to explore themes of homelessness and nostalgia in the light of Daniels, Lamiche and Belagraa, as key theorists.

DATA ANALYSIS

The novel deals with the theme of homelessness and its effects on the immigrants. The characters of the novel, *The Island of Missing Trees*, reflects on their journey of leaving their homeland, a beautiful island in the Mediterranean Sea, and adopting a new land, England. They explain that they have settled in England and have experienced growth and success there. The text, "I have since adopted another land, England, where I have grown and thrived, but not a single day passes that I do not yearn to be back. Home. Motherland," (p. 1) delves into the characters' complex emotions of homelessness and nostalgia. Having left their original home, the island, and settled in England, they have adapted and flourished there. However, despite their growth and success, the bond with their "Motherland" remains unbroken. Characters' emotional connection to their homeland contrasts with their physical presence in England, leading to a conflict between the two places. The text also brings attention to the power of maps and how they shape our understanding of belonging and identity. Maps often define borders, influencing who we consider friends or foes, and this might reinforce the narrator's sense of being torn between two worlds.

In a nostalgic recollection, the description of the island's idyllic features such as "golden beaches, turquoise waters, lucid skies," (p. 2) evokes a wistful longing for a place of cherished memories. The annual arrival of sea turtles and fragrant "scents of gardenia, cyclamen, lavender, and honeysuckle" (p. 2) reinforce a sense of belonging and emotional attachment to a once-familiar home. The imagery of 'wisteria' aspiring to reach the clouds symbolizes the hopes and dreams nurtured in that homeland. However, despite the enchanting portrayals, a subtle undercurrent of homelessness emerges, alluding to the narrator's current displacement from their original land, leaving them yearning for a lost sense of belonging and connection to the island's beauty.

Back in Nicosia, when he observed the work of the Committee on Missing Persons, an unspeakable thought had crossed his mind. It was a peaceful thought, as far as he was concerned. The bodies of the missing, if unearthed, would be taken care of by their loved ones and given the proper burials they deserved. But even those who would never be found were not exactly forsaken. Nature tended to them. (p. 265) The quotation mentioned above from text of the novel captures the contemplations of a witness in Nicosia, evoking sentiments of longing for a lost time and place.

Kostas finds solace in the work of the Committee on Missing Persons, envisioning the bodies of the missing receiving the proper burials they deserve, representing a desire for closure and healing. The juxtaposition of wild thyme and sweet marjoram growing from the same soil symbolizes the coexistence of beauty and resilience amidst the tragedy, akin to the enduring memories of a cherished homeland even in times of displacement. The imagery of nature's transformative power reflects a profound understanding of homelessness, where the victims, though lost, find continuity in nature's ability to perpetuate life and new beginnings, mirroring the narrator's yearning for belonging and a sense of home.

That night in her bedroom, listening to the singer her father was trying hard to like, Ada opened the curtains and stared into the darkness canopying the garden. Invisible as it was, she knew the fig tree was there, biding its time, growing, changing, remembering – trunk and branches and roots all together. (p. 264)

In a nostalgic perspective, the passage portrays Ada's introspective moment in her bedroom, where she listens to the singer her father is trying to appreciate. The act of opening the curtains and gazing into the dark garden evokes a sense of longing and remembrance. The presence of the fig tree, though invisible in the darkness, symbolizes the enduring connection to a place or memory, akin to the yearning for a lost home. The fig tree's growth, change, and rootedness signify a continuity and belonging that resonates with Ada's own feelings of homelessness, hinting at her emotional attachment to a past that holds significance in her heart.

“Ada suppressed her smile this time, amused at her father's lame attempt to connect with her through emo rap, of which he hadn't got a clue. Maybe she should try speaking his language instead” (p. 263). Ada's reaction to her father's attempt to connect with her through emo rap reflects a nostalgic point of view influenced by a sense of homelessness. Her suppression of a smile suggests a longing for a deeper emotional connection with her father, possibly reminiscent of a time when they shared common interests and understanding. As she contemplates trying to “speak his language,” it conveys her desire to bridge the gap between them, akin to the longing for a sense of belonging and emotional attachment to a past when communication and understanding were more effortless.

Something was strangling her - the past, the memories, the roots.' Ada bit her bottom lip, saying nothing. She remembered how, when she was six years old, she had broken her thumb, and it had swollen to twice its size, the flesh expanding and pushing against itself. That's how words felt in her mouth right now. (p. 257)

In this poignant passage, Ada reflects on her mother's love and untimely death from a nostalgic point of view, intertwined with a sense of homelessness. The reassurance from her father that her mother loved her deeply implies a yearning for the emotional connection she once shared with her mother. The mention of blooming and thriving signifies the tender memories of a loving relationship. However, the undercurrent of something strangling her mother hints at the

unresolved past and emotional burdens, akin to the nostalgic longing for a time when her mother's inner struggles might have been understood and healed. Ada's silence, likened to the swollen thumb, portrays her emotional struggle in articulating her feelings and experiences, possibly reminiscent of the displacement and yearning for a sense of belonging.

The voices of our motherlands never stop echoing in our minds. We carry them with us everywhere we go. Still today, here in London, buried in this grave, I can hear those same sounds, and I wake up trembling like a sleepwalker who realizes he has ventured dangerously into the night. In Cyprus, all creatures, big and small, express themselves - all, that is, except the storks. (p. 252)

In this evocative passage, Ada contemplates the enduring influence of their motherland on their identity and emotions, invoking a sense of nostalgia and homelessness. The reference to London as a distant place from their Cyprus motherland highlights the theme of displacement and yearning for a connection to one's roots. The imagery of being buried in a grave symbolizes a profound emotional attachment to their homeland, where the echoes of familiar sounds persist, evoking a sense of longing and reminiscence. The mention of the lonely storks blown off course parallels the narrator's own feelings of being adrift and displaced, searching for a sense of belonging. The storks' inability to sing represents the silence and unexpressed emotions that come with the detachment from one's cultural heritage. The reminiscence of a time when the storks sang enchanting melodies mirrors the nostalgic longing for a past when their motherland was a place of vibrant storytelling and wonder.

Occasionally, Defne noticed, a grandfather or a grandmother was keen to talk when there were no other family members around. For they remembered. Memories as elusive and wispy as tufts of wool dispersed in the wind. Quite a number of these men and women, born and raised in mixed villages, spoke Greek and Turkish, and a few, in the throes of Alzheimer's, slipped down the slopes of time into a language they had not used in decades. Some had personally witnessed atrocities, some had heard about them, and then there were others who seemed evasive to her. (p. 249) The protagonist, Defne, embarks on a poignant journey of discovery in a post-conflict setting, invoking themes of nostalgia and homelessness. Clad in her blue trench coat, she navigates the rain-soaked streets, searching for fragments of forgotten memories embedded in the diverse community's history. The encounters with families, marked by warm hospitality yet an underlying veil of mistrust, reflect the lingering impact of past events on the sense of belonging and trust.

The reminiscences shared by elders, who recall elusive memories like "tufts of wool dispersed in the wind," (p. 249) serve as poignant reminders of a time lost to history and the yearning for a reconnection with their past. The use of both Greek and Turkish languages by some elders symbolizes the complexity of their identities and the homes they once knew. Also, the presence of evasive individuals adds a layer of mystery, hinting at the collective trauma experienced and the ensuing feelings of

displacement. Defne's search for stories and memories mirrors the longing for a sense of home and cultural heritage, while the evasive reactions from certain individuals underscore the challenging task of uncovering suppressed or painful pasts.

As she tried to encourage her interviewees to open up, Defne was careful not to demand more than they were ready to provide. She was, however, troubled to observe deep rifts between family members of different ages. Way too often, the first generation of survivors, the ones who had suffered the most, kept their pain close to the surface, memories like splinters lodged under their skin, some protruding, others completely invisible to the eye. (p. 250)

In this thought-provoking passage, Defne's delicate approach to her interviewees reveals the complexities of intergenerational trauma and its impact on the sense of nostalgia and homelessness within families. The deep rifts between family members of different ages reflect the lasting scars of war and forced displacements, which have shaped their collective memories. The first generation, as survivors, carry the burden of painful memories that they keep close, akin to splinters lodged under their skin, symbolizing the enduring emotional wounds from their past. The second generation, in contrast, chooses to suppress the past, perhaps as a coping mechanism to shield themselves from the harrowing experiences of their parents. This paradoxical observation of the youngest generation holding the oldest memory in families marked by displacement and brutality highlights the profound impact of intergenerational trauma and the enduring quest for a sense of belonging amidst the shadows of a fragmented past.

Thus saying, she sat back with a little smile - one that disappeared completely when she heard what Ada asked next. I used to get upset at 'I kind of understand why my older relatives might have found it difficult to accept my parents' marriage. It's a different generation. They all went through a lot, probably. What I don't understand is why my own parents never talked about the past even after they moved to England. Why the silence?' 'I'm not sure I can answer that,' said Meryem, a hint of caution entering her voice. 'Try.' Ada leaned forward and stopped the recorder. "This is not for school, by the way. It's for me.' (p. 248)

In this emotional exchange between Ada and Meryem, the theme of nostalgia and homelessness is explored through the lens of intergenerational silence and the complexity of familial history. Ada's curiosity about her parents' silence regarding their past reflects a longing to understand her roots and a sense of displacement from her cultural heritage, embodied in her parents' marriage that faced resistance from older relatives. The use of the phrase "a different generation" underscores the intergenerational gap in experiences and the challenges of reconciling the past with the present. Meryem's caution in responding to Ada's question hints at the sensitive nature of the subject and the weight of unspoken histories. The act of stopping the recorder signifies Ada's desire for an intimate conversation, seeking personal connections beyond the formalities of a school project. This intimate exchange

echoes the theme of longing for belonging and a deeper understanding of one's identity through the exploration of family narratives.

The moment he walked in it all came rushing back to him. Evenings redolent with delicious odours of steaming food and warm pastry, the chatter and laughter of the customers, the music and the clapping, the smashing of plates as the night wore on... He remembered the afternoons he had trudged up the hill, carrying bottles of carob liquor and those honey-sesame bars that Yiorgos loved so much, and how happy his mother was with the money he brought home brightened as he recalled Chico flapping his wings, Yiorgos telling jokes to a newly married couple, and Yusuf watching it all with his customary silence and attentive gaze. How proud they were of what they had created together. (p. 231)

In this haunting passage, the protagonist's return to the tavern triggers a rush of nostalgic memories, portraying a profound connection to a lost sense of home and belonging. The sensory details, like the "delicious odours of steaming food" and the "chatter and laughter of the customers," evoke a longing for the past. The remembrance of small moments, such as carrying carob liquor and honey-sesame bars, symbolizes the simplicity and joy of life in the tavern. The reference to Chico, Yiorgos, and Yusuf highlights the communal aspect of the tavern, emphasizing the camaraderie and togetherness that once filled the space. The tavern, in essence, was not just a place to work but a cherished haven and the entire world for those who inhabited it. The protagonist's wistful recollections convey a profound sense of homelessness, as he longs for the warmth and comfort of the tavern and the close-knit community that has since dispersed, leaving a void in his heart. "A tree is a memory keeper. Tangled beneath our roots, hidden inside our trunks, are the sinews of history, the ruins of wars nobody came to win, the bones of the missing." (p. 186)

The tree becomes a touching symbol of collective memory, carrying within its roots and trunk the remnants of historical events, including wars and the fate of the missing. Shafak's (2021) evocative portrayal highlights the enduring impact of history on a land and its people, reflecting the longing for a lost past and the sense of displacement caused by the traces of conflict and upheaval that persist within the landscape.

Going to another school won't make things different. So you'd better stay. What is it? Are they giving you a hard time, the other kids?' Ada drummed her fingers against the table to keep them busy. 'Well... I did something awful in front of the whole class. Now I'm too embarrassed to go back. (p. 145)

In this poignant conversation between Meryem and Ada in *The Island of Missing Trees*, Shafak (2021) explores the emotions of youth, nostalgia, and the feeling of homelessness within one's own identity. Meryem's compassionate guidance reflects a nostalgic perspective, recognizing the impatience of youth yearning for a different reality. Ada's sense of embarrassment and longing to escape her current

situation resonates with feelings of dislocation and homelessness, as she struggles to find her place within her school environment. The theme of nostalgia is evident in Meryem's portrayal of life's challenges as an integral part of the present, highlighting the longing for a sense of belonging and purpose amidst the frustrations of adolescence.

'Let's say history is ugly, what's it to you?' said Meryem, continuing regardless. 'It's not your problem. My generation made a mess of things. Your generation is lucky. You don't have to wake up one day with a border in front your house or worry about your father being gunned down on the street just because of his ethnicity or religion. How I wish I were your age now.' Ada kept her eyes on her hands. (p. 145)

Meryem's reflective remarks underscore the impact of historical turmoil on her generation, while highlighting the stark contrast to Ada's fortunate circumstances in the present. The theme of nostalgia emerges as Meryem yearns for the simpler, less tumultuous times of youth, projecting her longing onto Ada's generation. The concept of homelessness subtly resonates in Meryem's words, as she alludes to the displacement and disarray caused by historical events, suggesting that Ada's generation, untethered to such harrowing experiences, finds a sense of belonging and security.

Amidst the chaos, intercommunal violence au mare. Deine's parents may forbidden her to leave the house, even for basic provisions. The streets were not safe. Turks had to stick with Turks, Greeks with Greeks. Confined to the house, she had spent hours reflecting, worrying, trying to find a way to talk to Kostas. (p. 142)

In the midst of intercommunal violence and chaos depicted in novel text Deine's parents impose strict restrictions on her mobility, reflecting a sense of nostalgia for a safer past and the theme of homelessness as people are confined to their homes. The enforced segregation along ethnic lines heightens the feeling of displacement and loss of a shared community. Deine's confinement to the house symbolizes the emotional and physical barriers that separate individuals during turbulent times, evoking a yearning for the lost harmony and interconnectedness of a bygone era. Her futile attempts to reach out to Kostas underscore the difficulty of communication and the longing for a sense of belonging amidst social disarray.

'We are closing,' said Yiorgos. "The staff have resigned. They don't want to work anymore. And you shouldn't be out like this. It's dangerous. Did you no hear? British families are going home. A chartered plane took off this morning carrying army wives and children. There is another plane tomorrow." Defne had heard stories about how English ladies had boarded the plane in their pastel hats and matching dresses, their suitcases packed tight. There was relief on their faces. But many were tearful, too, for they were departing an island they had come to love. Yiorgos said, 'When Westerners run away like that it means those of as they leave behind are in deep shit.'" Everyone in my community is extremely worried,' said

Defne. “They say there’s going to be a bloodbath.’ But we are happy to see you,’ said Yiorgos. ‘We’ve something for you. A letter from Kostas.’”Let’s n-not lose hope, it’ll pass,’ said Yusuf. (p. 142)

The imminent closure of the tavern and the resignation of the staff symbolize the loss of community and familiar social structures, reflecting the theme of homelessness in both a literal and metaphorical sense. The departure of British families emphasizes the widening divide between the island’s inhabitants and the foreign expatriates, deepening the sense of dislocation and isolation for those left behind. The impending bloodshed and fear expressed by Defne’s community underscore the anxieties and uncertainties of the present, contrasting with the past they hold dear. However, the letter from Kostas represents a glimmer of hope amidst the chaos, evoking a nostalgic longing for a peaceful time and a desire for connection in the midst of alienation. Yusuf’s plea to hold onto hope hints at the resilient human spirit, seeking refuge in nostalgia and the promise of a brighter future beyond the present turmoil.

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CONCLUSION

The Island of Missing Trees weaves the themes of homelessness and nostalgia, delving into the emotions of displacement and yearning for a lost sense of home. The characters’ journeys reflect the complexities of their identities as they navigate the historical legacies and intercommunal violence surrounding them. The novel captures the enduring impact of colonialism, emphasizing the resilience of displaced communities seeking a place of belonging and identity. The characters’ physical presence in their new lands coexists with an unbreakable emotional bond to their motherland, creating a poignant conflict between their present and past. The

novel's vivid descriptions evoke a wistful longing for the island's beauty and cherished memories, adding to the characters' sense of nostalgia for their lost home. Shafak skillfully explores intergenerational trauma, revealing how past experiences shape the emotions and perspectives of younger generations, leading to a burden of homelessness and dislocation. The quest for family narratives and memories mirrors the characters' search for a deeper sense of belonging and cultural identity. The novel employs the tree as a powerful symbol of collective memory, carrying the remnants of wars and missing individuals. The novel emphasizes the enduring presence of history, reflecting the desire for closure and healing amidst turmoil. Shafak's storytelling captivates readers, inviting them to reflect on their own relationships with home, nostalgia, and belonging.

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