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The Role of Voluntary Labor in Educational Regeneration in Christy Lefteri's *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* (2019)

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دور العمل التطوعي في تجديد التعليم في رواية كريستي ليفتيري مربي النحل في حلب(2019)

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الملخص

يتناول هذا البحث دور العمل التطوعي في تجديد التعليم من خلال تحليل أدبي لرواية مربّي النحل في حلب (2019) للكاتبة كريستي ليفتيري. وبالاستناد إلى تجربة الكاتبة الشخصية كابنة لاجئين قبارصة، وعملها التطوعي كمدرّسة لغة إنجليزية في مراكز إيواء اللاجئين، تُقدَّم الرواية كنموذج أدبي يعكس إمكانيات التعليم غير الرسمي في تلبية الاحتياجات النفسية والثقافية والفكرية للمجتمعات المهجّرة. يعتمد التحليل النظري على مفاهيم الماركسية، لا سيما أفكار كارل ماركس وفريدريك إنجلز، إلى جانب المنظورات الثورية لكل من ليون تروتسكي وفلاديمير لينين، بهدف الكشف عن الأبعاد socio–economic للعمل التطوعي، وما إذا كان يشكّل أداة مقاومة لبنية الطبقات المهيمنة أو مجرّد وسيلة للتخفيف من أعراض الظلم البنيوي.ويُظهر البحث أن العمل التطوعي يمكن أن يسهم بشكل فعّال في تجديد التعليم لدى الفئات المهمّشة، خصوصاً إذا تجرّد من الهيمنة الإيديولوجية وتم دعمه بسياسات تعليمية واضحة. كما يسلّط الضوء على القوة التحويلية للتعليم الراديكالي كما صوّرته الرواية، حيث لا يكون التعليم مجرد تلقين، بل أداة للتمكين والتغيير الاجتماعي. ويقترح البحث مزيداً من الدراسات النظرية والأدبية التي تربط بين العمل التطوعي والنقد الماركسي والنماذج التعليمية البديلة، لا سيما في سياق أزمات اللجوء العالمية.

الكلمات المفتاحية :العمل التطوعي، تجديد التعليم، الماركسية، تعليم اللاجئين، كريستي ليفتيري، مربّي النحل في حلب ، التعليم غير الرسمي.

Abstract

This paper examines the role of voluntary labor in educational regeneration through a literary analysis of Christy Lefteri's *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* (2019). Grounded in the author's personal experience as the daughter of Cypriot refugees and her volunteer work teaching English in refugee camps. The novel serves as a case study for exploring how informal educational practices can address the psychological, cultural, and intellectual needs of displaced communities. Drawing on Marxist theory, particularly the works of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Leon Trotsky, and Vladimir Lenin; the study investigates the socio-economic implications of voluntary labor and its potential to challenge class-based inequities in access to education. While Marxist critique reveals the limitations of voluntarism within systems of structural oppression, the revolutionary perspectives of Trotsky and Lenin underscore the transformative power of radical, inclusive education for marginalized groups. The research concludes that voluntary educational initiatives when they are released from ideological control and supported by policy, can contribute meaningfully to the regeneration of learning in refugee contexts. The study advocates for greater integration of critical theory and literary narratives in discussions of refugee education and proposes future research into the structural and philosophical dimensions of volunteer-driven tutorial models.

Keywords: voluntary labor, regeneration, Marxism, refugee.

1.Introduction

In light of ongoing global crises related to conflict, forced migration, and displacement, the role of education has become increasingly central in addressing not only the immediate needs of affected individuals but also the long-term social integration and psychological rehabilitation of refugees. Education today is no longer limited to its

traditional function of knowledge transmission; rather, it is a transformative process through which individuals and communities build flexibility, preserve identity, and foster social cohesion. Within this evolving landscape, the concept of 'educational regeneration' has emerged as a vital framework through which education is revitalized, particularly in contexts shaped by cultural diversity, international displacement, and humanitarian crises. Educational regeneration, in this sense, refers to "the reimagining and restructuring of educational systems and practices through inclusive, flexible, and socially responsive approaches" where voluntary labor plays a crucial and dynamic role (Kudinova 2020, 19).

Voluntary labor, when arranged in educational settings, especially in refugee camps and international aid contexts, often transcends conventional understandings of charity or service. It becomes a powerful act of solidarity, social engagement, and transformative pedagogy. Volunteers, particularly those with a background in teaching, act as cultural mediators and educational innovators. They address both cognitive and emotional needs, bridging gaps in access and ensuring that displaced learners can maintain a sense of continuity and hope. Within such frameworks, the personal experiences of educators themselves can deeply inform and enrich the educational process. One notable example is that of Christy Lefteri, the British author of *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* (2019), whose volunteer work at a refugee center in Athens shaped her literary and educational engagement with the refugee crisis. As the daughter of Cypriot refugees, Lefteri's background equips her with both personal insight and professional commitment, enabling her to navigate the intersections between trauma, displacement, and the transformative power of learning (Clark 2021,20).

Lefteri's novel, inspired by her direct experience as an English teacher in a refugee camp, becomes more than a fictional narrative. It represents a pedagogical and political act. Through storytelling, she foregrounds the human dimension of forced migration, giving voice to silenced experiences and making visible the structural and emotional dimensions of exile. In this regard, literature functions as a vehicle for educational regeneration, not only by documenting realities but also by inviting readers and educators to engage critically with them (Odabaşı 2021,42).By situating Lefteri's novel within the broader intellectual tradition of Marxist literary criticism, drawing on the foundational works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, as well as later contributions by Leon Trotsky and Vladimir Lenin; this study seeks to highlight how voluntary educational labor in refugee contexts becomes a site of ideological resistance and cultural production. From Marx and Engels' emphasis on material conditions and class consciousness to Trotsky's belief in literature as a revolutionary force, and Lenin's recognition of education as a mechanism of empowerment for the working class, the Marxist framework provides a comprehensive method for understanding how 'educational regeneration' operates in conditions of crisis and inequality (Osborne 2020,18).

Ultimately, Marxists demonstrate that the fusion of voluntary labor, literary representation, and educational regeneration holds significant potential for addressing the challenges posed by forced migration. By analyzing Lefteri's work within this theoretical pattern, the study seeks to affirm the essential role of education, not merely as an institutional function, but as a deeply human and socially transformative practice (Fényes 2015,16).

2.Literature Review

The Beekeeper of Aleppo (2019) is written by the British-Cypriot author Christy Lefteri. It serves as an emotional fictional account that interlaces war trauma, forced displacement, voluntary aid, and the fragile thread of human hope. The novel targets an adult readership, yet due to its accessible narrative and emotionally resonant characters, it appeals to young adult audiences as well. It is a humanitarian, sociopolitical, emotional, and culturally reflective narrative "weaving loss and healing through the sensory and symbolic threads of beekeeping" (Hosseini 2019,33). Lefteri constructs her story through the lens of Nuri, a Syrian beekeeper, and his blind wife Afra, as they flee from Aleppo to seek asylum in the UK. The novel is narrated in the first person by Nuri, which enables the reader to experience post-traumatic stress and survivor's guilt intimately. Lefteri's traumatized protagonist offers a limited yet profoundly honest narrative voice that humanizes the otherwise politicized refugee experience.

Comparable themes are explored in Khaled Hosseini's *Sea Prayer* (2018), a lyrical, illustrated novella inspired by the death of the Syrian boy, Alan Kurdi. Hosseini captures a father's last reflection before attempting to cross the sea with his son, presenting refugee trauma through poetic prose. Both novels merge memory and place, blending personal and collective grief in migratory contexts (Hosseini 2018, 55).

In Atia Abawi's *A Land of Permanent Goodbyes* (2018), the journey of Tareq, a teenage refugee, highlights violence, humanitarian relief, and displacement through dual narration, including that of a personified "Destiny".

The narrative perspective mirrors Lefteri's stylistic layering of internal and external voices, "illustrating how volunteer aid often becomes a fragile lifeline amidst chaos" (Abawi 2018,91).

Alan Gratz's *Refugee* (2017), although classified as a young adult novel, interweaves multiple refugee stories across different historical periods, including a Syrian boy, Mahmoud, whose journey closely parallels Nuri's. Themes of fear, endurance, and loss unify the characters' struggles, showing how "empathy and survival intertwine across generations of displacement" (Gratz 2017,96).

Likewise, Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* (2017) portrays the refugee experience through speculative realism, using magical doors as metaphors for escape. Hamid's Saeed and Nadia parallel Nuri and Afra in their gradual emotional detachment, alienation, and the search for meaning amid exile. Both Hamid and Lefteri explore how migration transforms identity and relationships (Hamid 2017,53).

Further parallels are found in Dave Eggers' *What Is the What* (2006), which fictionalizes the real-life story of Sudanese refugee Valentino Achak Deng. Eggers, like Lefteri, foregrounds the role of storytelling as a survival mechanism and a tool for advocacy. His work reveals the structural violence and resilience present in migration journeys, "turning oral histories into literary monuments" (Eggers 2006,57).

Collectively, these works depict the refugee condition not merely as a political problem but as a deeply human experience of grief, resistance, and rebirth. Lefteri's novel contributes significantly to this literary corpus by shedding light on the psychological and educational role of voluntary labor in restoring agency and dignity. While academic studies on *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* are still emerging, the comparative literature provides substantial grounds to assess its thematic significance and narrative contribution.

3.Structural Approach

Marxist theory, as developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, offers a foundational framework for understanding the structural dynamics of class, labor, and material conditions which are established in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' seminal work *The German Ideology* (1845). Here, the authors argue that human consciousness is determined not by abstract ideals or moral will, but by material and historical conditions shaped by the modes of production. Central to this framework is the concept of class struggle, which emerges from the conflict between "the proletariat" those who must sell their labor to survive and "the bourgeoisie" those who own and control the means of production. Education, through this lens, is rarely a neutral space. It is often designated to serve capitalist interests, functioning "as a mechanism to reproduce class structures and instill dominant ideologies" (Chatman 1978,13). The narrative of Lefteri follows Nuri, a Syrian beekeeper, and his wife Afra, a once-renowned artist, as they journey from war-ravaged, Aleppo, to seek asylum in the United Kingdom. In this journey, Lefteri masterfully demonstrates how displacement annihilates not only physical homes but also socio-economic identities. In this sense, Nuri reflects, "We found ourselves enclosed in barbed wire, and before us was a grim village with immaculate concrete walkways... An empire of identification.." (Lefteri 2019, 106). This statement condenses his fall from a defined position within a productive economic system to a subject in limbo stripped of class identity, agency, and labor value. Lefteri situates the refugee figure within what Marx would term the "lumpenproletariat", a group who are disconnected to structured labor, rendered economically irrelevant in the capitalist hierarchy. Refugees in the novel are displaced not only geographically but structurally, made dependent upon external aid and voluntary labor, thereby caught in a system that both assists and marginalizes (Clark 2021,26). Voluntary labor, often romanticized, becomes a double-edged mechanism. It sustains life but risks reinforcing class boundaries. In the novel, characters such as Lucy, a social worker who helps Nuri navigate the asylum process, represent this paradox. She provides emotional and legal support, yet the power imbalance remains evident, "Lucy Fisher is waiting for me… 'Please,' she says, 'don't lose hope. That's the thing.." (Lefteri 2019, 185). This moment exemplifies how despite noble intentions, voluntary aid often operates within hierarchical structures, where the volunteer possesses cultural capital and socio-economic privilege and the refugee remains at the mercy of systems they cannot influence. However, Lefteri also offers a counter-capitalist model of labor. One grounded not in productivity, wage exchange, or profit, but in empathy, healing, and solidarity. A central example is Nuri's spontaneous effort to teach a refugee boy about bees using small models in a shelter garden, "Where there are bees there are flowers, and where there are flowers there is new life and hope" (Lefteri 2019, 26) Here, teaching becomes an act of emotional reconstruction, not institutional instruction. It emerges organically from the shared experience of loss and exile. Education in this context defies commodification. It is a relational practice, not a service to be bought or sold (Suffolk Libraries n.d, 14). From a Marxist standpoint, this type of voluntary educational labor stands outside the formal economy, thus potentially subverting capitalist models of value. It echoes Lenin's and Trotsky's revolutionary visions of education as a

vehicle for collective consciousness and liberation, not merely institutionalized knowledge, but practical, ideological, and emotionally responsive engagement with life (Mahmoud 2019, 31). Lefteri frames this throughout her novel by showing how language lessons in refugee camps, storytelling, and acts of cultural memory become tools for human resilience. Yet, a deeper Marxist critique urges caution; while informal education and voluntary aid may be noble, the novel does not obscure the inequities that enable such dynamics. The ability to volunteer presupposes a level of economic stability, free time, and institutional support. Moreover, the commodification of education is critiqued implicitly throughout the narrative. In a world where knowledge often correlates with economic power, Lefteri posits an alternative model. One rooted in experience, compassion, and shared trauma. When Afra, who had gone blind from trauma, begins painting again, her act of expression is not commercial but existential. On this occasion, Nuri reflects "When she painted, she made a mess. And if Sami was painting too, it was even worse, as though they had shaken loaded brushes at the room." (Lefteri, 2019, 19). Such kinds of training and education are regarded as 'regeneration', not indoctrination; a return to meaning and expression through non-capitalist forms of labor and creativity. Ultimately, *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* challenges and enriches Marxist paradigms by foregrounding labor that is unpaid, unsystematic, and deeply human. Lefteri critiques the dehumanizing effects of capitalism on displaced populations while also presenting acts of voluntary labor and informal education as revolutionary gestures. These are not grand political movements but quiet resistances to the commodification of life, knowledge, and human dignity. In this way, the novel fulfills what Marx called the role of art; not merely to interpret the world, but to change it. Lefteri's work invites the reader to rethink education as more than a state service. It is a moral imperative, a collective responsibility, and perhaps, in the darkest of times, the last refuge of humanity.

4. Discussion

4.1 Treatment of Radical Educational Ideals

Christy Lefteri's *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* (2019) presents more than a fictional narrative of displacement; it embodies a literary engagement with radical philosophies concerning education and social justice. On the experience of 'voluntary labor', she comments "In the summer of 2016, and again in 2017, I found myself in Athens, working as a volunteer in a refugee center… *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* is a work of fiction. But Nuri and Afra developed in my heart and mind as a result of every step I took beside the children and the families who made it to Greece" (383-384). Particularly those which are articulated by Leon Trotsky and Vladimir Lenin. Through its depiction of refugee experiences, informal learning, and the transformative power of voluntary labor, the novel effectively dramatizes the potential for education to act as a liberatory force outside traditional institutional frameworks. In doing so, it resonates with and recontextualizes the revolutionary ideals of Trotsky and Lenin for contemporary humanitarian crises. Lefteri's treatment of education in the novel aligns closely with Trotsky's view that literature and education should address real-world problems and contribute to human liberation. Trotsky advocated for educational practices that do not simply transmit knowledge, but that awaken critical consciousness and social responsibility. In *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*, these principles are embedded in the narrative structure and thematic development. For instance, Nuri and Afra encounter not only violence and loss but also moments of learning and resilience that occur outside the confines of formal education. One such moment occurs when Nuri helps a young refugee boy in the camp understand bees, telling him, "where there are bees there are flowers, and wherever there are flowers there is new life and hope". The boy responds with hope, "Then maybe we can too" (233). This exchange reflects how education emerges from shared human experience, storytelling, and connection. Embodying Trotsky's vision of critical, empathetic education (Odabaşı 2021, 25). The novel's emphasis on voluntary labor, especially in refugee support contexts, further reinforces Trotsky's educational ideals. Lefteri herself volunteered as an English teacher in refugee camps in Athens, and this firsthand experience informs the novel's portrayal of grassroots educational efforts. These include language instruction, psychosocial support, and orientation services that are not mandated by any institution but arise organically from human solidarity. A poignant moment which is reflected when Nuri recalls, "The bees were an ideal society, a small paradise among chaos" (12). In this quote, Lefteri may refer to herself via Nuri's voice. Metaphorically, she regards herself as a bee, which does a voluntary labor despite the "chaos" of migration waves which strikes the commonwealth countries. She manages to create "a small paradise" and gives birth to her emotional novel in the midst of suffering and meditation. In his book, *The History of Russian Revolution* (2008), Trotsky specifies that "We seek to uncover behind the events changes in the collective consciousness. We reject wholesale references to the 'spontaneity' of the movement, references which in most cases explain nothing and teach nobody. Revolutions take place according to certain laws. … the changes in mass consciousness are not

accidental, but are subject to an objective necessity…" (123). Such scenes echo Trotsky's belief that radical change emerges through collective, horizontal interactions rather than top-down reform.Vladimir Lenin's idea that literature should serve the working class and reflect the realities of marginalized groups finds powerful expression in Lefteri's treatment of refugees. While Lenin framed this within the context of class struggle, Lefteri expands this notion to include displaced populations, effectively portraying refugees as a modern, vulnerable class striving for survival and dignity. Lefteri's characters are not passive victims; rather, they actively seek knowledge and self-reliance, despite being denied access to basic rights and formal education systems (Caruth, 1996). As Nuri records, "I was tired of being locked up in the shop, and my father was eager for me to learn as much as possible," (Lefteri, 2019, 134). This illustrates Lenin's principle that the oppressed must become their own educators when institutional structures exclude them (Clark 2021, 29). The volunteer education and autodidactic learning are evident in the novel's focus on language learning and adaptation. In a refugee camp in Greece, Nuri helps fellow refugees understand signs and directions, "I went into the cafe. … She had learnt a bit of all three languages" (Lfteri, 2019, 111). These moments highlight how informal, improvisational education becomes a lifeline, a means of survival, empowerment, and restoration Additionally, the novel challenges the commodification of education by presenting voluntary labor as an antithesis to profit-driven systems. The refugee camps in *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* are spaces where educational and psychological support are offered freely, not sold as services. Lefteri critiques neoliberal educational models through characters like Lucy, who helps navigate organization not as a paid official, but as someone motivated by ethical responsibility, "There is a lightness about Lucy Fisher that I like. She is proud of herself for keeping things in order." (Lefteri, 2019, 210). Such depictions position voluntary labor as a form of political resistance against systems that monetize education and reduce aid to technical checklists. (Odabaşı, 2021, 31)In summary, *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* treats the revolutionary educational ideas of Trotsky and Lenin not in abstract or theoretical terms, but through the lived realities of refugee life. The novel frames voluntary labor as a vehicle for educational regeneration, presenting informal, compassionate, and empowering teaching as central to both individual healing and collective resilience. Through this, Lefteri invites the reader to reconsider education not only as an institutional responsibility but as a moral imperative rooted in solidarity and transformation. (Ali, 2021, 48)

4.2 Educational Regeneration in Refugee Context

Christy Lefteri's *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* presents a narrative in which voluntary labor, particularly acts of care and informal education, plays a transformative role in the protagonists' journey toward psychological regeneration and personal rediscovery. While the characters do not participate in formal educational settings, their experiences demonstrate how learning, emotional, relational, and expressive occurs in fragmented, informal, and often volunteer-supported spaces, especially among refugees (Markos, 2017, 61).

1. Physical and Psychological Transformation as Informal Learning

The physical deterioration of both Nuri and Afra expressed in their changed appearances, lack of hygiene, and exhaustion mirrors their emotional unraveling. Yet these visible signs of decline also signal the absence of structured support systems, including education and healthcare, which are traditionally guaranteed by the state but in refugee contexts are often replaced by volunteer-run efforts (Osborne, 2020, 23).The transformation of Nuri and Afra is also educational in nature, though not in the institutional sense. The journey forces them to unlearn their prior understanding of safety, family, and identity and to relearn how to communicate, cope, and relate in a world reshaped by war and displacement. For example, Afra's trauma-induced silence is eventually disrupted not by therapy or formal schooling, but by a moment of creative expression facilitated by Nuri, who gifts her paper and coloring pencils. Tools that become catalysts for healing. This act mirrors the work of volunteers who use art therapy, drama, or storytelling in camps to promote non-verbal forms of education and psychological recovery (Ali, 2021, 51).

2. Voluntary Care as Educational Regeneration

Nuri becomes both caregiver and emotional educator. As Afra's dependence on him increases, he must learn and teach simultaneously. Learning how to guide her through new environments, cope with her blindness, and manage his own increased trauma, while also educating her (and himself) emotionally through care, routine, and dialogue. These survival skills are not innate but are acquired slowly, painfully, and often in informal communities shaped by solidarity and volunteer assistance (Davies, 2018, 68)Such circumstances reflect how voluntary labor can act as an educational force, cultivating empathy, resilience, and interpersonal competence among traumatized

individuals. This is particularly evident in refugee settings, where community members or volunteers often step in to rebuild cognitive and emotional capacities disrupted by war (Clark, 2021, 32).

3. Psychological Healing Through Expressive Practice

Afra's re-engagement with drawing, despite her blindness, marks a critical pedagogical moment in the novel. It is a form of self-directed, nonlinguistic learning that reestablishes her connection with memory, identity, and grief. Drawing here is not mere therapy but a process of internal educational regeneration of reawakening the self that trauma fragmented. Such moments parallel initiatives led by volunteers in real-world refugee camps, where creative expression is used to stimulate emotional literacy and narrative reconstruction, especially for those who cannot or will not speak (Clark, 2021, 35).As Balaev (2008) notes, trauma recovery often transcends verbal expression. Volunteer-driven arts and literacy programs respond to this by offering alternative educational modalities that restore dignity and agency. In this sense, Afra's drawing is both a coping mechanism and a subtle educational act, reconnecting her with her pre-trauma identity and suggesting that education, broadly defined, can emerge even in the darkest moments (Davies, 2018, 22).

4. Shared Spaces and Communal Learning

Upon arriving in Athens and later in the UK, Nuri and Afra are placed in spaces like camps and temporary accommodations sites often maintained or supplemented by volunteers. These spaces become environments of informal learning and social education where shared experiences create a communal consciousness. The couple's encounters with other refugees enable a process of relational education. They begin to understand their trauma not as isolated but as collective, part of a broader migratory suffering (Gibadullina, 2021, 108).

This shared trauma enables a form of social regeneration, where storytelling, listening, and cohabitation become educational tools. Voluntary labor is essential here, not only in providing food, shelter, and legal support, but in creating spaces where narrative exchange and psychological rehabilitation can occur.

4.3 Voluntary Labor

Voluntary labor, often defined as unpaid work carried out by individuals for the benefit of others or the broader community, emerges in *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* not merely as an act of charity, but as a crucial form of social intervention that fills the gaps left by institutional systems. Lefteri's novel is shaped by her own experiences as a volunteer English teacher in a refugee center in Athens, reflects on the transformative power of human engagement outside formal structures. Through the lives of displaced individuals, particularly Nuri and Afra, the text underscores the value of compassion, empathy, and service in spaces where official systems often fall short (Harflett, 2015, 64).In the novel, voluntary labor is depicted as a counter-narrative to the institutional detachment commonly found in state-run refugee programs. Unlike impersonal procedures and legal frameworks that often dehumanize asylum seekers, the voluntary efforts portrayed in the novel are grounded in relational care and personal commitment. Volunteers appear as educators, therapists, translators, and simply as listeners. Their roles are vital in helping refugees recover from the trauma of war and displacement. These interactions humanize the refugee experience and suggest that informal care structures, while limited, are often more impactful than formal interventions in restoring dignity and agency (Hardill, 2013, 106).One of the most poignant examples of voluntary labor occurs through Lefteri's own fictional lens, shaped by her real-life teaching of English to refugees. The novel's portrayal of learning is closely tied to healing. Nuri's gradual reclaiming of narrative voice and Afra's re-engagement with the visual world both symbolize the educational and emotional rehabilitation made possible by supportive, informal encounters. These subtle forms of education are facilitated by volunteers, do not rely on institutional curricula but instead emerge organically through conversation, storytelling, and shared experience. Therefore, the novel expands the definition of education to include psychosocial and existential dimensions, enabled by voluntary labor (Khadzhialiev, 2016, 83).Furthermore, the novel suggests that voluntary labor is inherently political, even if it appears apolitical on the surface. The act of choosing to help refugees outside the obligations volunteers as actors in a moral and ethical struggle. This becomes particularly relevant when viewed through the lens of global inequality: the volunteers often come from more stable backgrounds and use their relative privilege to offer assistance. While this dynamic can be critiqued, Lefteri's narrative focuses instead on the sincerity of human connection and the way such acts, however small, can influence lives (Dean, 2021, 45).Yet, the text also invites reflection on the limitations of voluntary labor. While it celebrates the emotional and educational support provided by volunteers, it also acknowledges that these efforts are not systemic solutions. The novel does not propose voluntary labor as a replacement for formal structures but highlights it as a necessary supplement—especially in situations where official support systems are under-resourced, overwhelmed, or

indifferent. Through this dual lens, voluntary labor is positioned as both a vital lifeline and a reminder of institutional failure. (Papazyan, 2018,51)In summary, *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* offers a nuanced exploration of voluntary labor as an essential form of human solidarity in the context of refugee crises. It frames voluntary work not as charity, but as an act of restorative justice. One that contributes significantly to the personal and educational regeneration of those who have been marginalized by conflict and displacement. By portraying volunteers as empathetic facilitators of healing and learning, Lefteri's novel challenges readers to consider the broader implications of civic responsibility, informal education, and the moral power of giving one's time in service of others (Markos, 2017, 12).

Conclusion

Christy Lefteri's *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* offers more than a narrative of displacement. It serves as a literary intervention into the socio-political discourses of class, education, and humanitarian labor. Viewed through a Marxist pedagogical lens, the novel reimagines education as a liberatory force, grounded in empathy, informal exchange, and human solidarity rather than institutional authority or economic gain. Drawing upon the revolutionary ideals of Trotsky and Lenin, Lefteri illustrates how voluntary labor in refugee contexts can function as both resistance to capitalist commodification and as a catalyst for personal and communal regeneration.

The novel resists portraying refugees as passive victims; instead, it elevates their pursuit of knowledge and resilience through shared experiences, storytelling, and language acquisition. By doing so, Lefteri challenges prevailing hierarchies and reframes education as an act of political agency. Voluntary labor emerges not merely as charity, but as a conscious act of moral and ideological resistance. It offers healing, dignity, inspiration, and empowerment to those displaced by war and economic injustice

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