

**THE FICTION OF ELIF SHAFAK: A BUTLERIAN
STUDY**

Thesis Submitted for the Award of the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

English

By

Alima Mudasir

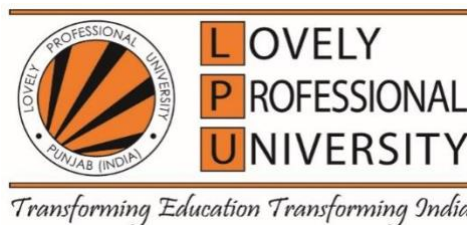
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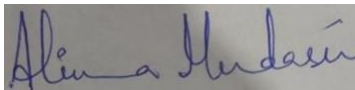


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2026

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I, hereby declare that the presented work in the thesis entitled “The Fiction of Elif Shafak: A Butlerian Study” in fulfilment of my degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph. D.)** is the outcome of research work carried out by me under the supervision of Dr. Ishfaq Ahmad Trambo, working as Assistant Professor, in the Centre for Professional Enhancement of Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India. In keeping with the general practice of reporting scientific observations, due acknowledgments have been made whenever the work described here has been based on the findings of another investigator. This work has not been submitted in part or whole to any other University or Institute for the award of any degree.



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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the work reported in the Ph. D. thesis entitled “The Fiction of Elif Shafak: A Butlerian Study” submitted in fulfillment of the requirement for the award of degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)** in the Department of English, is a research work carried out by Alima Mudasir, 42000436 is bonafide record of her original work carried out under my supervision and that no part of thesis has been submitted for any other degree, diploma or equivalent course.



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ABSTRACT

In the modern world, gender studies is becoming increasingly important in shedding light on the enduring gender inequality and discrimination ingrained in sociocultural structures. This multidisciplinary field challenges the historical, cultural, and religious structures that uphold inflexible gender roles in addition to analysing how gender is created and maintained. Frequently referred to as a mirror of society, literature is a potent medium for reflecting and critiquing such concerns. Elif Shafak's nuanced handling of complex gender relations and marginalized identities within the framework of Turkish culture sets her apart among modern literary voices. From social exclusion to body politics, and from gender performativity to heteronormativity, her literature daringly tackles these topics.

Although Shafak's work has been studied from a variety of feminist perspectives in the past, there is still a clear lack of research specifically looking at her fiction through the prism of Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity. By providing a theoretical and critical analysis of a few of Shafak's works using Butlerian poststructuralist ideas, the current study seeks to close that gap. In Turkish patriarchal society, where people are expected to exhibit and act in ways that are judged acceptable by hegemonic institutions, the study focuses especially on prescribed gender roles. Additionally, the goal of this study is to examine how Shafak's narratives generate, contest, and perform gendered identities.

The Gaze published in 1999, *The Bastard of Istanbul* in 2006, *The Forty Rules of Love* in 2009, *Honour* in 2012, and *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World* in 2019 are among the works chosen for this qualitative study. This research is relevant from a sociological and psychological standpoint. On the sociological level, it explains how conservative societies' power structures operate, and on the psychological level, it investigates how performative gender norms affect people's identities on an interior level.

Judith Butler transformed feminist theory by viewing gender as a performative act—a sequence of stylized repetitions governed by cultural norms—rather than an intrinsic identity. Butler compares gender to a part in a play that has been written by cultural and historical organizations. Despite being frequently seen as natural, these

behaviours and exchanges are actually highly culturally accepted performances. As a result, gender identity fluctuates over time and across cultures and is unstable, fluid, and context-dependent. Butler maintains that gender roles are performed in a way that perpetuates the gender structures that society considers "normal." Complicit in the perpetuation of gender hierarchies is the person who fulfills these tasks in accordance with social norms.

These Butlerian concepts are strongly reflected in Shafak's fiction. Her characters frequently reinforce hegemonic power structures by acting out gender stereotypes that are influenced by Turkish religious, cultural, and historical conventions. Shafak does, however, also include characters in her books who are rebellious and resistant—people who don't follow the socially prescribed paths. The Butlerian agency that questions the alleged naturalness of gender binary thinking is represented by these characters: housewives, sex workers, obese women, transgender individuals, and even men with disabilities. Shafak illustrates how society punishes or shuns people who don't fit the mould by using their tales. Shafak exposes the price of nonconformity in a culture where religious doctrine and patriarchal authority rule the matrix of intelligibility through these characters.

The research's third chapter explores Butlerian agency in Shafak's books, emphasizing how people challenge and work around power dynamics. Butler characterizes agency as a resisting repetition—a reluctance to follow gender norms—rather than complete autonomy. In situations where deviance from religious and cultural norms is met with social and frequently violent repercussions, Shafak's characters exhibit varied degrees of agency. According to Butler's perspective, the research demonstrates that although subversion gives rise to agency, it is nonetheless limited by the widespread influence of power. The chapter thus demonstrates how Shafak's fiction provides narratives of resistance and resiliency while also serving as a critique of gender-based subjugation.

The concept of Butler's "matrix of heterosexuality," which refers to the discursive and social structure that upholds the binary conception of sex and gender, is then examined in Chapter 4. Any divergence from heterosexuality is seen as deviant in this matrix, which views it as the sole acceptable type of desire. By presenting

characters who do not fit within the male-female heterosexual dichotomy, this chapter illustrates how Shafak challenges heteronormativity. Shafak illustrates how these people are routinely suppressed or made invisible. Shafak demonstrates how the cultural rejection of alternative sexualities sustains social exclusion and violence, especially in the context of conservative Turkish society where gender roles are inflexibly defined by religion and patriarchy. In addition, this chapter places Shafak's fiction in the context of Turkish feminism and criticisms of masculinity, highlighting the ways in which her works challenge conventional gender stereotypes and advance a more inclusive conception of identity.

By examining the performance of intelligibility, another key idea in Butler's theory, Chapter Five expands on these discoveries. Butler argues that people are only seen as comprehensible when they play their gender in accordance with prevailing conventions. Transgender people, queer bodies, and those with ambiguous gender performances are among those who are stigmatized and rendered incomprehensible for deviating from this normativity. This chapter examines the ways in which Shafak challenges this regulatory structure through her characters. The psychological anguish, social alienation, and structural brutality experienced by those who do not fit into understandable gender scripts are shown in her literature. Shafak criticizes not just the outside organizations that uphold these standards but also how her characters internalize them. As Butler argues that subjectivity is always created through submission to power, the tension between one's own identity and public performance emerges as a major theme.

The chapter also emphasizes how Turkish society inhibits divergence and maintains rigid binaries due to its collectivistic orientation and strong religious and familial structures. Shafak's tales demonstrate how religious morality, community repute, and family honour are used as weapons to uphold gender policing and hegemonic masculinity. The expression of genuine or fluid gender identities is severely limited by these deeply embedded oppressive structures. Shafak nevertheless keeps showing characters who defy the matrix of intelligibility and assert their agency in subversive ways.

In summary, this study demonstrates the strong Butlerian influence in Elif Shafak's fictional world. Shafak reflects Butler's main thesis that gender is a performative, fluid construct rather than a fixed identity through her depictions of minority identities, gender non-conforming people, and socio-religious critiques. Shafak challenges the validity of fixed identities and emphasizes the necessity of gender emancipation by highlighting both resistance and conformity within gender norms. The study contributes to the broader area of gender studies by crossing poststructuralist feminism with current Turkish literature and by expanding the debate on how literature may function as a site of resistance and transformation. Additionally, it highlights the universal applicability of Judith Butler's theoretical framework in comprehending gender, power, and identity across cultural boundaries and creates new opportunities for future research on performativity in non-Western literatures.

The underrepresented experiences of women negotiating patriarchal standards in both public and private settings are brought to light by this study. Through literary and cultural analysis, it emphasizes how urgently awareness, discussion, and structural change are needed to safeguard and strengthen women's voices in historically oppressive settings.

Research Objectives

The research aims to meet the following objectives by critically analysing the selected novels of Elif Shafak through the lens of the Theory of Gender Performativity.

The present research has the following objectives:

- To critically analyse the theoretical ideas of Judith Butler

- To study the fiction of Elif Shafak in the light of Butlerian ideology

- To examine the situations and the experiences of the characters in the light of theoretical perspectives in the fiction

- To apply Butler's view of post-structuralism on Elif Shafak's fiction

Statement of Purpose

This study aims to conduct a thorough feministic analysis of five of Elif Shafak's novels, looking at how the author depicts the intricacies of gender, identity, and marginalization in the context of modern-day Turkey's sociopolitical environment. The study examines Shafak's storytelling techniques in expressing the underrepresented perspectives of women and other marginalized groups who live on the outskirts of society through a critical reading of these texts. This study attempts to demonstrate how Shafak's literature subverts prevailing gender conventions and creates forums for resistance and discussion by examining themes including patriarchy, trauma, body politics, spirituality, and transgression. The goal is to contribute to the worldwide understanding of gendered identities in culturally complicated circumstances and to highlight Shafak's influence on feminist discourse in contemporary Turkish literature.

Hypothesis

According to this study, a few of Elif Shafak's novels serve as literary platforms for protesting against gendered oppression and long-standing patriarchal systems in Turkish society. In addition to exposing the complexity of womanhood, Shafak also challenges the social and cultural structures that silence women through her nuanced depictions of female protagonists, underrepresented voices, and taboo topics like honour, sexuality, mental health, and mysticism. Her stories combine political and personal elements, providing a forum for the development of multiple identities and feminist awareness. Her writings transcend national and ideological borders by fusing aspects of Sufism, memory, and transnationalism, establishing literature as a transformative medium for social change and gender equality.

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First and foremost, I want to thank the All-Powerful God for his strength, endurance, and direction during this study journey. This project would not have been feasible without God's grace and kindness. I thank God for giving me the chance and the intuition that prompted me to pursue this academic endeavour.

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Introduction

“The Fiction of Elif Shafak: A Butlerian Study” is a qualitative investigation that applies the theoretical framework of ‘Gender Performativity,’ as proposed by American philosopher Judith Butler, to a selection of Elif Shafak's fictional works. The primary objective of this study is to examine the implicit portrayal and construction of gender in Shafak's novels. The study aims to reveal Shafak's thoughts and viewpoints on gender identities by examining various characters from her books. Known as one of the most significant writers to emerge from Turkey, Elif Shafak has consistently addressed themes of marginalization and gender, particularly those affecting minority groups. According to this study, her work is a valuable resource for understanding current gender discourses from a Butlerian perspective. She is so progressive and humanitarian in her outlook that she did not even budge to speak openly about political issues like the Armenian genocide in her novel *The Bastard of Istanbul* which was then banned in Turkey. She was prosecuted and even imprisoned for this incident which eventually led her to leaving her native country and migrating to The United Kingdom. Shafak’s works explore many themes like multiculturalism, cultural liminality, patriarchy, passivity of women, subjectivity of men and many more. It seems that there has not been any study conducted on Shafak in the context of Butler’s theory of gender performativity. This study tries to uncover new vistas of knowledge for further studies from this point of view for the overall benefit of humanity.

To investigate Elif Shafak's views on gender politics, gender performativity, and the formation of gender identities, this study conducts a thorough examination of a few of her fictional works. The novels chosen for in-depth research include *The Gaze*, *The Bastard of Istanbul*, *The Forty Rules of Love*, *Honour* and *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in this Strange World*. The theoretical context for this study is Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, which offers a critical prism through which Shafak's themes, characters, and narrative techniques are examined and evaluated. Shafak's characters offer a rich canvas for exploring gender and identity-related topics, frequently questioning accepted wisdom and emphasizing the perspectives of underrepresented groups. Shafak is a prolific author who writes fiction and non-

fiction in Turkish and English. Her works have been translated into about fifty languages, demonstrating her literary influence on a global scale.

The present study tries to explore the fictional world created by Shafak through her novels and her characters offer a wide range of study into gender identities and gender construction and to analyse the societal roles assigned to men and women in patriarchal Turkish society where only binary system of gender is considered normal and anything outside this matrix is considered a threat to the Muslim culture of Turkey. Though many of her novels are set outside Turkey but most of her characters are strongly knit into conservative Muslim and Turkish culture. Even if her characters are living in the western part of the globe, they still seem to experience a sense of alienation because of the changes in their habitat and the pressure and pulls of Turkish culture. The focus of Shafak's works is how intricacies of gender performativity and gendered identities give rise to gendered power which ultimately sows the seeds for discrimination, prejudice and exploitation of one gender against the other. She highlights the prejudices prevalent in Turkish society which may be called socio-culturally biased because of its gender role assignments and gender role expectations. Elif Shafak constructs a fictitious world in her works to critically define the opinions, actions, and conversations of her characters. She is a superb storyteller who blends Eastern and Western storytelling traditions with ease. Shafak holds a strong belief that it is this art of storytelling that will help in unsettling the cultural ghettos. She upholds that one should respect and love not only one's own culture but also other cultures.

Shafak upholds a feminist poststructuralist stance and creates the situations and experiences in her works to prove her point. Feminist poststructuralism posits that a relationship exists between subjectivity, language, social institutions, power, and agency (Weedon). When we study Shafak's works minutely it seems that she is exploring the issues of gender identity and gender performativity. She comes across as a champion of not only women's issues but also advocates gender equality in totality without any bias towards other genders like transgenders, gays, lesbians, LGBTQ etc. She is equally concerned about the well-being of marginalised in the society. Shafak has a craftsmanship of modelling various characters as protagonists which marks her

again as a poststructuralist writer. Gender essentialism, the idea that gender is a fixed, biologically determined quality, is contested by Elif Shafak in her writings. Her writings address issues like patriarchy and the systematic prejudice women experience, but they do so through the prism of idealized societal reality. In addition to being works of art, Shafak's stories are also tools for societal criticism. She draws attention to the urgent problems that lead to a larger societal catastrophe by illustrating the ingrained injustices in society. Shafak thus takes on the role of a social critic, employing her fiction to elicit reflection and suggest avenues for societal change.

Like Shafak American philosopher Judith Butler also challenges the theory of gender essentialism and postulates the theory of gender performativity in her 1990 book titled *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Butler in her theory posits that gender is not something innate and fixed, rather it is performative in nature. According to this theory gender is a social and cultural construct that gets constructed because of the language, actions and behaviours of the individuals (Lorber). Butler believes that gender is not simply a noun rather she contends that gender is a verb. Because it aims to undermine the dominant essentialist conceptions of gender, Judith Butler's position on gender is fundamentally subversive. Butler argues that when people act out gender roles in line with social expectations, they are actively reinforcing cultural norms rather than merely adhering to them. According to her theory of gender performativity, gender is a construct that is continuously created and reproduced via routine acts, behaviours, and interactions rather than an innate or stable identity (Hey). Butler promotes a more flexible view of gender as a continuum by contesting the binary division of gender into male and female. This creates room for a variety of identity expressions that go beyond conventional dichotomies.

Butler's theory of gender performativity had a significant impact on gender studies and brought a new insight into the concepts of gender and identity. Butler's views on gender performativity proclaim her as a feminist poststructuralist. Butler has arrived at her theory by taking inspiration from Derrida, Lacan and Foucault. Butler believes that it is society that assigns bodies with gender. This gender assignation is in tandem with the laws and practices of the society. Butler claims that gender is an

identity constructed over time by a stylised repetition of actions. A body becomes its gender through “historical sedimentation” of time so that the body thinks that its gender is natural. Only such bodies are welcome that have cultural and societal validations. The law of the society is absolute and upholds the power. Any deviation or abnormality is looked at with suspicion and is a threat to the existing scriptures and rituals of the society. Therefore, deviants are often dealt with strictly and sometimes with violence. Bodies become intelligible by taking the genders assigned to them by the existing scriptures and rituals of the society and this process of gender assignation is called gender intelligibility. Butler believes that there is a connection between compulsory heterosexuality, upheld by the law of the society, and the gender intelligibility which is called as the matrix of intelligibility. Butler challenges the basic contention of gender and says that gender is only real when it is acted.

Tracing the history of gender studies and arriving at Judith Butler’s theory of ‘Gender Performativity’, this research examines Butler’s theory of ‘Gender Performativity’ and then applies the main concepts drawn from the said theory to Elif Shafak’s selected novels. This study also tries to comprehend the affinities between the main concepts of ‘Gender Performativity’ and Elif Shafak’s idea of gender identity, gender construction and gender performativity. The present thesis is divided into five chapters.

Chapter one, titled “Gender Performativity: An Introduction,” first traces the development of gender studies and then discusses Judith Butler's theory of ‘Gender Performativity’. Butler, in her 1988 essay “Performative Acts and Gender Construction: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” argues that gender is performative, a claim she later elaborated in her books *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* and *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*. Butler, while framing her theory of gender performativity, had taken cue from such poststructuralist philosophers like Foucault, Derrida, Wittig, Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva. Such influences are also studied to better understand Butler’s theory of gender performativity and to evaluate the extent to which Butler is indebted to these poststructuralist thinkers. The chapter also tries to discuss main ideas and components of Butler’s theory of gender performativity. The chapter tries to derive the main ideas

and components of the theory and examines them one by one. The main aim of this chapter is to examine and explore the theory of gender performativity and to sum up Butler's notion of gender performativity. A critique of the gender performativity is also done in this chapter towards the end and Elif Shafak as a writer concerned with the issues and problems of gender is discussed. Therefore, this research tries to locate Shafak in the circular rein of Butler's theory of performativity.

Chapter two titled, "Patriarchal Discourse and Gender Performativity in Elif Shafak's Fiction" traces the origin of the term 'masculine signifying economy' and gives full credit to French feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray for inventing the term. The said term refers to a system of ordinance in vogue in societies where masculinity is levelled at the top and femininity is given second preference and to talk of other genders in such a society is a taboo. For such societies anyone outside male and female circle does not exist. This kind of mentality can nurture gender inequality, ill will, unnecessary competition, jealousy and prejudiced mindset which may hamper the overall progress of such societies.

The present chapter examines Butler's interpretation of the said term and tries to study how Butler's stand on the term 'masculine signifying economy' is slightly different from Luce Irigaray. Luce Irigaray believes that women have been since ages discriminated by language and its grammar. Butler believes that the masculine in 'signifying economy' is a closed circle wherein no interaction can take place between masculine and feminine since "plane of content" and "plane of expression" are both held by masculine (*Bodies That Matter*). Butler invariably differs from Luce Irigaray and believes that gender discrimination is not only a result of a set of symbols or meanings but also is an outcome of a set of stylised performative actions.

Butler asserts that in order to shake the foundations of masculine signifying economy one has to first understand and accept the fact that gender identity is a social and cultural construct and also give due regard to the important role played by the stylised repetition of actions in the construction of gender identity. For Butler masculine signifying economy is performative and indirect which can only be invalidated by resistance and change rather than by being passive spectators. This chapter highlights Butler's contention that the root cause of gender inequality is that

society only validates binary categorisation of gender. Further in this chapter Elif Shafak's selected works of fiction are taken one on one and explored against the backdrop of the concept of masculine signifying economy. The chapter examines all the selected novels with an aim to highlight Elif Shafak's position with respect to the concept of masculine signifying economy. The main aim of this chapter is to highlight Shafak's belief that masculine signifying economy is a result of a relationship between the traditional system of values and the repeated practices and interactions of the genders in the society.

This chapter aims to examine how Elif Shafak challenges conventional gender norms that uphold structural gender inequality in society through the variety of her characters and topics. Shafak shows how other genders are demoted to inferior or marginalized positions while masculinity is frequently placed at the top of societal structures. Her stories demonstrate that not only are non-masculine genders seen as inferior, but that everyone who doesn't fit the expected gender roles is regarded with suspicion and social rejection. The chapter also looks at how this long-standing structure, which has its roots in a masculine signifying economy, supports the continued existence of inequality and discrimination against women.

Chapter three titled "Butlerian Agency in Shafak's Novels" draws on Butler's notion of agency and power. This chapter first looks at Judith Butler's theory of power and agency before using these theoretical understandings to analyse a few of Elif Shafak's fictional works. With Butler's framework of agency and power acting as the main interpretive lens, each of the selected novels is examined separately. The chapter makes the case that, according to Butler, agency is an extension of performativity—the subject's first performance is what starts the cycle of stylized repetition, which in turn enacts performativity. Butler defines agency as the intentional and continuous process of creating one's identity through deliberate opposition to hegemonic discourses, religious rituals, traditional norms, dominant power structures, and culturally imposed frameworks (*The Psychic Life of Power*). The chapter uses this viewpoint to show how Shafak's characters either exemplify or question these ideas of agency within their respective sociocultural contexts.

The chapter shows that Butler upholds a strong assumption that a body becomes an agent when its behaviour deviates from societal conventions but at the same time agency is not someone who is autonomous and free to choose its gender. The chapter tries to trace the origin of Butler's agency from the subject 'I' and Butler's strong belief that this 'I' takes part in power politics (*The Psychic Life of Power*). The present chapter highlights Butler's contention that power controls the agency and any act of resistance by agency is dealt with strictly and sometimes with violence.

This chapter provides a thorough examination of a few of Elif Shafak's books, emphasizing how Judith Butler conceptualizes power and agency. Butlerian ideas of agency, according to which identity is constantly created via opposition to prevailing power structures, are strongly supported by Shafak's stories. Colonial and patriarchal authority are the main sources of power in Shafak's imaginary world. Even those who live abroad are nonetheless subject to the customs, traditions, and traditions of their Turkish heritage, and many of her characters are from orthodox Muslim Turkish communities. Shafak highlights the intricate dynamics of power and resistance in diasporic and traditional contexts and challenges the sociopolitical limitations that create identity through these depictions.

With an emphasis on the consequences for female subjectivity in patriarchal settings, this chapter explores how Elif Shafak represents agency and power through her characters and themes. Shafak's essays highlight the need for the female body to actively challenge social norms and pursue its own elusive liberty. She frequently uses marginalized people who experience societal exclusion and oppression, such as housewives, transgender people, sex workers, overweight women, and physically diverse men—like dwarfs—to represent her conception of agency. Because they are situated outside of what society considers to be "normal," these people help to reveal the mechanisms of power and emphasize the importance of resistance in the quest for identity and selfhood (*Gender Trouble*).

This chapter also demonstrates how Elif Shafak gives her characters the freedom to act with intention and make thoughtful decisions in order to achieve economic, political, and cultural sovereignty. Shafak seems to share Judith Butler's

views on agency and power, especially when it comes to supporting resistance to repressive social systems. The chapter also looks at Shafak's claim that some actions, attitudes, and belief systems are actively shaped by society stereotypes, which serve as tools of power. Because they deny them agency and respect within the prevailing cultural discourse and reinforce discriminatory norms, these inflexible frameworks frequently put marginalized people at risk.

Chapter four titled “Matrix of Heterosexuality and Shafak” explains in detail Butler’s conception of matrix of heterosexuality. In her books *Gender Trouble*, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*, and *Undoing Gender*, Butler provides a general explanation of her performativity theory. The chapter tries to examine Butler’s definition of the concept of matrix of heterosexuality as a social system which holds a firm belief that there exist only two genders/sexes that is male and female. This belief system holds that for mutual benefit of the society; complementarity of the sexes is essential. Men can only be intimate with women and vice versa. This system has rigid scriptures and conventions for role assignments to men and women which can in no case be reversed and which has societal and political validation as well and therefore is considered normal. There is a hidden mechanism in the society for individuals who do not fit into the existing genders to either become invisible or become mute.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine how heteronormativity shapes and perpetuates gender norms across a range of gender identities. It also looks at Judith Butler's claim that people create their gender identities by acting in ways that conform to heteronormative norms to gain acceptance and respect from others. These behaviours’ performative quality upholds social norms, legitimizing some gender manifestations while marginalizing others. This chapter examines how Elif Shafak's characters negotiate, defy, or fit into these normative gender frameworks by critically analysing a few of her fictional works via the theoretical prism of Butler's concept of heteronormativity.

In order to support a critical evaluation of Elif Shafak's works, this chapter offers a succinct historical summary of feminism in Turkey and looks at a few chosen ideas about sexuality. It emphasizes how literature is a potent tool for bringing

attention to societal inequalities, especially those pertaining to gender and sexuality, in the setting of a strongly patriarchal Turkish society. The chapter emphasizes how Shafak's writings regularly address the experiences of marginalized groups, such as members of sexual and ethnic minorities, victims of patriarchal oppression, both men and women, and those with physical disabilities. Shafak's fiction provides a platform for concerns that are frequently difficult to express in public conversation ("The Politics of Fiction"). Her stories bravely address taboo topics like virginity tests, honour killings, rape, and incest, upending social norms and igniting critical discourse.

In Shafak's matrix of heteronormativity masculinity plays a pivotal role to shape the identity of women characters. The chapter highlights Shafak's belief that heteronormativity is responsible for viewing women as reproductive beings and beings to provide enjoyment to men or masculinity. Since Shafak's matrix of heteronormativity comprises of Turkish conservative society so the gendered behaviours that are performed by women are in accordance with Turkish cultural norms and any breach is subject to stigmatisation and social punishment.

Chapter five titled "The Performance of Intelligibility" examines Butler's concept of intelligible genders. According to Butler the intelligible genders are those genders whose identity and behaviour is proportional to the societal roles expected from that gender particularly regarding heteronormativity, sexual orientation and desire. Butler contents that acting one's gender as per the societal conventions does not safeguard that the individual had selected his favourite part. Butler says that a gender construction by enactment of a set of performative acts is not so simple, it is like converting a societal dream into societal reality along with all the hindrances, taboos, rituals and scriptures of the society.

This chapter supports Judith Butler's contention that gender and subjectivity stereotypes are performatively created rather than innate. Even the physical body, which is sometimes assumed to be the basis of binary sex, is a cultural site upon which society conventions enact the "drama" of gender, according to Butler, who questions the conventional binary distinction between sex and gender (*Gender Trouble*). Butler argues that gender is not a fixed identity but rather the result of

interactions between socially and culturally constructed individuals that are influenced by certain historical and contextual factors. The chapter expands on Butler's assertion that cultural, social, and political regimes—rather than any physiological or biological determinism—are the source of gendered binaries. Butler argues that breaking down inflexible gender norms allows for the formation of a variety of gender expressions, upending fixed identities and contesting the heteronormative framework that favours the binary idea of man and woman.

This chapter uses Judith Butler's idea of the performance of intelligibility to analyse a few of Elif Shafak's fiction pieces. A thorough analysis of each of Shafak's books reveals her viewpoints on the performative aspect of gender identification. According to Shafak, gender roles are created by the dynamic interplay between people and their sociocultural surroundings rather than being innate. At the same time, these formulations set normative standards for actions that are considered suitable for each gender. The chapter also emphasizes how Shafak's protagonists often struggle with religious, cultural, and familial demands to fit in with traditional gender conventions, highlighting the conflict between personal identity and socially enforced standards.

This chapter emphasizes how Judith Butler's concept of the matrix of intelligibility is extremely constrictive in a conservative society like Turkey. Only specific gender identities and manifestations are considered socially acceptable under this strict framework, while others are viewed as abnormal or incomprehensible. These limitations are exacerbated by the collectivistic value system that dominates Turkish society, which frequently leads to the repression of individual agency and voice. Through her collection of work, Shafak illuminates the ways that deeply ingrained social conventions, especially within the family, allow catastrophic experiences like rape and incest to be silenced. The victims suffer from emotional pain, psychological trauma, and long-term repercussions as a result of these violations, which are usually covered up in the sake of honour, family reputation, or religious propriety. The chapter also examines Shafak's argument that people in these civilizations have to deal with religious precepts that specify proper gender roles in addition to social and familial constraints. The capacity for genuine gender expression

is severely constrained by this confluence of social, familial, and religious factors, which serves to further the hegemonic structures that Shafak's fiction aims to challenge.

The main conclusions and insights from the current research study, which explores the relationship between Elif Shafak's fictional works and Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, are outlined in the conclusion. Butler's revolutionary contribution to the area of gender studies is fully acknowledged. By highlighting the fact that gender identity is a created phenomenon that is continuously produced and reinforced by stylized repetitions throughout time, rather than an innate or biological fact, her theory of performativity has completely changed our view of gender. The theoretical foundation of this study is Butler's poststructuralist feminist framework, which permits a critical examination of the sociocultural processes that influence gender norms and subjectivities.

Elif Shafak's literary intervention, which eloquently captures the hardships, daily realities, and suppressed traumas of excluded people in Turkish society, is equally important. Shafak highlights several types of gender-based oppression that frequently go unopposed within traditional socio-cultural frameworks, such as honour-based crimes, sexual assault, domestic violence, and religious rigidity, through her nuanced characters and multi-layered narratives. Her fiction turns into a potent vehicle for speaking up for those who cannot speak and challenging the unseen power structures that govern the lives of sexual minorities, women, and other oppressed groups.

The study confirms that Butler and Shafak have a feminist poststructuralist perspective despite working in separate academic fields. Both argue that gender is not set or biologically defined, but rather performative. Rather, it is created by repeated behaviours that become ingrained in culture over time and are perceived as intrinsic or natural. Collectively, these creations subvert hegemonic power systems and create room for critical resistance, alternative gender expressions, and societal change.

Chapter 1: Gender Performativity: An Introduction

The interdisciplinary area of gender studies examines the construction, representation, and experience of gender identity in social, cultural, political, and economic contexts (Woodward and Woodward). Gender studies expand the analytical lens to look at how privilege and oppression function within gendered institutions. It developed from women's studies, which focused on women's lives and viewpoints in scholarship. Along with other axes of identity and social location, such as race, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and disability, it examines how power is distributed through gender. Gender studies, which gained considerable disciplinary acceptance in the early 1990s, today offers critical frameworks for comprehending and contesting the normative systems that influence both social institutions and individual lives. A qualitative, interpretative, and theoretical research methodology has been adapted in this chapter based on close textual reading and conceptual analysis. This chapter critically analyses Butler's concept of gender performativity, traces its philosophical foundations, and establishes the theoretical lens, also employing a poststructuralist and feminist theoretical framework.

As a creative writer Elif Shafak presents the rich socio-cultural and religious distinctiveness of Turkish tradition with great sensibility. She always captures the western culture and its influence on her native culture in her works in a subtle manner. In doing so she aptly uses self-consciousness and experimental postmodern narrative modes of writing that transcends national and cultural boundaries. The works of Elif Shafak have been chosen for this study primarily because they have not been subjected to in-depth critical studies in the postmodern context. Full-length critical works solely about the works of Elif Shafak are not available to the best of the researcher's knowledge, and the published articles are also extremely limited. The available online resources such as articles, reviews, essays, interviews, documentaries, critical observations by other writers, and newspaper reports about Elif Shafak's life and works have been used as a supporting material to conduct the research. As few of research papers and articles are available on few of her works, these are taken for study as literature review.

Özlem Ögüt Yazıcıoğlu, and Ozlem Yazicioglu examine in their article “Who is the other? Melting in the pot in Elif Shafak’s *The Saint of Insipient Insanities* and *The Bastard of Istanbul*,” the themes of migrancy and transculturalism in both these novels. Analysing the characters in the fiction it discusses the concept of nation, ethnicity and identity which is the primary subjects of Elif Shafak’s novels. Both these novels are set in Istanbul and The United States the multicultural experiences of the characters and their mark upon their identities are witnessed.

Fatima Anjum and Ramzan, Muhammad bring out the correlation between the thirteen century Rumi’s world and twenty first century world of Cosmopolitan Ella and her writer friend Aziz. Universal spirituality and love is analysed as a mutual podium of unity and relation to the mankind in this work. Sufism and Sufis are being explored here. Unlike religion, Sufism dissolves all the clashes and brings out the theme of the novel that love is that centripetal force that can bind all of us together.

Alaa Walid Malak discusses the female anxiety and the experience of female characters in the novel *The Forty Rules of Love*. The study explores the strong and determined women of the novel and their struggle against the phenomenon of male dominance attempt to overcome their experience of anxiety of authorship despite all odds. They succeed to prove themselves as equal to men and emerge strong and intact.

Rasha Dayekh discusses the structure and narrative technique of Elif Shafak in the novel *The Forty Rules of Love*. The paper examines the effect of postmodern diversified techniques on the thematic concerns in the novel. The parallel narrative technique is used to show the relevance of Rumi’s philosophy of love on the twenty first century cosmopolitan characters. Their dialectical relationship is also explored in the article. The employment of novel within a novel helps to blend the different cultures and centuries. The Pastiche elements in the novel provide the holistic view of the story. Intertextual references of Rumi’s poetry and use of dreams makes the novel more decorative.

Gazala Gayas analyses the novel *Honour* from feminist point of view. She discusses the different problems of female characters such as discrimination, violence and their struggle for existence in the male dominant society. She tries to present the

plight of these characters by taking into consideration the concept of Gender Trouble, Feminism and Subversion of Identity by Judith Butler and *The Second Sex* by Simone De Beauvoir. Sonika Sethi examines the spirituality presented in the novels *Three Daughters of Eve* and *The Forty Rules of Love*. The study focuses on the projection of faith in both these novels through the love of mankind.

Moh. Zaimil Alivin, and Miftahul Huda analyse the theme of identity and its relation to social remembrance in multicultural society. The conflicting identities of Turks and Armenians in the novel have been viewed by employing the theory of identity construction proposed by Castells. Elena Furlanetto portrays the multiethnic Turkish culture by blending the past with the present. The work presents a detailed analysis of the literary ties of these Turkish origin writers to The United States.

Aysegul Turan explores the relationship among space, memory and culture in Elif Shafak's novel *The Flea Palace* by closely examining the apartment buildings and their residents as a microcosmic representation of Turkey. It depicts how the architecture continues to exert a direct impact on the senses and feelings of the characters in the novel. It traces the transformation of Istanbul along with the characters by juxtaposing the history of the city with the story of the characters.

Afreen Faiyaz studies how Elif Shafak in *The Forty Rules of Love* executes her theme of love under the brilliant façade of Sufism. The relevance of the mystical teachings of thirteenth century Rumi and his mentor Shams of Tabriz on the characters in the fiction is analysed in this paper. The theme of love is discussed with its impact across temporal, geographical or ethnic boundaries. Employing Eliot's theory of impersonality in discussing vividness and uniqueness of the characters in the novel, it confirms the common theme of love in all of them.

Azra Ghandeharion examines that Shafak espouses feminist beliefs in her bestseller, *The Forty Rules of Love*. Benefiting from the views of feminist theorists like Woolf, de Beauvoir and Fried her paper reveals how Shafak appropriates Rumi for her feminist purposes. *The Forty Rules of Love's* protagonist, Ella Rubinstein is analyzed, compared and contrasted with her former literary counterparts Pinhan and Zeliha, heroines of Shafak's previous novels. By adapting Rumi's definition of equality, Shafak shows how

egalitarianism must pervade the relationship between women and men. The adaptation of Rumi's ideas regarding the equality of sexes finds a different dimension when Shafak reveals that all humanity possesses femininity and masculinity at the same time. By means of ideas prevalent in the ancient Silk Road, the five classical elements theory, and the yin and yang principle, Shafak portrays unity within contradictions. It is concluded that although individuals might belong to different typologies of the five symbolic elements of nature, they can at the same time complement one another's inharmonious personalities peacefully. The process of integration of female and male sexes can be expedited by opening up one's heart to a universal love.

Nevin Faden Gurbuz studies about issues of gender, race and immigration and search for freedom in Elif Shafak's novel *Honour*. Identifying the multicultural identity of the characters in the novel, the paper gives a viewpoint on the perception of this identity. It demonstrates that the culture one has fled is still carried in an immigrant in his behaviour, cultural belief and values.

N. B. Abu Madi and R.K. Al- Khalili examine Elif Shafak's feminine discourse in her novel *Black Milk*, on writing, motherhood, and the harem within from a Hegelian dialectical perspective to explore the diversities and multiplicity of the self in a postmodern world. The novel primarily explores a woman's complex identity rather than the conventional man-woman dualism that marked previous feminist ideologies. Her themes that revolve around issues of singlehood, motherhood, and diversity within the self are discussed in the light of the Hegelian terms "being," "nothing," and "becoming" that are characteristics of the phases of the postmodern-postfeminist character in the novel.

After analysing the research review based on the works of Elif Shafak some observations are quite clear that there are previous studies, dissertations, research articles and papers based on the themes of mysticism, Sufism, love, migrancy, on narrative techniques, experimental ways of writing, relationship among space, memory and culture, feminist existentialism and other related issues. Shafak is either studied on the basis of one or two of her works or comparing with the works of other writers. Although feminist readings have been given to her novels but no in-depth

comprehensive studies that explore gender identity and performativity in the major works of Elif Shafak are there. After reviewing the literature, a gap has been identified and hence it is found that application of Judith Butler's theory of performativity in Elif Shafak's selected works would be absolutely novel and innovative. The present study will fill this lacuna and thereby bridge the gap.

The area of gender studies is intrinsically interdisciplinary, incorporating ideas and approaches from many other academic fields. To increase knowledge in gender-related research, disciplines including literature, linguistics, archaeology, history, human geography, economics, psychology, anthropology, sociology, media studies, law, public health, human development, and medicine regularly work together. A more thorough and nuanced analysis of how gender functions in and across diverse social, cultural, and institutional contexts is made possible by this interdisciplinary approach. Furthermore, the goal of gender studies is to identify and describe the intricate relationships that exist between gender and other axes of identification, including nationality, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, geography, and disability (Alvesson and Billing). Understanding the varied and complex experiences of people—especially those who are marginalized by prevailing power structures—requires an awareness of these intersecting categories. Gender studies advances a more critical and inclusive view of social justice, representation, and injustice by analysing the interactions between various identity markers.

The definition of 'gender' in the field of gender studies has been a subject of controversy. It does not pertain to the overall biological condition of being male or female; instead, it pertains to the societal and cultural perceptions of masculinity and femininity. However, numerous gender theorists hold a contrasting perspective on this matter. A significant number of sociologists have similar perspectives to those of Simone de Beauvoir, the French existentialist philosopher, writer, social theorist, and feminist activist. In her 1949 book *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir asserts, "that womanhood is not an innate quality but rather a result of social and cultural influences" (12). The divergence between biological sex and socially and historically constructed gender, known as the sex-gender distinction, was first recognized by

Beauvoir. Beauvoir argues that women's subjugation stems from the historical and social construction of femininity as the ultimate Other.

Scholars from a wide range of academic backgrounds, such as renowned feminist theorist Judith Butler and psychotherapist Jacques Lacan, contribute to the discipline of gender studies. Although both provide insightful perspectives on how gender is constructed, their methods and theoretical stances frequently diverge. Butler, who is based on feminist poststructuralism, highlights how gender is performative and contends that it is created via repeated behaviours inside of rules. Lacan, on the other hand, investigates how language and the unconscious create gendered subjectivity, depending on psychoanalytic theory. Notwithstanding their differing viewpoints, both theorists add to the larger conversation on gender representation, experience, and regulation. It is becoming more widely acknowledged that gender is a key concept in political discourse, frequently used by political players to specify their stances on a range of social and legislative issues (Stewart et al.). In many academic fields, "gender" is commonly seen as a collection of actions or performances influenced by institutional and societal standards. This performative interpretation challenges essentialist and binary conceptions by highlighting the fluidity and manufactured nature of gender.

Gender studies have been shaped by a diverse group of thinkers, with a particular emphasis on psychoanalytic theory. Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, Julia Kristeva, and Bracha La Ettinger are prominent individuals within this group. These intellectuals possess distinct viewpoints regarding gender. Freud, in his work suggests that women are 'mutilated' and need to come to terms with their absence of a penis, which he refers to as a deformity. "In the phallic phase ... when the girl discovers the penis of the boy, 'she sees it and knows that she is without it and wants to have it.' She falls victim to penis envy and to a masculinity complex" ("*Some Psychological Consequences*" 252). However, Lacan posits that masculinity and femininity are organized into separate unconscious systems. The feminine side of sexuation is supplementary rather than antithetical or complementary, and both male and female subjects participate in the 'phallic' arrangement (Horney 55).

To challenge the belief that gender identity is inherent or predetermined by biology, Lacan presents the concept of *sexuation* (sexual situation), which refers to the developmental process by which gender roles and role-playing are established in childhood. Lacan contends that an individual's *sexuation* plays a crucial role, if not a more significant one, in shaping their gender identity compared to their genetic sex, whether male or female. (Wright 45).

Several feminist theorists, such as Jane Gallop, Griselda Pollock, Shoshana Felman, Juliet Mitchell, Jessica Benjamin, Nancy Chodorow, Luce Irigaray, and Jane Flax, have embraced feminist psychoanalysis. They assert that psychoanalytic philosophy is indispensable for comprehending feminist issues. In her book *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* Shulamith Firestone contends that Freudianism is a misguided form of feminism. She asserts that Freudianism is largely correct, except for Freud's substitution of the term 'power' for 'penis' (124). The Freudian concept of an 'inescapable' sexual distinction and its tendency to 'pathologize' any attempt to indicate that it is not overwhelmingly significant and clear-cut, is unsettling.

Judith Butler's article titled "Societies and Representations" frequently criticize psychoanalysis for upholding a patriarchal family and social structure that is built on a fixed and unchanging notion of the parental hierarchy (Molinier). The foundation of French feminism with a psychoanalytic inclination predominantly rested on literary and visual theory. The influence of Virginia Woolf and Adrienne Rich's proclamation that women should revise literary works has sparked a fresh surge of feminist authors who have produced innovative compositions. Griselda Pollock, like several feminists, examines myth, poetry, and literature from a gender perspective.

The development of gender studies has been greatly impacted by postmodernist ideas, which have led to a move away from essentialist views of gender identity and toward more flexible and pluralistic ideas. This change is in line with poststructuralist criticisms, which question established identity categories and overarching narratives. Gender studies have been influenced by poststructuralism in two main ways: first, by exposing the instability of meaning and dismantling

universalist claims; and second, by bringing in queer theory, which broadened the field's focus to include critical conversations about sexuality and non-normative identities.

With the help of postmodern and sociological viewpoints, gender studies has shifted its emphasis increasingly toward the study of masculinity within this theoretical framework. Scholars like R.W. Connell, Michael Kimmel, and E. Anthony Rotundo have made significant contributions in this field, furthering our knowledge of how masculinities are created, performed, and preserved in certain historical and cultural contexts. These shifts in emphasis have generated fruitful discussion within the subject, which is indicative of its dynamic and ever-changing character.

Feminists have contrasting views with queer theorists who assert that all aspects are fragmented and devoid of overarching narratives, as well as the absence of discernible patterns or classifications. Feminists argue that gender categories should be fully abolished and that they are ineffective in changing the power dynamics that are ingrained in gender. To clarify, the presence of oppressive power structures based on gender is not invalidated by the understanding that gender is a product of societal norms and beliefs. The field of gender studies not only explores the disparities between males and females, but also focuses on sexual variations and the concept of gender beyond the binary.

Published in 1988, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory”, is a seminal work by Judith Butler, an influential American philosopher and gender theorist. Butler's contributions to literary theory and philosophy have been highly influential. Butler's idea of ‘performative gender’ was developed from this essay and further elaborated in her book *Gender Trouble* and subsequent works. Butler argues that gender is performative since it gains its identity through conduct. Therefore, different genders can exist based on different behaviours. The theory of performativity elucidates the notion that gender can be seen as performative, encompassing both philosophical and theatrical dimensions. This theory draws upon insights from phenomenology, theatre studies, anthropology, and linguistics. From a theatrical standpoint, gender can be perceived as a prescribed set of behaviours that individuals in a society are expected to perform,

thereby bringing them to life through what is known as ‘ritual’ and ‘social dramas’. Philosophy posits that gender arises from a series of ‘performative acts’, which are ritualized behaviours that significantly influence various aspects of society.

In linguistic terms, performativity can be deduced from the verb ‘perform’ in the theory of speech acts. This verb carries a metaphorical sense of ‘quoting,’ ‘conveying meaning,’ and ‘repeating,’ with some influence from poststructuralist thought. It seems to signify actions such as ‘enact,’ ‘embody,’ and ‘do’. Butler describes it as the performance of gender through verbal acts. “Performative acts are a category of speech that holds authoritative power. Most performatives, such as declarations, not only express a specific action but also establish a binding authority when uttered” (*Gender Trouble* 225). In *speech-act theory*, the term ‘performative’ refers to the use of language that indirectly identifies and creates something. The term ‘perform’ in the word ‘performative’ indicates that an action is being carried out when a statement is uttered (Austin 6). Austin endeavours to explore the potential impact of speech on conduct. Butler states that gender categories can be examined through discourse and compared to discursive episodes. She then introduces linguistic performative acts as an additional aspect of gender concerns. The statement “Gender identities (gender, sex, and sexuality) are part of a reality that is constructed through discourse” serves as the basis for her argument (Wenjuan 21). She bases her conclusion on the views of prominent French feminists such as Monique Wittig, Julia Kristeva, and Luce Irigaray, as well as influential poststructuralist thinkers like Foucault, Lacan, and Derrida.

Butler deconstructs gender categories to redefine performative in a poststructuralist manner. Austin demonstrates a strong belief in the stability of the referent and the strong connection between the signifier (gender categories) and the referent (gender reality). Butler discusses the signification process and describes the signifier as being detached from any specific meaning. She also argues that while the concept of ‘referentiality’ is changed, the ability of language to refer to bodies with specific genders is not denied (*Gender Trouble* 11). Benjamin aims to alter the meaning of performative by examining the stability of the lexicon and categories, which is a necessary condition for speech act theory. Butler says:

If gender attributes and acts, the various ways in which a body shows or produces its cultural signification, are performative, then there is no pre-existing identity by which an act or attribute might be measured; there would be no true or false, real or distorted acts of gender, and the postulation of a true gender identity would be revealed as a regulatory fiction. (*Gender Trouble* 180)

In her argument, she endeavours to refute Austin's differentiation between constative and performative by suggesting that "the constative assertion possesses an element of performativity in philosophical context" (*Bodies That Matter* 11). Butler argues that gender claims, such as 'it's a girl' or 'it's a boy,' are performative because they challenge notions of truth or falsehood, as genders cannot be categorized as true or false. Moreover, as stated by Wenjuan ("Queering Performativity" 21), the word 'performing the 'girling' of the person while the 'referent' girl does not have ontological existence outside the discursive event' initiates the process of creating the girl. From Austin's viewpoint, this action would be considered constative because, during that period, gender identities were perceived as objective rather than socially constructed. The presence of 'a girl' or 'a boy' was regarded as fixed and beyond doubt, as they were associated with specific anatomical sexes, gender characteristics, and sexual orientations. Austin would not have anticipated that the phrase 'it's a girl/boy' serves the purpose of ascribing gender, bringing forth the existence of 'a girl/boy,' rather than conveying gender. "Butler's aim is to show that gender is formed through both discourse and performance. In other words, Butler contends that gender is not just present in discourses, but also in a specific sort of performative discourse" (*How to Do Things with Words* 23). Further, Austin states: "She examines the theory of speech acts in further depth by employing the post-structuralist concepts of citation and reiteration as they relate to the law and gender norms" (23)

Elaborating further upon the above example, Butler argues: "[I]n that naming, the girl is 'girded', brought into the domain of language and kinship through the interpellation of gender. But that 'girling' of the girl does not end there; on the contrary, that founding interpellation is reiterated by various authorities and throughout various intervals of time to reinforce or contest this naturalized effect"

(*Bodies That Matter* 8). The phrases 'naming' and 'founding interpellation' pertain to the act of citing and reiterating gender norms that are governed by the heterosexual model. On the other hand, 'performativity' is described as the capacity of discourse to produce effects by means of repetition (20). Butler's interpretation of Austin's concept of speech performance might be seen as a post-structuralist 'reiteration' of gender. To comprehend Butler's concept of gender performativity, one must examine it through the lenses of 'performative subversion', 'performative reiteration', and 'gender regulation'/control/rule. This necessitates redefining speech-act performativity in light of Žižek's perspective, Lacan's citation, and Derrida's reiteration.

Austin's theory posits that there is a lack of correlation between the notions of rule, control, law, and symbols. Austin believes that the performer's ability to exercise control and authority over their performance is what gives it significance and support. Austin defines control as appropriateness, indicating that the specific individuals and conditions in a given situation must be suitable for the implementation of the specific process used (*How to Do Things with Words* 34). He labels these as the 'felicity conditions' of performative utterances. However, Butler perceives the laws, rules, and symbols that dictate gender performance as either Foucault's 'regulatory ideal' or as 'the temporalized regulation of signification' (*Bodies That Matter* 22).

Regarding gender, it seems that the rule, authority, and regulation establish a mandatory framework for a binary, heterosexual gender arrangement: Gender identities are consistent and logical. A gender identity of a woman can be defined as the combination of a biological sex, a sexual orientation that is exclusively attracted to individuals of the opposite sex, and a gender expression that aligns with femininity. On the other hand, a gender identity of a man is characterized by a biological sex, a sexual orientation that is attracted to individuals of the opposite sex, and a gender expression that aligns with masculinity (Fausto-Sterling 1). One must acknowledge and embrace the concept of 'a generalized representation of shared characteristics' as presented in this gender formula (50). According to Butler, the concept of 'sex' (as well as other gender categories) is consistently created as a repetition of dominant norms. Butler argues that language, namely the gender norm/authority/law/symbolic, exerts control and conceals fragmented, inconsistent, and prevalent gender

expressions, creating a false sense of gender consistency. She refers to this phenomenon as 'compulsory heterosexuality' or 'heteronormativity' (*Gender Trouble* 179, 180). Butler asserts that the initial act of saying 'it's a girl!' foreshadows the future declaration of "I pronounce you man and wife" in this specific context (*Bodies That Matter* 231).

According to Judith Butler, gender norms are constructed through discursive performances rather than being the outcome of outside, deterministic occurrences. Butler argues that the only way these standards endure is by their frequent enactment in social behaviour, which is further supported by commonplace bodily conventions. Gender norms are produced, maintained, and disseminated through embodiment and the repeated behaviours that aim to comply to them rather than existing as predetermined truths. Additionally, the idealized depictions of gender that these performances promote are replicated in the very behaviours they encourage. As a result, the gender standard is not ontologically autonomous and only becomes legitimate by citation and repetition. Therefore, every gender expression turns into a reference to the normative framework—a repetition or citation of the legislation governing gender intelligibility. Subsequently, the act of citing becomes a compulsory procedure that obscures the arbitrary connection between those actions and a normalized notion of gender idealization (gender identity). It also compels the integration of internally inconsistent performative actions (sex, sexuality, and gender) into a coherent gender framework (*Gender Trouble* 179). Butler argues that this 'rule' can only be considered a law if it forces the distinct references and approximations known as 'feminine' and 'masculine' (*Bodies That Matter* 15), respectively.

Butler diverges from Austin's speech act theory by introducing the concept of gender performance as 'reiteration'. Austin's primary attention lies in the process via which a single discursive engagement produces outcomes, as he is particularly intrigued with individual performatives. Butler examines different and ever-changing gender performances, studying the possibility for rebellion in the process of multiplying genders and the overall impact of the gender performance framework. Butler conceptualizes performativity as an ongoing iteration of regulations rather than a singular action, and she argues that norms, authority, and laws influence the entirety

of the performance that constructs a representation of materiality. Butler argues that gender 'reiteration' or repetition is fundamentally contradictory. She attributes the subversion and reproduction of gender norms to these repetitions. She argues that gender norms are perpetuated through bodily practices, which also have the ability to modify these standards as they are referenced and utilized. Butler often uses the terms 'inner subversion' and 'subversion from within' to describe the potential for 'changing norms while citing them'. The author asserts with absolute certainty that subversion, if feasible, will manifest itself from within the legal system, through the convergence of opportunities that arise when the law turns against itself and generates unforeseen variations. The statement that 'gender' just serves heterosexism does not imply that we should never utilize such terminology. This argument is employed to endorse the subversion by repetition technique. On the contrary, it is necessary to reiterate concepts such as these in a manner that contradicts and supersedes their initial objectives, as they were formulated and constrained within these particular systems (*Bodies That Matter* 123).

The exact notion of Butler's subversion is very unclear. Butler asserts that it is impossible to establish a definitive criterion for subversiveness, while acknowledging her inability to offer a specific definition of subversion. She argues that subversions originate from gender performances that are either unsuccessful or repetitive (*Gender Trouble* 29). According to Judith Butler, gender formulas are created through discursive performances rather than being dictated by outside circumstances. Only via their enactment in everyday bodily actions and social behaviour are these norms maintained. Gender norms do not have a permanent ontological reality; rather, they are embodied and sustained by citation and repetition rather than having an autonomous existence. The regulatory laws limiting intelligibility are thus rearticulated by every gender expression, which challenges and reiterates those standards (Turanli 412). Therefore, the central focus of her gender politics study revolves around exploring the potential for modifying the limitations imposed by the supposed gender roles. The paradoxical process of creating and dismantling gender identities, referred to as 'reiteration', along with Butler's exceptional ability to reinterpret gender failures as acts of 'undoing' and subversion, are the domains in which these possibilities might be located.

Butler's ultimate deduction is especially remarkable since it introduces a novel framework for challenging traditional gender norms, demonstrated through drag performances and advocacy for LGBTQ+ rights. From her queer feminist perspective, disrupting gender identity involves a subversive rearticulation of symbolic representations. This can manifest in different forms such as gender parody, drag, and including the broader LGBT experience (*Bodies That Matter* 109). Expanding the theory of gender performativity appears to be her objective. Butler presents a fresh perspective on gender performativity, focusing on the impact of queer groups in questioning gender norms, rather than getting caught up in traditional feminist issues like women's rights, gender stereotypes, and injustice. Butler incorporates feminism, poststructuralism, and speech act theory into the concept of gender performativity by analysing and examining various discourses.

Act

Butler begins by analysing the concept of the term 'act', which, according to Butler, can encompass both a performative speech act, such as vocal affirmations and commitments that bring about a promise, and an actor assuming a character. Butler also asserts that actions of a distinct nature also have a role in shaping and upholding the societal construct of gender identity (Lorber). Several theories argue that gender roles are not solely dictated by physiological sex characteristics and that these characteristics differ among individuals, nations, and historical eras. Nevertheless, many individuals maintain the belief that gender identity remains consistent. Butler's expertise lies on the interpretation and formation of gender. Butler further explains that social pressure and cultural restrictions result in the enactment of 'gender acts', which subsequently establish gender ("Performative Acts" 520). According to her, even the performers and players are inclined to believe in the potency and effectiveness of this performance. During performances, the body assimilates the cultural norms and restrictions, creating the perception that these rules are customary and indispensable. According to Butler, as a given temporal duration within the entire performance, 'acts' are a shared experience and 'collective action' (525).

An 'act', in Butler's view, is both socially and historically constructed (Performative Acts 530). These 'gender acts' are being explained by Butler as, "responsible for

material changes in one's existence and even in one's bodily self: One is not simply a body, but, in some very key sense, one does one's body differently from one's contemporaries and from one's embodied predecessors and successors as well" (272).

Butler argues that the actions performed by an individual or group are actions that have existed before the individual's birth. She also compares an 'act' to a meticulously rehearsed screenplay, emphasizing that the presence of individual performers is crucial for the performance to be realized and reproduced as reality. Butler defines gender as a physical expression or performance. This trend is entirely ideological and is unrelated to fundamental "truths" regarding the body. The origins of this style predate the individual adhering to those principles. In his study on ritual social theatre, anthropologist Victor Turner asserts: "Social action requires a performance which is repeated. This repetition is at once a re-enactment and re-experiencing of a set of meanings already socially established; it is the mundane and ritualised form of their legitimation" (*The Ritual Process* 33).

Butler used the notion of social performance to discuss gender, arguing that individuals ultimately adopt gendered appearances to embody cultural meanings in public. This is how society upholds gender within its binary structure, and hence, the enactment or portrayal elucidates and reveals societal norms. Everyday behaviours such as walking, talking, gesturing, and others are essentially gendered actions that are consistently carried out to uphold heteronormative standards of authority and power. Butler argues that the division between the private and public domains is a contrived concept designed to justify an oppressive regime. Consequently, the existing society standards and rules consistently govern even the most personal physical actions. Butler emphasizes the constructed aspect of genders to advocate for the rights of oppressed identities and those who challenge conventional heterosexuality. Butler says, "This self is not only irretrievably outside, constituted in social discourse, but that the ascription of interiority is itself a publicly regulated and sanctioned form of essence fabrication. Genders, then, can be neither true nor false, neither real nor apparent" ("Performative Acts" 528).

Butler contends that labelling social standards as proper or necessary is unjust if they lack both a natural basis and a necessity for society's functioning. Butler argues

that as these practices have a lengthy history and depend on frequent citation or performance by individuals, other performative actions could possibly be employed to question and modify them. Butler argues that there is no option to rely on an inherent and unfulfilled sex or gender that gender performances supposedly convey, as the actuality of gender is formed by the performance itself (*Gender Trouble* 278). Butler acknowledges that a crossdresser's gender is equally valid as that of someone who adheres to societal expectations, provided both are genuine.

Sex and Gender

Butler examines the areas of consensus and divergence regarding the concept of the body in phenomenology and feminist philosophy. Gender is an embodiment that goes beyond physiological sex features. The concept of gender derives its strength from its embodiment. Feminist and phenomenological thinkers make a distinction between sex and gender. Gender refers to the interpretation of the body in relation to masculinity and femininity, while sex pertains to the physiological characteristics of the body. Butler asserts, “Phenomenological theories of human embodiment have also been concerned to distinguish between the various physiological and biological causalities that structure bodily existence and the meanings that embodied existence assumes in the context of lived experience” (“Performative Acts” 520).

In his book *The Phenomenology of Perception* Merleau-Ponty refers to the body as ‘an historical idea’ as opposed to ‘a natural species’ (23). The phenomenological perspective holds that the body is the site where possible meanings are made, dramatized, and disseminated after history and society have determined those meanings. Simone de Beauvoir contends in *The Second Sex* that gender, and consequently womanhood, is a product of historical circumstances rather than an innate fact.

In both cases, the physiology of the body is recognized, but it is recognized as separate from the gendered body. Doing gender is like a performance not just because it's done, but also because it reinforces and maintains the role while it's being done. From Butler's perspective, gender-determining actions are similar to theatrical performative acts (“Performative Acts” 521).

Butler and other phenomenological theorists contend that theory and practice are entwined. The most noteworthy example is the oppression of women, where patriarchal political structures give rise to patriarchal emotional and cognitive processes. Among these important ideas is the notion that women are less clever than men. Women are not allowed to pursue advanced education or hold positions of responsibility because of its patriarchal ideals, which contributes to the continuation of patriarchal political systems. Butler refutes feminist theorists who maintain that oppression is an essential component of being a woman, adding that this definition obstructs the path to real equality.

The Heterosexuality

In this context, Butler integrates principles derived from the field of anthropology. According to Butler, the anthropological literature on kinship has identified certain prerequisites for the dissemination of a particular culture. Marriage systems that prioritize heterosexual relationships and encourage reproduction in specified gender roles are designed to ensure the continuation of a particular kinship structure (524). As Foucault asserts, “The association of a natural sex with a discrete gender and with an ostensibly natural attraction to the opposing sex/gender is an unnatural conjunction of cultural constructs in the service of reproductive interests” (*The History of Sexuality* 78).

Based on feminist cultural anthropology and kinship studies, cultures are regulated by laws and norms that not only supervise and guarantee the creation, exchange, and utilization of physical goods but also maintain the connections of kinship, which form the foundation for disciplinary laws, prohibitions, and other limitations. According to Levi-Strauss, the prohibition of incest is intended to ensure that sexual desires are channelled towards heterosexual marriage and its various manifestations (*The Elementary Structure of Kinship* 524).

Butler argues that the process of categorizing bodies into distinct sexes based on their inherent appearance and heterosexual characteristics conceals and perpetuates the system of compulsory heterosexuality. The justification for laws and practices that grant legal validity to gender-based oppression stems from the assumption of inherent naturalness. Theoretically, people can choose their preferred gender identities when

they are subjected to gender-based persecution. They are however still subject to strong social pressures that force them to follow accepted cultural norms, frequently at the price of their desires. According to Judith Butler, gender possibilities are greatly influenced by discursive and cultural systems, making it difficult to deviate from accepted standards on a social and psychological level (Speer and Potter). Butler also contends that through a variety of control systems, civilizations actively monitor and regulate gendered behaviour. These include social stigma, gender-based violence, and other forms of discipline, all of which contribute to the maintenance of dominant gender hierarchies and the appearance of fixed, binary identities.

Butler defines historical sedimentation as the process by which an individual's gender is formed through a series of actions that are revised, altered, and solidified over time. She asserts that the domain of bodies is the realm in which sexuality and sex-related ideas are generated, revived, and regulated throughout history. Over time, the historical manifestations of sex, gender, and heterosexuality have gradually been perceived as inherent or innate. Butler says that the basic procedure of making a category for representation called as “women” is tricky. According to Butler, the qualification for being a subject must first be met before representation can be extended (*Gender Trouble* 44).

Butler opens her discussion in *Gender Trouble* by addressing two primary preoccupations of feminists: representation and politics. Furthermore, she defines representation as the prescriptive role of language, which either exposes or distorts the presumed reality concerning the group of women. Representation, as she describes it, refers to the political process aimed at granting visibility and legitimacy to women as political entities. Butler argues that the term "women" lacks inclusivity and hence fails to establish a collective identity. She argues that gender is often intertwined with sexual, class, racial, ethnic, and regional viewpoints, and is not necessarily derived logically and consistently in various historical contexts. Butler claims that, it becomes impossible to separate out gender from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained (6).

Foucault argues in *History of Sexuality* that legal systems of power construct the individuals whom they ultimately come to embody. One can contend that the legal

notion of power seeks to suppress political existence in adverse manners, such as by enforcing control, prohibiting specific actions, limiting political engagement, and even advocating for people who possess political authority. The subjects under their control are moulded, comprehended, and conveyed in conformity with the demands of those structures. According to Butler in *Gender Trouble*, “The juridical formation of language and politics that represents women as the subject of feminism is itself a discursive formation and effect of a given version of representational politics” (4).

For Butler, “politics should be responsible for managing the productive and judicial dimensions of power” (6). Derrida argues that the law establishes and conceals the concept of ‘a subject before the law’ to utilize it as an underlying assumption that has been normalized and subsequently validates the law's dominant control (5). Butler claims that the current studies on how women might effectively advocate their rights in language and politics is inadequate. Feminists should strive to comprehend the intricate power structures that both enable and restrict the concept of ‘women’, which is the focal point of feminism.

In Butler’s view, “the effectiveness of the representational discourse is compromised by its constraints, which in turn challenge the assumed universality and unity of the subject of feminism” (7). She argues that the endeavour to develop a conclusive "category of woman" results in multiple instances of disbelief in the category and allows for accusations of blatant misrepresentation. Butler says that feminism should reformulate representative politics that rely on alternative criteria.

Women can only achieve stability and coherence within the context of heterosexual relationships. In contrast to the argument advocating for a stable gender inside the heterosexual framework, a new kind of feminism should acknowledge the dynamic nature of gender identity production (194). Butler contends that the basis of feminist politics should not rely on the recognition of the feminist individual if the individual's development takes place within a domain of authority that is often undermined by the affirmation of that basis. Paradoxically, the significance of representation for feminism may only become apparent when women are no longer mentioned (9).

Sex/Gender/Desire

Butler questions the notion that one's biological makeup determines their fate. She argues that the concept of gender and sex being separate entities reinforces the notion that gender is influenced by cultural factors, but sex is defined by biological factors. Consequently, she deduces that gender is neither as clearly determined as biological sex, nor is it a mere consequence of biological sex. At the time Butler wrote *Gender Trouble*, it was commonly acknowledged that sex and gender were distinct concepts. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler argued that gender and sex are synonymous. Psychologist Robert Stoller, in his book “Sex and Gender: The Development of Masculinity and Femininity”, was among the pioneers in differentiating between sex and gender. According to Stoller, “the word gender describes how much feminine and masculine behaviour an individual displays and the word sex describes the biological characteristics of a person” (77).

This contrast highlights the fact that gender is far more flexible than biological sex and is socially formed. Butler challenges the conventional wisdom that sex is solely biological by arguing that cultural and discursive elements are crucial in determining both gender and sex. Butler contends that from this angle, the distinction between gender and sex dissolves, making the two conceptually indistinguishable. She views sex as a cultural construct, arguing that normative social practices actually shape what is frequently thought of as physiologically determined. Butler uses examples from today's society to further support this claim, showing how prevailing societal standards still uphold a binary system where people are expected to identify as strictly male or female, which restricts the acceptance of gender variety. Consequently, children with ambiguous genitalia undergo surgical interventions to modify their anatomy to align with either the male or female category. Similarly, certain individuals identify as transgender and opt for gender-affirming medical interventions to align their gender identification with their physical presentation. Butler's conclusion posits that sex is a concept that is shaped by society, since it may be modified to align with prevailing standards. Butler aims to analyse and dismantle the concept of gender and sex, as she posits that those in positions of authority shape the societal standards that revolve around them.

Their perspective aligns with the prevailing societal notion of moral correctness. Illustrations of such standards encompass the conviction that there exist just two genders, and that heterosexuality is the prevailing standard while homosexuality is seen deviant. Social construction gives rise to the assumptions about which attributes are connected with each gender. (55)

The Impact of Masculinity on the Economy

Elucidating the process of gender formation Butler argues that bodies possessing specific anatomical traits are marked with gender associations, resulting in these bodies passively conforming to an unchangeable societal standard. According to Butler, the implementation of these laws leads individuals to hold the belief that gender is immutable and cannot be changed. Cultural influences, rather than biological ones, can determine a person's destiny in certain instances (12). Simone de Beauvoir argues in *Second Sex* that the process of becoming a woman is acquired via learning and experience, rather than being an inherent trait.

In *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler cites Simone de Beauvoir, who argues that gender is not an innate trait but rather is formed by a reflective consciousness, or what Beauvoir calls the "cogito" (12). Beauvoir contends that regardless of their biological sex, people are forced to fit in with cultural norms that categorize them as female. The process of "becoming a woman" is not based on biological femininity, she stresses. Beauvoir contends that rather than being a fixed biological object, the body should be viewed as a "situation"—a site of cultural and historical significance (12). Butler uses this argument to illustrate that a physical body that has not been given cultural significance cannot be referred to in any way. Hence, it is inadequate to solely regard sex as biologically predetermined without taking into account any cultural interpretation (44).

According to cultural thinker Luce Irigaray, women within the framework of discussions about identity have a paradoxical nature, and may even appear contradictory. Women are part of a distinct and varied gender. Women are perceived as unrepresentable in a predominantly male-centric language that prioritizes male perspectives and ideas. Women are a gender that should not be perceived as lacking in

verbal expression or as ambiguous. The feminine gender exerts impact on the components of a linguistic system that rely on clear and unambiguous meanings but are difficult to manage or identify. Butler argues that gender is a form of signification. Unlike Beauvoir, who regards women as ‘the other’, Irigaray argues that both the subject and the other are fundamental masculine elements of a closed, phallogocentric system of meaning that completely eradicates the feminine (14). Luce Irigaray argues that the feminine sex is a verbal void that lacks a linguistically defined essence. Therefore, it reveals the irrational nature of a conversation dominated by males, which mistakenly assumes the existence of this fundamental quality. Butler contends that a sign system that rigidly associates masculinity with a specific relationship between the signifier and the signified is inadequate for accurately representing the ideas of masculinity and femininity (15). Beauvoir argues that males are unable to resolve the gender problem because they would be assuming the conflicting roles of both participant and judge (33). Butler contends that feminist study on gender is problematic due to its circular nature and susceptibility to opposing perspectives. “Gender is often considered as an irrelevant personal characteristic. However, some argue that the concept of a person being portrayed as a subject in language is inherently biased towards masculinity. Indeed, this bias hinders the recognition and acceptance of feminine gender identities” (15).

The Binary Categorising of Subjects

Gayatri Spivak argues that the binary is an act that marginalizes and colonizes. She analyses the concept of the ‘self-presence of the cognizing supra-historical self’, which she perceives as a defining feature of the philosophical Cogito’s dominance in knowledge. Politics influence the formation of knowledge by revealing and examining the boundaries that contribute to the conditional understanding of the knowledge system to which an individual is subjected. Exclusionary tactics are consistently employed to establish and control these boundaries. The individual persists in expressing their thoughts or opinions.

I call politics as such the prohibition of marginality that is implicit in the production of any explanation. From that point of view, the choice of particular oppositions.....is no mere intellectual strategy. It is, in

each case, the condition of the possibility for centralization (with appropriate apologies) and, correspondingly, marginalization. (“Three Women’s Texts” 22)

Butler observes that while Irigaray focuses on the ontological, logical, and epistemological structures of a male-dominated system of meaning to expand the range of feminist analysis, the worldwide extent of her research restricts its potential. Butler further asserts that, “Feminist critique ought to explore the totalizing claims of a masculinist signifying economy, but also remain self-critical with respect to the totalizing gestures of feminism. The effort to identify the enemy as singular in form is a reverse discourse that uncritically mimics the strategy of the oppressor instead of offering a different set of terms” (*Gender Trouble* 20).

Butler challenges both the concept of male dominance and the notion that feminine identity is universal. Butler, in her work on coalitional politics, describes it as a ‘dialogic encounter’ where women with different positions express their identities with political purpose. According to Butler, this coalition is characterized as a ‘unpredictable assemblage of positions’, indicating that it cannot be anticipated beforehand (20). However, coalitions can embody a form of unity that is once again characterized by exclusivity. Though, Butler supports a coalition that does not consider unity as a requirement for participating in political activities. Butler also encourages feminist theorists to directly address and examine the power structures that both generate and limit opportunities for dialogue. Butler advocates for the acceptance of ‘acknowledged fragmentation’, ‘essential incompleteness,’ and a ‘anti-foundationalist approach’, which serves as the foundation for her coalitional politics. Butler asserts that her coalitional political model would generate diverse identities, which will ultimately disintegrate due to their fundamental behaviours. For Butler, gender is a complicated concept that is never fully realized at any one point in time; its entirety is always postponed. “An open coalition, then will affirm identities that are alternately instituted and relinquished according to the purposes at hand; it will be an open assemblage that permits of multiple convergences and divergences without obedience to a normative telos of definitional closure” (22).

The Performance of Intelligibility

According to Butler, an individual can only be deemed interpretable if they adhere to recognized criteria of gender intelligibility (22). As per her statement, the concepts of 'coherence' and 'continuity' concerning 'the person' are manufactured by society and serve to maintain norms of comprehensibility, rather than being based on logic (23). She also proposes that maintaining constant notions regarding sex, gender, and sexuality contributes to the preservation of one's 'identity'. She then raises the issue of 'incoherent' or 'discontinuous' gendered entities, referring to humans who do not conform to the cultural standards of intelligibility that define human identity.

According to Butler, 'intelligible genders' are those that build and maintain links of unity and continuity between sex, gender, sexual behaviour, and desire to a certain extent. Butler argues that the regulations aiming to establish a connection between biological sex, socially constructed genders, and sexual attraction are the ones that consistently limit and generate the risk of 'discontinuity' and 'incoherence' within this framework. By approaching the subject of sexuality from a Foucauldian perspective, Judith Butler contends that some identities essentially contradict the accepted notion of gender. These include identities where biological sex does not dictate gender and situations where neither sex nor gender structures desires. These identities highlight the performative and manufactured character of gender and sexuality and reveal the volatility of conventional gender frameworks.

These identities are seen to be incompatible with the cultural framework that shapes our understanding of gender identity. Butler uses the term "matrix of intelligibility" to describe the unique connection between enforced heterosexuality and the discursive frameworks that shape our understanding of sexual identity. According to Irigaray, there is just one gender—the masculine and it is being posited by Foucault that irrespective of gender, the concept of sex is a consequence of a dispersed system of sexual regulation. According to feminist academic Monique Wittig, in situations where heterosexuality is imposed, the concept of sex is consistently associated with femininity, while masculinity remains unmarked and therefore seen as universal.

Wittig agrees with Foucault's assertion that the dominance of heterosexuality would be broken and scattered, leading to the disappearance of the concept of sex.

The various theories proposed by French feminists and post-structuralists offer multiple explanations for how power constructs the concept of sex. Based on these models, it is evident that sex is viewed as a concept embedded in dominant language. In other words, it is seen as a state that is achieved using language or communication techniques, which hides the reality that a person cannot inherently possess a specific sex or gender. (25). Wittig argues that a system of enforced heterosexuality achieves its reproductive objectives by imposing a binary limitation on sex. She asserts that the elimination of compulsory heterosexuality is necessary to achieve genuine humanism, devoid of the limitations imposed by gender.

According to Wittig and Beauvoir, granting women equal freedom and autonomy as men is undermined since women are identified primarily based on their sexual characteristics, which reduces them to a category defined by sexualization. Butler argues similarly that there exists just one gender, which is feminine, and that only men are considered 'persons' (26).

Butler says that the canon of gender coherence compels and actively manufactures the primary result of gender. She asserts that gender is indicative in the discussion about the metaphysics of substance. She desires a redefinition of gender that goes beyond the metaphysical classifications of material existence. Therefore, she argues that gender expressions do not always reveal a person's gender identity. Instead, gender identity is formed through the actions and behaviours that are often associated with it (34).

Language, Power and the Strategies of Displacement

From a materialist feminist standpoint, it becomes evident that the mark imposed by the oppressor, known as the 'myth of woman', along with its tangible implications and manifestations in the bodies and consciousness of women, is the sole source and basis of oppression. Consequently, this mark does not come before persecution. Sex is commonly conceptualized as an inherent and instantaneous attribute or as physical traits that are inherent in the natural hierarchy. However, what

we perceive as a direct and concrete experience is only a sophisticated construct called 'imaginary formation'.

Irigaray claims that gender's 'mark' is crucial to the dominant male signifying system. Wittig argues that language itself is not inherently misogynistic, but rather it is how it is used that perpetuates misogyny. Wittig concludes that feminine writing does not exist by utilizing Beauvoir's analysis of the feminine myth in *The Second Sex*. Irigaray posits that through the adoption of an alternative language or sign language, individuals might liberate themselves from the gender 'mark', which, for the feminine, entails the complete erasure of the female sex by the phallogocentric system. Irigaray aims to reveal the apparent 'dualistic' connection between genders as a strategy that favours masculinity and fully excludes femininity.

Wittig is aware of the power of words to both control and exclude women. She contends that the system of obligatory heterosexuality establishes and disseminates the concept of 'linguistic fiction' of sex to restrict the formation of identities centred on heterosexual attraction. According to Lacan, the concept of the masculine 'subject' is an imaginary creation that arises from the same rule that forbids incest and necessitates the continuous redirection of a heterosexual individual's desire. He affirms that femininity can never be considered a defining trait of a particular gender and says that it is never indicative of the topic. On the contrary, the feminine is a representation of absence, symbolized by the Symbolic, which is a linguistic framework that effectively establishes gender-based differentiations. The core restrictions of the Symbolic law, which is governed by the father figure, involve the process of becoming an individual and adopting a heterosexual masculine linguistic stance. The law enacted under the father's name is the incest taboo, which prohibits the son from engaging in any form of interaction with the mother, therefore reinstating their familial bond. Similarly, the legislation that denies the girl's requirement for both her father and mother stipulates that she must embrace the emblem of motherhood and adhere to kinship traditions. Therefore, rules that impose limitations and define genders based on cultural norms are utilized to enforce traditional male and feminine roles. However, these roles only become apparent when

an unconscious sexual desire reemerges in the realm of imagination, as described by Lacan.

Butler contends that the feminine is an unrepresentable absence that serves as the foundation of the signifying economy through exclusion and is a result of masculine denial. The feminine position as the excluded inside the hegemonic conceptual structure offers the potential for criticism and disruption of that system.

Rose asserts that the concept of 'identity' is constructed and argues that the law against it is ineffective. Perceiving parental law as an erroneous concept that results in defiance, rather than as a manifestation of divine intent, is crucial. Foucault argues that power and sexuality are inherently interconnected. Foucault argues that the origins of the productive and legal functions of different connections are rooted in power rather than the law. Consequently, the expression of sexuality within power dynamics consistently reflects a recurring pattern of a male-dominated system of identity, rather than just replicating the legal framework.

Butler contends that if sexuality is shaped by culture and power dynamics, then the idea of a standard sexuality that exists independently of power is culturally unattainable and politically unfeasible. This notion delays the urgent and current endeavour of reevaluating rebellious prospects for sexuality and identity within the framework of power. The works deviate from their initial objectives and inadvertently activate potential 'subjects' that not only surpass the limits of cultural comprehensibility, but also effectively broaden the limits of what is considered culturally understandable (39). By its nature, this significant responsibility believes that operating within the power hierarchy is distinct from blindly reproducing systems of control. Butler responds to Beauvoir's claim that women are not naturally born, but rather develop over time. Butler argues that femininity is an ongoing process, a social construct that has no definite starting point or conclusion. According to Butler, this perspective implies that womanhood allows for the potential recurrence of societal norms rather than their solidification (40). Butler further states that as gender solidifies into its most outstanding manifestations, it looks to be a tenacious and cunning tradition that is maintained and followed by many social patterns. She, therefore, concludes, "gender is formed through the repeated process of shaping one's

body within a highly regulated framework. Over time, these recurring actions gradually consolidate to provide the appearance of solidity and an inherent sense of authenticity” (52).

The role of normative violence as a catalyst for restricted free will

Butler contends that individuals conform to societal expectations of gender to maximize benefits and minimize suffering and dissatisfaction. She posits that gender is a product of prevailing ideological frameworks and discourses, such as heterosexuality and patriarchy. Butler argues that normative violence, which supports authority and a specific social structure, poses a threat in our everyday lives and serves to uphold these standards. Normative violence encompasses hate speech, racial slurs, jokes targeting race and sexual orientation, and language that marginalizes others through pejorative terms.

Assessment of Butler's Theory on Gender Performativity

Butler's theory of gender performativity, however innovative, captivating, and full of potential for queer and transgender studies, has faced severe criticism from both feminists and philosophers. Critics of the theory of gender performativity argue that it neglects the physiological attributes of the female anatomy, as examined in feminist literature. The concepts of subject and agency have been exposed to significant criticism. Butler questions the core feminist belief that women and men have distinct and important sexual distinctions by asserting that one's “sex, sexuality, desire, gender, and the body” are all manufactured through language and society (Lloyd 63). Butler contests the notion that women and men may be considered as a uniform group with identical acknowledgment, status, and sexual longing. Butler redirects her attention from the biological and sexual disparities between genders emphasized by feminism, including biology, to the influence of language and communication in moulding the physical form (*Gender Trouble* 69). She perceives the sexualized body as a product of the heteronormative system that governs it.

Feminist theories primarily focus on the female physique and its historical utilization as a representation of sexual and biological disparity, as well as a subject of objectification, violence, subjugation, and procreation. Feminist theorists have voiced

their criticism against the notion that gender is exclusively a social construct apart from biological sex. They argue that this perspective overlooks the actual experiences and individuality of women, who are not merely products of speech but also embodied beings.

Lloyd states that feminist critics of Butler's theory contend that she rejects the inherent and biological existence of the human body, as well as the distinctions between male and female bodies. These critics also find fault with Butler's ideas for being unclear and abstract to the physicality and materiality of the female body (Lloyd 70). Furthermore, critics have challenged Butler's theory for its lack of emphasis on the psychoanalytic and intrapsychic dimensions of human nature, particularly regarding agency and the processes by which individuals form identities and comprehend their surroundings (56). Moreover, her views may face criticism for being excessively focused on how language and discourse influence human behaviour. Nevertheless, Butler's expertise lies in the fields of linguistics and philosophy; hence, her objective is not to offer psychoanalysis or practical advice. She has mostly concentrated on examining the historical and sociological elements that influence gender relations and society. These concepts are both novel and practical, and can be applied to social work practice when examining issues related to clients, families, and communities. Butler's work offers readers valuable insights into how historical and social discussions, together with systems and organizations, have shaped gender norms, patterns, and hierarchies that greatly influence people's daily experiences.

Hood-Williams and Cealy Harrison argue that Butler's explanation is limited to the reconstruction of philosophical gender theories based on an equally foundationalist view of gender performativity ("Trouble with Gender" 88). Alison Stone criticizes Butler's theoretical discourse, contending that it overlooks essential inquiries regarding subversion and instead prioritizes the probability of "subversive agency" and the appeal of defying "gender norms", rather than offering an elucidation of subversion itself or its intended objectives ("Towards a Genealogical Feminism" 5).

Catherine Mills and Lois McNay challenge Butler's agency by arguing that it is problematic when an individual's power is based solely on their ability to repeat, recite, or reassess their initial claim, while agency is reduced to mere resistance and reactive behaviour. Fiona Webster concludes that ultimately, Butler's explanation of agency is inadequate since it fails to address how particular subjects can actively and purposefully challenge specific activities that define their unique identity ("The Politics of Sex").

Vicki Kirby observes that Butler posits the idea that there is no possibility of accessing a completely independent material existence that exists outside or prior to language, and consequently, no possibility of accessing a purely material existence of corporeal life that is apart from language. "The substance of corporeal being ... must be understood as itself textual, as imbricated in the signifying order of language and culture—not as a separate, prediscursive material realm" (*Telling Flesh* 5). Another critic Katy Dow Magnus highlights that as Butler expands her concept of subjectivity and transitions from gender performativity to linguistic performativity, the significance of subjective agency diminishes progressively. "As Butler begins to develop a more general notion of subjectivity and shifts her focus from gender performativity to linguistic performativity, her notion of subjective agency becomes increasingly diminished" ("The Unaccountable Subject" 82).

Furthermore, Butler has received negative feedback from both the linguistic and philosophical sectors about her "regrettable" prose and writing style, as well as theoretical critiques (Dutton 1). Butler's writing style, while occasionally difficult to understand and characterized by a large vocabulary, also serves to emphasize the exceptional features of her body of work. Nevertheless, her work should not be dismissed on account of its complexity; instead, it should serve as an opportunity for other scholars and philosophers to grasp and articulate her groundbreaking ideas in a manner that is accessible to a broader audience, including students.

Introduction to Elif Shafak

Elif Shafak is a contemporary Turkish-British author, journalist, and orator who explores the actualities of worldwide human existence. She is one of the most widely read Turkish woman writers. She is proficient in both Turkish and English, and has experience in writing both fiction and nonfiction. Out of the total of seventeen books she has published, eleven of them are novels. Her writings have been translated into fifty different languages. Her writings exemplify the fusion of Western and Eastern narrative conventions. She is a prominent figure in Turkey who actively opposes historical revisionism and cultural amnesia. Shafak was born in Strasbourg, France on October 25, 1972. Her mother, Safak Atayman, had a career as a diplomat, while her father, Nuri Bilgin, worked as a teacher. Following her parents' divorce, she began using the pen name Safak, which is her mother's name, in her domestic publications, and Shafak in her international publications. She possesses a Doctorate in political science and a Master's degree in gender and women's studies. She received an award from the Social Scientist's Institute for her thesis on "Islam Mysticism and the Circular Understanding of Time." She has held professorships at various universities in the United States, United Kingdom, and Turkey. She holds the title of honorary fellow at St. Anne's College, Oxford University. She was employed as a faculty member at the University of Arizona and held a temporary teaching position at the University of Michigan. Her nonfiction writing encompasses a diverse array of topics, including multiculturalism, women's liberation, cross-cultural exchanges, and the art of living together. Her essays on these issues are compiled in three books: *Med-Cezir*, *Firarperest*, and *Semspare*. Penguin releases her perspectives on identity in the form of an electronic book titled *The Happiness of Blond People*.

Shafak contributes to esteemed global publications like The Guardian, The Washington Post, The New York Times, The New Yorker, the Financial Times, Der Spiegel, El Pais, and Die Zeit, in addition to her renowned works of fiction and non-fiction. She has the position of a founding member in the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) and is also a member of the We Forum Global Agenda Council Economy. Furthermore, Shafak advocates for the principles of freedom of speech, the rights of the LGBT community, and gender equality. She is an engaging and charismatic public speaker who has delivered captivating speeches at TED on two separate occasions. She holds the prestigious status of Fellow of the Royal Society of

Literature and has been bestowed with numerous accolades, such as the "Marka Award" from Turkey in 2010, the title of "Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres" from France in 2010, and the "GTF Award" for Excellence in Promoting Gender Equality in 2016. She has held various prestigious roles, including being the patron of the National Centre for Writing in Norwich and serving as a judge for the 2017 Man Booker International Prize and the 2016 Baileys Women's Prize for Fiction. Additionally, she has been a board member of the Free Word Centre, an organization that promotes literacy, and an English PEN member. She has also acted as a cultural ambassador for the Ottoman Orient in Renaissance.

The objective of this research is to analyse the select works of Elif Shafak through the lens of Judith Butler's theory of performativity. The study tries to investigate the prescribed gender roles in a patriarchal Turkish culture, where individuals are required to fulfill and demonstrate the attributes that are highly esteemed by the society. Additionally, it also tries to explore the process of constructing gendered identities. The objective of this study is to examine the gender differences in societal expectations between men and women. More precisely, the analysis tries to examine how these expectations reinforce gender-based hierarchies that enable individuals to engage in discrimination, household biased attitudes, and exploit the distinctive qualities of women. Shafak endeavours to tackle the problem of women being exploited in patriarchal societies. Shafak's primary literary works predominantly explore themes pertaining to the dynamics of gendered power within Turkish society, namely examining the submissiveness of women and the subjective experiences of men. She conducts a critical analysis of the behaviours'', attitudes, language, and expressions of the characters that depict men in positions of authority, while women are assigned the roles of homemakers, child-rearers, and submissive partners to their husbands. There is a strong preference among males and societal norms for women who are physically appealing, clever, obedient, and have a simple and unpretentious appearance. Nevertheless, there is a total neglect for matters such as education, women's economic rights, financial stability, and personal liberty. Elif Shafak's writings serve to empower women by encouraging them to acknowledge their individual identities, assert their rights, create their own paths, and eventually uncover their distinctiveness. She highlights the societal bias and the gendered nature

of Turkish culture, which assigns specific duties and expectations to men and women. The protagonist in most of her works experiences a sense of alienation from the places and situations they find themselves in. She meticulously selects words in order to imbue them with fresh significance through their strategic placement, while simultaneously avoiding their traditional interpretations. Her writings adeptly depict the difficulties of cultural liminality, as she and her characters face problems due to Turkey's transition from an Islamic imperial state to a secular republican nation-state.

To sum up, Chapter One has established the theoretical framework by following the development of Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, placing it in the context of poststructuralist philosophy, and critically assessing its main ideas. The chapter offers a conceptual framework for examining the gendered experiences portrayed in literary works by demonstrating that gender is a created and repeated performance influenced by societal and discursive norms rather than an innate nature. This knowledge opens the door to investigating how gender is regulated and constrained within broader structural frameworks in addition to being performed. In order to explore how language, performative repetition, and power reinforce male dominance and marginalize other gendered identities, Chapter Two goes on to explore the idea of the "Masculine Signifying Economy," which was first proposed by Luce Irigaray and reinterpreted by Butler. By exploring how Elif Shafak's characters represent, challenge, or are limited by this hegemonic economics of gender, it also presents her literary cosmos as a site of resistance.

Chapter II: Patriarchal Discourse and Gender

Performativity in Elif Shafak's Fiction

The term ‘masculine signifying economy’ is used to describe a cultural and socioeconomic framework that places greater emphasis on masculinity and male characteristics compared to femininity and female traits. Men are generally perceived to possess more esteemed attributes such as strength, aggression, and assertiveness, while women are typically connected with virtues like empathy, compassion, and nurturing abilities, which are considered less highly valued. This can lead to the development of a society and culture that prioritize domination and rivalry rather than cooperation and consensus-building. Additionally, it can foster hostility between genders. In the phrase ‘masculine signifying economy’, the term ‘signifying’ pertains to the mechanisms through which meanings are generated and communicated via language and other cultural symbols. Language, media, the entertainment industry, and other cultural institutions continue to uphold traditional gender norms and hierarchies. These aspects are regarded economically important and associated with masculinity. Critics argue that the economy, which emphasizes masculine traits and behaviours, restricts the range of acceptable behaviours and characteristics for both genders, ultimately causing unintended harm to both men and women. These critics argue that to achieve a fair and inclusive culture, it is imperative to challenge existing gender stereotypes and promote a wider range of behaviours and perspectives.

The term ‘masculine signifying economy’ was used by French feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray to describe the way in which language, culture, and society are structured based on patriarchal principles and male-centred norms that prioritize masculinity while devaluing femininity. Luce Irigaray broadens the scope of feminist criticism by exposing the structure of the economy of masculine meaning. In her 1985 book *Speculum of the Other Women*, Irigaray critically examines Western phallogentric notions in language culture and popular media imagery through her two articles, “Any Theory of the Subject Has Always Been Appropriated by the Masculine” and “La Mystérique” The author posits that women's sexual differentiation can be understood as a means of opposing the male economy, as this system is often associated with patriarchy, the marginalization of women, and

feminine concepts. She argues that the linguistic dichotomy of opposing concepts, which prioritizes masculine behavioural traits such as logic, objectivity, and reason above feminine traits such as intuition, subjectivity, and emotion, forms the basis of the masculine system of meaning. The binary opposition structure not only impacts our comprehension and utilization of language, but it also shapes our institutions and social and cultural practices.

Irigaray argues that this value system supports gender inequality and marginalizes women and other oppressed groups. She promotes the adoption of a new language and culture that challenges the prevailing norms and appreciates the variety of human experiences and expressions. The concept is frequently employed in feminist theory to elucidate the pervasive presence of patriarchal rules and ideals inside language and discourse. Luce Irigaray contends that language exerts a discernible influence on society, as it frequently assigns masculine gender to significant entities such as the sun or God, while relegating less significant entities to feminine gender. She adopts a critical position towards the traditions that employ linguistic agreements to associate women with the subject matter of the Other. She proposes that although there is no separate position designated for women, women have the ability to assimilate into male subjectivity. The author's thesis examines how Western thought linguistically differentiates between the sexes, leading to a lack of significant sexual distinction. Irigaray analyses the role of language, concepts of femininity and sexuality, and sexual distinctions in the marginalization of women in society and their historical subjugation. In contemporary times, manifestations of gender inequality can be observed in various ways, including the undervaluation of women's domestic work and the disparity in wages between genders in the corporate realm. This issue significantly exacerbates a broader cultural framework that promotes gender norms and stereotypes, while also devaluing femininity in comparison to masculinity.

Judith Butler offers a new interpretation of Luce Irigaray's concept of the masculine signifying economy in her book *Gender Trouble*. Luce Irigaray examined the subject of women and language, asserting that women are the incomprehensible gender, the unportrayable entity, the linguistic absence, and the obscurity arising from

the enclosed male-centred system of meaning-making. Irigaray's feminist theory posits that the notion of 'female gender' denotes a linguistic void, an inability to form a grammatical structure. Consequently, this argument exposes a fundamental and reinforcing fallacy within masculinist rhetoric. Butler clearly demonstrates that the masculine and feminine cannot exist together in a single system of meaning, where the masculine is the only realm of symbols and meanings. Irigaray argues that patriarchal cultures have ingrained linguistic systems that prioritize male perspectives and ideas, while simultaneously denigrating femininity as a negative and inferior category.

Butler's views differ from Irigaray's in that she contends that gender categories should be essentialized and integrated into a separate feminine language or writing style. Gender, as per Butler's perspective, is not a static essence or identity, but rather a performative construct that is shaped and perpetuated via repetitive actions. In this perspective, Butler argues that the male signifying economy is, to some extent, a compilation of discursive actions that establish and maintain gender categories, rather than being a rigid linguistic structure (*Gender Trouble*). Additionally, she questions the gendered subjectivity that arises from these discursive practices, emphasizing the performative nature of gender and the potential for subverting and resisting gender norms through disruptive behaviour related to gender.

Feminist theory and the larger discipline of gender studies have been significantly influenced by Judith Butler. According to her, language and symbolic systems actively contribute to the formation and maintenance of gender identities rather than being neutral or independent of gender. Butler argues that gender is a performative construct that is created via repeated behaviours and acts rather than a fixed or stable essence. Because of this repetition, gender is essentially malleable and malleable. Butler also argues that gender is maintained and controlled inside what she refers to as the "masculine signifying economy" through patriarchal language and symbolic structures. She asserts that challenging this system involves more than simply creating a unique feminine language. Instead, it requires overturning and undermining the existing gender symbolism, which is a social and cultural construct

that is continually created and reinforced through our interactions with others and our environment.

Luce Irigaray and Butler have quite different conceptions of the male signifying economy. Butler presents the idea of performative acts, which people use to actively create and preserve their gender identities, in contrast to Irigaray, who stresses symbolic structures and linguistic representations that uphold gender hierarchies. Butler argues that gender is a socially produced and culturally maintained process rather than a fixed or biologically given essence. She emphasizes that gendered behaviours do not originate from any innate or natural qualities, but are instead learned through socialization and performed repeatedly (*Gender Trouble* 33). The task of challenging the masculine signifying economy is not simply about substituting female symbols with male ones or creating new symbols that depict women's experiences. Instead, it involves acknowledging gender as a social and cultural creation and emphasizing the importance of performative activities. Butler reconceptualizes the masculine signifying economy as a performative and discursive framework that can be undermined and altered through alternative practices and meanings. This is because Butler contends that the performative aspect of gender allows for the subversion of gender norms and the formation of alternative discourses and identities.

Butler finds fault with her approach as it persists in depending on a binary comprehension of gender, where femininity and masculinity are perceived as distinct categories. Butler's approach prioritizes the concept of agency and the potential for resistance and transformation, rather than accepting dominant discourses and identities passively. Gender is not simply a target of criticism in the masculine signifying economy, but rather a social construct that is enacted and strengthened through language and other cultural practices (Rosenberg and Tickner). Butler seeks to challenge the idea that genders are fixed and unalterable categories. According to Butler, gender is not primarily about expressing an existing identity, but rather about consistently reenacting and perpetuating identity norms through language and actions. In simpler terms, the masculine signifying economy is a system that operates by normalizing and repeating specific gendered performances and behaviours. The

notion of male dominance in society is further bolstered by these actions and behaviours, which are often associated with masculinity. These performances are shaped and strengthened by societal norms and expectations, and they operate through a system of hierarchy and exclusion rather than being inherent or unavoidable. Butler argues that certain actions, perspectives, and modes of self-expression are favoured due to their association with masculinity.

Women are traditionally supposed to exhibit qualities such as gentleness, compassion, sensitivity, and obedience, whereas men are typically encouraged to display traits such as assertiveness, ambition, and leadership. This hierarchy is upheld through diverse cultural customs, encompassing language, attire, and conduct. Gender is a multifaceted social and cultural construct that operates on various levels and profoundly influences our experiences and existence (Mazzuca et al.). It goes beyond just personal identification. Butler echoes Foucault's point that the system of gendered signification exists not due to its inherent character, but rather as a result of the historical and cultural processes that have shaped and upheld these gender norms.

Elif Shafak's remarkable and captivating novel *The Gaze* written in 1999 delves into the detrimental consequences, whether apparent or concealed, that might arise from our fascination with individuals who seem distinct from ourselves. The novel, once named 'Mahrem,' was released in the Turkish language. The content is categorized into four distinct portions, which are determined by both age and location. Despite each section being an independent narrative, they are all interconnected and form a coherent whole. Each of the four sections delves into the notion of "gaze" and showcases a unique ensemble of characters and narrators. The characters' intense gaze significantly enhances the story, making them captivating. The underlying disparity in perception between men and women is in their ability to either engage in observation or become the subjects of observation. The novel features parallel narratives and digressions that encompass several settings, including a stylish residential apartment in Istanbul, a 19th-century Turkish freak show, and fur hunts in 17th-century Siberia. The central focus of the novel revolves loosely around an overweight woman filled with anxiety and a dwarf man.

The book portrays an overweight woman and her small spouse as weary of constantly being watched, stared at, and scrutinized wherever they go. They opt to exchange roles because of their naivety and strong disgust at the continuous monitoring of patriarchal cultural norms. The male applies cosmetics when he ventures outside, but the woman adorns her face with a moustache, symbolizing their subconscious inclination to assimilate among the continual observation of bystanders. However, while the woman desires to conceal herself and withdraw from society, the man is subjected to unfriendly glances from observers and constructs his own "Dictionary of Gazes" to scrutinize the boundaries between outward appearance and actuality. Elif Shafak has authored a remarkably remarkable book including fictional yet authentic characters and events that are simultaneously straightforward and exceedingly intricate. The plot of the story not only contains profound symbolism and strategically planned plot twists, but also showcases intricate characters that captivate the reader by exploring the dynamics of observation and being observed, so facilitating the comprehension of a multifaceted socio-psychological phenomenon.

The novel presents two narratives simultaneously. The first story takes place in nineteenth-century 'Pera' and revolves around 'Keramet Mumi Keske Memis Efendi', a man with slanted eyes. His mother died at the moment of his birth, and the midwife was unaware of her death. Elif Shafak offers an objective and indifferent account of the scenario, stating, 'The midwife took a while to comprehend that the mother had passed away, as she was unable to divert her gaze from the newborn'. This infant possessed an additional attribute; something beyond the ordinary. (*The Gaze* 24-33). Consequently, as soon as the baby sets foot on our planet, individuals begin to gaze at him due to his lack of distinctive characteristics or his uncommon traits. Nevertheless, it is indisputable that this recently born youngster does not conform to the traditional criteria of a 'typical' human baby; as one commentator expressed, 'it lacked distinct characteristics and appeared to be made of wax'. Despite his upbringing as a very intellectual individual, it was his eyes, rather than his intellect, that attracted others to him. This distinctive trait of deviating from the standard has persisted within him.

Set in Istanbul throughout the latter half of the 20th century, this narrative explores the progressive transformation of women's viewpoints. Shafak portrays the narrative via the perspective of the protagonist, who is a lady with obesity. Wherever they travel, she and her partner are under constant observation, leading to the formation of an impression on the readers of their situation, emotions, and interactions, sometimes referred to as "the gaze." The account of their encounter, according to their viewpoint, commences quite straightforwardly—they encounter each other for the first time on a bus. They engage in shared activities, develop affection for each other, and ultimately experience romantic feelings. The duo derives utmost solace from one another's companionship, and BC emerges as the epitome of a perfect partner throughout the initial period of their relationship. Through enduring years of continual scrutiny and assessment from males, BC aided her in cultivating a profound affection and admiration for her own physique. Additionally, he assisted her in achieving a sense of comfort and acceptance inside her own physical body. Although she attracted significant attention due to her considerable size, causing others to pause and fix their gaze upon her wherever she went, she would continue to consume food excessively and thus experience further weight gain. This behaviour stemmed from her discomfort with the scrutiny she faced from others, as described in the novel (242).

Elif Shafak critically analyses in *The Gaze* how a male-dominated cultural and economic structure affects women's identities and experiences in Turkish culture. Among the many characters the book follows is an overweight woman who grows more and more fixated with her appearance. Shafak depicts a civilization where male power permeates every aspect of life and is firmly rooted in patriarchal standards. The objectification of women, the focus on aesthetic pleasure, and the reductive definition of femininity—which is mostly determined by youth, attractiveness, and sexual desirability—are characteristics of the story. In this context, women are forced to decide between social exclusion and marginalization or strict adherence to social norms. Men consistently scrutinize and evaluate women's bodies, employing them to assert their dominance and authority (Bareket and Shnabel). An instance of exerting control over women is achieved by depicting their preoccupation with physical appearance, so reducing them to objects that are sought after, owned, and controlled.

In a similar vein, the narrator consistently faces criticism and feelings of guilt due to her body weight, which is perceived as a sign that she fails to conform to societal expectations.

The novel provides a sophisticated examination of the complex interplay between gender and power in modern Turkish culture, showing how patriarchal systems routinely marginalize and abuse women while giving men social privileges and authority. Shafak portrays male characters as individuals who frequently exhibit dominance, entitlement, and superiority, as evidenced by their positions, behaviours, and societal attitudes, both within and outside of Turkish culture. On the other hand, female characters are seen negotiating a delicate landscape, forced to switch between idealized gender roles while being closely observed by men to preserve their safety and social acceptance. The story also shows how women are acutely aware of how social status and gender intertwine to limit their life options and define their perceived value.

The novel's plot elucidates the enduring influence of patriarchal institutions on gender interactions in contemporary cultures and underscores the importance of removing these structures to establish a more equitable and just society for everyone. However, women consistently experience discomfort due to the persistent scrutiny and observation from men, as exemplified by the phrase "She felt her dress with her hands." The woman experienced a sense of relief as she realized that she was not naked in the presence of the unfamiliar guy, as she was clothed in the dress that her grandmother had bought for her (*The Gaze* 216).

The major characters in Elif Shafak's novel struggle with their personal identity and social status, while the dominant influence of a patriarchal culture on gender identification and the impact of gender norms, as dictated by male standards, remain central themes throughout the story. Masculine attributes such as anger, physical prowess, and dominance are esteemed higher than feminine attributes such as compassion, vulnerability, and caregiving. The novel explores the limitations imposed by this system on individuals' autonomy and their capacity for self-expression, as well as its effects on women's experiences and its reinforcement of gender norms. Women play a role in upholding and adopting the cultural norms and expectations that

reinforce male dominance due to the influence of masculine ideals in culture, language, beliefs, behaviours, and institutions. Shafak argues that the only means to achieve genuine equality and liberation is by rejecting patriarchal norms and constructing novel, inclusive, and equitable social frameworks. Nevertheless, our existence is immersed in a realm of spectacles. Regarding the act of observing and being observed.

Women are compelled to conform to patriarchal norms, whether it is by the intense gaze of B-C on the narrator or the scrutiny of any man on any woman; it is through their visual scrutiny, observations, fixed gazes, imposed gazes, and evaluations. Men employ language, discourse, and communication in this manner to dominate and exert control over women. Shafak's depiction of the traditions that maintain and perpetuate gender inequality; her perceptive examination of the inherent nature of male dominance and the need for women to assert themselves and regain their voices in male-dominated environments is comparable to attempting to divert attention from the woman in the crowd.” (*The Gaze* 264)

The main plotline of *The Gaze* ends in a way that emphasizes the novel's cyclical shape, and the work is organized as a sequence of connected stories. The thematic emphasis on the cultural relevance of the "evil eye" in Turkish society is further supported by this structural design. Four concentric rings are commonly used to symbolize the evil eye, or nazar: three outer bands, usually azure, ivory, and occasionally golden, around a central obsidian circle. It is commonly accepted that the innermost circle symbolizes the evil gaze that directs harm or bad luck toward its target. To protect the viewer and the seen from unexpected repercussions, the encircling rings serve as protective layers that are meant to absorb or deflect the gaze's potentially destructive power. In addition to using this sign as a cultural motif, Shafak also uses it as a metaphorical lens to analyse visibility, objectification, and power about gender and social standards. Therefore, the novel's narrative aims to depict the image both structurally and semantically.

The Gaze examines the ideas of observing and being seen within a complex narrative setting that involves multiple perspectives and reflections. It delves into the notion of visually perceiving an item from different temporal dimensions and with varying attitudes. Zeynep Z articulates that Shafak explores the intricacy of observation in her novel by portraying the contrasting and contradictory encounters of the gaze through her three primary female characters (289).

The female characters in the novel are depicted as mere objects of male desire, devoid of agency. They struggle to assert their independence and establish their own identities in a society that exclusively values and rewards traditionally masculine traits. Each tale in *The Gaze* presents a consistent storyline centred around extreme manifestations of physical appearance, encompassing both the most desired and the most odious aspects. These narratives are conveyed through various perspectives and expressed in distinct spatial and temporal contexts. The novel has repeating structures that are facilitated by the utilization of parallels, oppositions, and symmetries (*The Gaze* 289–299). The novel highlights the role of society in establishing and maintaining gender stereotypes and expectations, as well as the challenges individuals face when attempting to resist these expectations and assert their own identities. Under the intense scrutiny, the narrator articulates her struggle in the following manner: “When compelled to engage in an undesirable action, it was not merely my physical being that resisted, but also the very essence of my being. Passersby cast concerned glances at me as I clumsily ascended the slope” (*The Gaze* 109).

The “Dictionary of Gazes” is a collection of visually shown entries that vividly demonstrate how the act of looking and its associated dynamics of control are present throughout human existence. It serves as the most prominent symbol of the gaze in the text. *The Gaze* highlights the oppression and disadvantages faced by women in a culture that is built upon widely accepted masculine stereotypes. Irigaray argues that language functions as a system that reflects the values, perspectives, and concerns of men, as it was created and is being governed by them. In this language system, the feminine voice is devalued while the masculine voice is prioritized. The female characters in the book are consistently subjected to the scrutiny of the male gaze, with their ability to conform to societal standards of beauty being assessed in

conjunction with their external looks. The narrative contains many allusions to the entries in the “Dictionary of Gaze”, which, despite being occasional and brief, contribute to the story's dynamic structure by introducing statements and assertions regarding the act of gazing. Shafak employs repressive techniques to emphasize the significance of play and observation, illustrating the profound impact that a mere act of looking can have. The narrator asserts in *The Gaze* (108) that it was not their stomachs that were unable to be satisfied, but rather their visual perception.

The *Gaze* explores the impact of cultural norms and societal expectations on our perception of gender and identity. Nevertheless, the book challenges readers to engage in critical thinking regarding these norms and seek alternative inclusive and egalitarian methods for understanding and valuing gender and sexuality. Moreover, the Turkish language reinforces gender norms and stereotypes through several allusions, such as the prevalent use of masculine pronouns and the connections between specific words and phrases and femininity or masculinity. Shafak, on the other hand, refutes these assumptions and shows that there is no inherent connection between gender and modes of communication or thinking. She promotes a broader and varied approach to identity and expression, highlighting the detrimental and limiting effects of gendered stereotypes. In essence, *The Gaze* offers a powerful analysis of how women's identities and experiences in Turkish culture are influenced by the economic aspects of masculine symbolism. Shafak's depiction of various women's lives urges readers to recognize the complexity and subtlety of these experiences. It also encourages them to reassess their preconceived notions and biases about gender and authority.

Judith Butler argues in *Gender Trouble* (10) that if gender is understood as the cultural interpretations assigned to the physical body, it cannot be said that gender necessarily corresponds to one's biological sex. Michael Foucault, however, oversimplified this argument by presenting an implicit argument. According to his argument in *The History of Sexuality* (36), this refers to the process of converting sexual activity into a form of communication that is not driven by the goal of eliminating sexual practices that are related to reproduction. Thus, by employing a systematic and constantly evolving communication, language has played a role in

converting biological sex into the concept of gender. Words manipulate gender by attributing masculine traits with binary power while suppressing feminine traits, so shaping societal expectations of men and women in favour of the dominant male paradigm. The utilization of language and culture as symbols has had a substantial impact on the establishment and perpetuation of women's subjugation, as language primarily represents men and the masculine. Evidence suggests that men possess greater opportunities to attain positions of authority compared to women, and that men are perceived as the societal norm and representatives of the 'Masculine Signifying Economy'.

The novel *The Bastard of Istanbul*, written by Elif Shafak in 2006, features a broad ensemble of characters, each facing distinct obstacles and having unique experiences. Elif Shafak skilfully constructs a captivating narrative set between Turkey and the United States, effectively portraying Turkey's tumultuous, intense, and tumultuous history. At the heart of these historical, national, and personal events is Asya, a 19-year-old who is passionate about Johnny Cash and the French Existentialists, and is referred to as the "bastard" in the title. The central focus of the novel revolves around Asya, the four sisters of the Kazanci family residing in a large household in Istanbul. These sisters include Zehila, Asya's mother; Banu, who has recently embraced her newly discovered clairvoyant powers; Cevriye, a widowed high school teacher; and Feride, a hypochondriac fixated on an imminent catastrophe. The novel's overarching significance is also greatly influenced by Armanoush, the Armenian daughter of a distant brother who lives in Arizona with his partner. The Turkish history takes a new turn as Armanoush secretly leaves for Turkey, and the sections on the Armenian Massacre are expertly revised. It uncovers the enigmas that bind the two families together and link them to the killings and forced removals of Armenians in 1915.

Asya, an indignant 19-year-old, vehemently opposes the societal and familial expectations imposed upon her due to her perception of being an outsider in a household dominated by authoritative women. Asya is the youngest female member of the Kazanci family and was born and raised in Istanbul. Asya, being born out of wedlock, lacks knowledge of her paternal identity. She is conflicted between her

desire to uncover the truth about her origins and her aspiration to forge a future unburdened by her ambiguous past and unknown lineage. Armanoush makes an unplanned trip to Turkey during a period when the past has caused a feeling of disorder in Asya. Armanoush, an American Armenian, belongs to the Armenian diaspora and grapples with the burdensome legacy of her ancestors. Her objective is to ultimately establish her own sense of self by returning to the country where her family experienced immense sorrow and devastation, including the deportations and killings in 1915. Istanbul is sometimes characterized as a metaphorical city that embodies the juxtaposition between the Eastern and Western cultures, the historical and the modern, and a fusion of vibrant aesthetics, solid architecture, and melodic tunes. Moreover, the city has an impenetrable and deceptive exterior, and the two girls set in motion a sequence of occurrences that unveil deeply concealed realities, which will unexpectedly establish connections between them and their families. The narrative, expertly woven, explores the challenging endeavour of reconciling with the past while maintaining the belief that the concealed truth from the past may someday come to light.

The novel explores the concept of a 'masculine signifying economy', referring to how male-dominated Turkish society uses patriarchal systems and structures to exert power and authority over women and their bodies. This theme also delves into the hidden and underlying events that have occurred in the past. Male individuals exercise dominance over the females in their personal relationships, as evidenced by the numerous female characters that are influenced by this power dynamic throughout the book. For instance, Mustafa, who is Asya's uncle, is depicted as a domineering and oppressive spouse who seeks complete authority over his wife and daughters. Additionally, Armanoush faces societal and familial pressure to conform to conventional gender norms and expectations. Shafak's writing offers a persuasive analysis of how patriarchal institutions can exert a substantial detrimental impact on individuals and societies right from the beginning. The novel "The Bastard of Istanbul" provides a nuanced and insightful examination of the complex issues of identity, culture, and power via the perspectives of its diverse cast of characters.

The Bastard of Istanbul is a complex literary piece that explores historical, identity, and familial topics via the lens of the female characters, particularly in connection to their individual histories and family backgrounds. The women in the book have challenges in asserting their agency within a society that places greater importance on men than on women. They persistently strive to establish and assert their identities in a culture that is unfriendly towards them. Zeliha, the mother of the main character Asya, is a fiercely independent woman who strongly resents the patriarchal constraints put on her by family and culture. Asya, her daughter is known as the 'bastard of Istanbul. Zeliha is powerless to stop Asya from being reared by her traditional and conservative grandmother, who supports and perpetuates the patriarchal economic system, despite her tenacious efforts to speak up within a patriarchal system. Armanoush, meantime, makes a concerted effort to protect and reestablish her Armenian cultural legacy while she is in Istanbul. Armanoush faces pressure to fit in with society's expectations, which are mostly influenced by male-centric norms and standards, much like her mother, who was forced to repress her ethnic identity in favour of assimilating into American culture.

The Gaze starts by exploring the patriarchal systems that are ingrained in Turkish culture, where male characters are frequently portrayed as powerful, controlling, and cunning, while female characters are supposed to be submissive and obedient. The widespread usage of cultural constructions and masculine symbols, which normalize and uphold male authority, reinforces this dynamic. It is evident from Shafak's characterization how these portrayals uphold hierarchical gender relations and give preference to male viewpoints over female ones, therefore perpetuating systemic gender inequity. Furthermore, the novel examines the role of language in the economy of masculine signification, which results in the marginalization of women's voices and the perpetuation of gender stereotypes. For instance, the characters in the story often employ gender-specific vocabulary to depict individuals and items. Male characters are commonly portrayed as authoritative and dominant, whilst feminine characters are represented as docile and subservient. Ultimately, the novel examines how women navigate and respond to language and symbols that are typically associated with males. The female characters in the novel are shown as formidable, autonomous, and adept at challenging the gender norms of

Turkish culture. Additionally, they possess a resolute determination to advocate for their rights and assert their position in society, displaying an unwavering refusal to be silenced.

The Bastard of Istanbul, the second novel selected for this study, presents a gripping examination of Turkish society, where deeply ingrained patriarchal structures dictate the roles and conduct expected of women. By depicting male family members as having power and influence over their female counterparts, the story highlights how gender inequalities are perpetuated in both the home and broader societal settings. Social norms of reliance and obedience are reflected in traditional settings, where women are frequently expected to marry young and be subject to their husbands' authority. Shafak does, however, also offer opportunities for defiance and self-confidence. The novel demonstrates female agency through characters like Asya and Armanoush, showing that women can pursue personal independence and make independent decisions even in the face of constrictive patriarchal norms.

Asya and Armanoush grapple with their identities and experience a sense of alienation from their Armenian and Turkish heritage simultaneously. They face difficulties in reconciling their identities within a culture that values masculine traits and is unfriendly towards anything that diverges from the standard. Elif Shafak portrays the patriarchal nature of Turkish society, illustrating the challenges faced by women who challenge deeply entrenched male-dominated norms and the privileges associated with masculine traits, sometimes resulting in animosity and disdain. The novel *The Bastard of Istanbul* by Elif Shafak explores the intricate dynamics of gender, culture, and identity in present-day Turkey.

The core of the masculine signifying economy is the concept that male power is established through language and discourse, where language is used to maintain and reinforce male control over women. This is exemplified throughout the novel through the utilization of Turkish language and culture to uphold patriarchal norms and stereotypes. Armanoush has obstacles when conducting her family history research in Istanbul due to the dominant narrative around the Armenian Genocide. This topic is considered taboo in Turkish society due to the widespread denial of its occurrence. Shafak denounces the patriarchal tendencies that have shaped Turkish culture and

encouraged the suppression of dissenting voices through her character. *The Bastard of Istanbul* explores various themes, including the complexities of self-identification, intergenerational conflicts between Turkish and Armenian families, and clashing of cultures (Simon). The female protagonists in the book face discrimination due to their gender and Armenian heritage. Additionally, the book explores the interconnections between gender and ethnicity.

Armanoush, a young American lady, represents the Armenian perspective in the cultural conflict depicted in the book. She travels to Istanbul to reconnect with her Armenian roots. Armanoush is depicted as a resilient and self-reliant woman who, upon encountering her family's patriarchal culture that prioritizes male dominance and marginalizes women, defied conventional gender norms, defied societal expectations, and asserted her individuality as a woman and an autonomous member of society. Shafak depicts the harmful consequences of this patriarchal system, such as the distortion and obliteration of women's identities, as well as the perpetuation of political and gender-related cultural conflicts (Waniek). Men persist as the prevailing social entity, while women are restricted to subordinate roles that are defined in relation to men. This refers to the concept of the masculine signifying economy, a social structure that places importance on masculinity and uses it as a standard against which all other identities are evaluated. Shafak depicts the male characters in *The Bastard of Istanbul* as powerful, both politically and socially, while the female characters struggle to assert themselves in a culture that marginalizes them.

In essence, *The Bastard of Istanbul* explores the complex interactions between gender, identity, language, culture, history, and the covert power structures that shape social and political reality. Shafak highlights how patriarchal structures that value masculine traits and viewpoints dominate society, influencing both individual and societal opinions. The novel examines how these interlocking systems serve to exclude and repress people who identify as feminine or who don't fit into traditional gender roles. By doing this, it reveals how patriarchy affects cognitive frameworks, the fundamental constitution of the self and society, and social behaviour. Similarly, the female characters in the novel consistently face the presumptions and anticipations imposed on them due to their gender, and their efforts to express themselves are often

disregarded or suppressed. Through their interactions, disobedience of patriarchal standards, and engagement with alternate modalities of knowing and existence, the female characters in *The Bastard of Istanbul* aggressively confront and disrupt masculine norms. Elif Shafak explores the connections between gender, culture, politics, and reactionary nationalism using a complex and multi-layered storytelling technique (Radu). The novel makes the argument that a more inclusive, egalitarian view of gender, identity, culture, politics, and history is necessary to overcome structural barriers and bring about both individual and community change.

Elif Shafak's jovial and lively sequel to her *The Forty Rules of Love* reveals two seductive parallel stories that, when combined, embody the poet's enduring message of love. One is set in the nineteenth century, during which Rumi met Shams of Tabriz, a whirling dervish, who served as his spiritual mentor. Ella Rubenstein, a forty-year-old lady, accepts her life's complacency when she accepts a position as a literary agent's reader. Ella's first task is to read and report on the novel *Sweet Blasphemy*, written by a man named Aziz Zahara. As Ella reads the book, she starts to realize how little love she has in her life compared to the love the characters in the book seem to have. Ella finds his account of Shams's quest for Rumi fascinating, particularly the dervish's pivotal role in converting the affluent but miserable clergyman into a devoted mystic, an ardent poet, and a champion of love. Shams's lessons, or rules, which provide insight into an antiquated philosophy emphasizing the oneness of all people and religions and the existence of love in every one of us, also make an impression on her. As she continues reading, she understands that Zahara, like Shams, has come to set her free and that Rumi's story mirrors her own.

In Elif Shafak's *The Forty Rules of Love*, two parallel storylines—one set in the thirteenth century and the other in the modern world—are interwoven in a dual narrative framework. The novel contrasts the historical and spiritual connection between the well-known Persian poet Jalal al-Din Rumi and his spiritual guide, Shams of Tabriz, with the contemporary romance between Ella Rubenstein and Aziz Zahara. Shafak examines the transformational potential of love—both romantic and divine—through this multi-layered story. The novel's symbolic complexity is further enhanced by its thematic organization around the five classical elements—earth,

water, fire, air, and ether—each of which represents a distinct aspect of life and spirituality. The opening of each chapter, which takes place in the summer of 2008 in America and alternates between mid-thirteenth-century Turkey and the twenty-first century in America, is the letter "B," which has the same sound as the beginning of the Quran in Arabic. The novel's modern plot gradually emerges through Ella and Aziz's email exchanges, but the ancient tale is told in twelve different voices—two of which are that of the main characters, Shams and Rumi—and is by far the most compelling and comprehensive section of the work. Many other people are also significant, such as Rumi's family and a group of odd but fascinating characters like Hasan the Beggar, Suleiman the Drunk, and Desert Rose the Harlot.

Despite the Turkish constitution's ban on gender discrimination, R Diana Monisha contends that gender bias is pervasive in modern-day Turkey. Unresolved cultural and linguistic issues surrounding gender justice persist in this society, where women are subjected to molestation, femicide, honour killing, domestic abuse, and dominance. Elif Shafak uses the character Ella to shed light on Turkish women. Shafak employs the experiences of women as a means of examining the condition of women from a variety of angles, including those related to gender and class, culture and religion, ethnicity, and race. *The Forty Rules of Love* by Elif Shafak examines a number of topics, such as spirituality, love, and identity, while also delving into the prevailing cultural and societal ideals that elevate men and masculinity above women and their feelings of self-indulgence. Ella Rubinstein is a character in the novel who battles to develop her own voice and identity as well as her duty as a woman in a patriarchal culture. She also experiences emotional constraints from society. She has been dissatisfied in her marriage and decides to communicate with Aziz Zahara, the author of *Sweet Blasphemy*, online to explore her feelings.

Ella, the novel's protagonist, finds it difficult to balance her obligations as a mother and a wife. She feels stuck in her marriage and unfulfilled in her motherly and wifely duties, which are often associated with women. All of those changes, though, when she starts reading *Sweet Blasphemy*, aptly named because it's a novel within a novel about the love tale of Rumi and Shams. Shams's lessons highlight the value of love and connection over power and domination, and Ella learns this lesson from the

story. She starts to question conventional gender norms and expectations as she grows more perceptive and aware of men and women as equal partners in the quest for spiritual enlightenment. Through her unconscious, involuntary psychological encounters with Rumi and his poetry, and Shams and his ideas, Ella starts to challenge the boundaries and restrictions of conventional relationships and consider alternative paths for her own life. Her fantasy of the ideal life takes flight inside of her, and she yearns to soar above social conventions and predetermined roles. This illustrates how gender norms and expectations can restrict people and perpetuate inequality, but they can also be challenged and overcome by people via the force of love and connection.

Ella is greatly touched by Aziz's story, which affirms the feminine as a source of creative and spiritual force. As Ella immerses herself in the novel and corresponds with Aziz, she starts to doubt the presumptions and ideals of her former existence. Her perspective on the world begins to shift, favouring empathy, compassion, and creativity above the power, control, and competitiveness that are hallmarks of patriarchy. In this way, the novel critiques the economics of masculine signification and makes the case for the need for a more inclusive and equitable society. The novel presents a vision of a more holistic and linked world that honours the unique contributions of all people, regardless of gender or social standing, by embracing the feminine and the spiritual. Ella was greatly influenced by Shams of Tabriz, a figure who embodies a more feminine, perceptive, and spiritual way of life. Shams pushes Rumi to examine his own presumptions and ideas and urges him to look within for fulfilment rather than looking outside of himself for approval. The work makes the argument that the social norm is ultimately harmful and constrictive through the connection between Shams and Rumi, and that a more equal and objective society must appreciate feminine and non-conventional sources of information and experience.

Ella, a woman who was unhappy with her life and set out on a voyage of self-discovery through reading a novel that ignites her passion, only needed a spark to start a new life. Ella is able to escape the confines of the patriarchal culture and find joy in her own life thanks to Shams, a traveling dervish who questions traditional ideas of gender and femininity. She gains the ability to accept and value her own femininity

while rejecting the constrictive gender norms that have been placed upon her. Shams is a free spirit who celebrates his uniqueness and rejects conventional conventions. His narrative inspires Ella to follow suit, pushing her to embrace her ambitions and passions while rejecting the constraints placed on her by society. Through her conversations with Shams and her developing comprehension of his philosophy, Ella starts to have doubts about the customs, cultures, and traditions that have shaped her existence. She comes to see that she has been socialized to devalue feminine traits like sensitivity, intuition, and emotional expression while elevating established norms for women under masculine violence and authority. In a culture that minimizes feminine attributes, she finds it difficult to find meaning and purpose. She comes to reject the constraints of patriarchal thinking and adopt a more comprehensive understanding of gender and sexuality as a result of her interactions with the character Shams of Tabriz.

Through Shams, Shafak presents an atypical character; the novel implies that there are other ways to be and live in the world that aren't governed by patriarchal or conventional societal systems. The novel also makes the case that love and spirituality, which provide a means of connecting with people on a more genuine, profound level that goes beyond social conventions and gender, may be extremely effective tools for confronting and transforming. Since Shams is portrayed as a nonconformist, this idea serves as a theoretical framework to explain the power relations between men and women in traditional communities. Through its examination of spirituality, love, and self-discovery, the novel also explores the role of women in traditional Islamic societies. *The Forty Rules of Love's* two parallel storylines pose significant issues regarding gender, power, and identity in society and provide a convincing picture of how these problems can be resolved. The patriarchal standards of their culture, where they are frequently denied agency and autonomy and are required to adhere to traditional gender roles, are depicted as limiting the female characters in *The Forty Rules of Love*. Shafak presents characters that question prevailing gender hierarchies and power systems to critically examine the conflicts between tradition and modernity. The novel challenges the tenets of patriarchal control through these depictions and creates opportunities for rethinking a more just and inclusive social structure.

The story vividly illustrates how male characters in the novel are required to adhere to a particular ideal of masculinity, which is defined by strength, assertiveness, and emotional detachment, as it follows Shams and Rumi's spiritual journey. For example, Ella is inspired by the work of a male poet from the thirteenth century named Rumi, who finds it difficult to balance his need for spiritual satisfaction with his responsibilities as a husband and father. His attempts to strike a balance between his love for poetry and his obligation to his family sometimes result in conflict. Shams chooses to impart his knowledge to someone on par with him, someone as sincere and in love as he is, because he is a spiritual person who sees glimpses of the future and anticipates his own death. He makes the long journey to Baghdad in search of Rumi, a cleric with an unsatisfied spirit. While spreading knowledge, he encounters hostility and disappointment from others, particularly from Rumi's family. He shows Rumi the way of light and love in the face of all odds and perils, which is why he became one of the most sought-after Sufis and poets of all time. The storyline of the 13th century is especially polyphonic, presenting us with the views of many individuals, not just the Shams and Rumi. Examples of these people are the roadside leper, the amateur intern at a madrasa, and the barren harlot.

To sum up, Elif Shafak's *The Forty Rules of Love* is told through two parallel stories that reflect one another across two radically different cultures and seven centuries, as well as through a variety of events, such as Alladin assisting in the killing of Shams, Ella leaving her husband to join Aziz, Aziz's death, and Ella following in his footsteps. Shams of Tabriz, a mystic provocateur who confronts societal injustice, religious bigotry, and conventional wisdom wherever he finds it, nevertheless, continues to be the focal point of the book. His soul aims to change his pupil, a devoted but rather smug, unmystical preacher, into one of the greatest poets of all time and the "voice of love." He is looking for Rumi, his spiritual companion. It becomes necessary to overcome patriarchy, established identity structures, and societal conventions in order to complete the path of soul and self-realization. The novel's narrative framework portrays Rumi as a well-respected preacher in his society, and Shams has to guide him away from the consolation of his honourable lifestyle and the fleeting pleasures of ego. Essentially, Rumi and Ella are compelled to confront and subsequently renounce the seeming stability and security of their life in favour of

the unpredictability, exhilaration, and heartache of love as a result of their seemingly ephemeral relationships with Shams and Aziz. Both Shams and Aziz disappear quickly and neither can make any kind of promise of eternal life or everlasting bliss. They can provide a taste of mystical union, divine love, and the profound peace that results from the genuine self—which is revealed via the soul rather than through language or social acceptance—emerging when the false self—which was created to satisfy society's expectations of respectability—is shed. Shaking off all knowledge, Shams shares the forty rules of love, fundamental Sufi wisdom that he both preaches and lives by. He also constantly rebels against social and religious norms, putting himself in danger and inciting the contempt and wrath of the literal-minded, self-righteous moralists around him. With his story of Rumi and Shams, Aziz convinces Ella to leave a marriage that has become emotionally and spiritually burdensome for her, and he inspires Rumi to become one of the most passionate and deep voices of knowledge in the world.

Honor, the following novel chosen for this research, delves into the complex history and generational pain underlying the "honour killing" carried out by Iskender Toprak, a young Turkish-Kurdish man who kills his own mother. Elif Shafak tells the tale of the Toprak family over three generations, offering a complex critique of the deeply ingrained patriarchal ideals that justify this kind of brutality. The book, which is addressed "to those who see and those who hear," vehemently explores the particular forms of patriarchy in Turkish society and condemns the acceptance and continuation of violence against women in the guise of honour. Critics greeted the book with great enthusiasm, stating that Shafak "turns what might seem a polemic against honour killing in lesser hands into a searing but empathetic and ultimately universal family tragedy" (*Honor* 33). The storylines of twins born in a Kurdish village are followed in this gripping narrative of families, love, and miscommunications. Jamila stays behind to pursue her career as a midwife, while Pembe moves to London with her Turkish husband Adem in the hopes of starting again for the family. They must decide whether to adhere to the established customs in London or make every effort to blend in. Iskender, the eldest son, must take over and become the one who won't allow the family reputation to be tarnished once Adem deserts them. And Iskender will learn that even when you love someone with all of

your heart, you can still be willing to hurt them when Pembe has an affair with a man named Elias.

Pembe, the protagonist of the book, battles throughout to get her voice heard in a culture that still views men as the alpha males. She immigrates to England with her spouse, Adem, and their kids from a traditional Turkish household. The expectations that her family, community, and husband have of her limit Pembe in spite of her attempts to adjust to her new environment and embrace a more independent identity. The idea that Pembe's worth and value as a woman are dependent on her capacity to uphold family and community traditions lies at the core of Pembe's struggles. Her husband, Adem, demands obedience and subservience from his wife and is possessive, jealous, and in charge. The patriarchal ideals of their society, which emphasize male dominance and female subservience, support Adem's actions. Pembe encounters opposition from her spouse and community when she tries to question traditional gender norms. She pays a high price for her disobedience when she chooses to break away from Adem and pursue a connection with another guy. She experiences rejection from her friends and family as a result.

The novel then jumps ahead more than fifty years to the start of a multigenerational tale. A woman named Naze in a Kurdish region of Turkey understands that it is her responsibility to bear a son. Women who have given birth to daughter's weep here. Rather, she gives birth to twin girls, naming them Kader, which means 'Destiny' and Yeter, which means 'Enough'. Her spouse renames them Pembe and Jamila out of concern that their names tempt fate. The girls are dubbed Jamila Yeter ('Enough Beauty') and Pembe Kader ('Pink Destiny') (34). The girls have the same appearance, yet they have quite distinct personalities. Adem, a young man, develops feelings for Jamila; however, once Jamila is kidnapped by another man, Adem feels that Jamila's honour has been violated, as does their entire town. Rather, Adem marries Pembe. Although it is obvious from the start that this relationship will fail, the young couple nevertheless relocates to Istanbul, where they give birth to their first child, Iskender, before moving to London, where they eventually give birth to Yunus and Esma. Jamila stays in their hometown in the interim. She turns into a semi-

legendary 'virgin midwife', a lone woman who travels under God's protection to help with difficult births, after refusing to get married.

Through the figure of Pembe, Elif Shafak examines how patriarchal cultural standards affect women's life in *Honor*. The novel shows how deeply rooted cultural norms that value masculine over femininity frequently restrict women's autonomy, agency, and self-expression. Shafak also emphasizes the bravery and fortitude needed by women to oppose and challenge these constrictive standards. Characters like Adem and their views on gender roles are rooted in the larger patriarchal ethos of Turkish-Kurdish society, which promotes male virility and the idea of masculine honour. Men are under tremendous pressure in this setting to demonstrate their masculinity by dominating women and other people. Pembe is a more sophisticated and nuanced figure than Adem, who has strict ideals. Pembe finds it difficult to balance her personal goals and objectives with what society and her spouse expect of her (78). She wants greater agency and independence in her life, but the symbolic authority is always putting a stop to her. It demonstrates how rigid gender norms imposed by patriarchal societies can restrict people's independence and support inequity. The work also emphasizes the significance of questioning these conventions and promoting greater gender equality through the character of Pembe.

This effectively means that Adem is freer than Pembe to pursue the love that their marriage does not provide. He starts playing poker and strikes up a relationship with Roxana, an escort at one of his preferred gaming establishments. By the late 1970s, Adem had forsaken his family and wasted their money on gambling. Driven to provide solely for her children, Pembe accepts a job at a nearby hair salon, where she blossoms and becomes further integrated into the British culture. She eventually meets Elias, a passionate chef and movie fan, when she sneaks into abandoned theatres. Pembe, who is still bound by conventional norms, insists that their connection be strictly platonic and maintains it a secret. Iskender, Pembe's son, and Adem, her spouse, both utilize foul language and violence to establish masculine authority over women. They think that because women are less than males, they should be subjugated and punished when they behave inappropriately. Pembe's kinder, more supportive language is contrasted with this one, which is undervalued

and written off as feeble and ineffectual. Pembe is ensnared in a patriarchal culture that prioritizes male pride and privilege over women's rights and independence.

Pembe's children, however, have all handled the difficulty of growing up as Turkish Kurds in a strange place in a different way. Iskender, who was born in Turkey and brought up by his mother, a 'little sultan', who never stopped considering it a victory that she had given birth to a boy, maintains a traditional mindset. Racist bullying causes his allegiance to Turkish and Muslim ideals to become more rigid. He soon joins a group of Muslim adolescents who have become somewhat politicized. Yunus, the youngest sibling, immerses himself in the hippy scene of London in the 1970s. When he is seven years old, the hippies of a nearby squat adopt him as a sort of mascot. A wise man above his years, he takes in their principles and gets inked. Bookish Esma has to work to maintain harmony in her family while Iskender grows more radicalized and Yunus takes up an extreme brand of Western liberalism. She must find a way to satisfy the needs of both groups. As time goes on, Iskender grows more and more certain that there is no viable path for them to follow: "We Topraks were only passers-by in this city—a half-Turkish, half-Kurdish family in the wrong end of London" (44). Turkey's patriarchal society is portrayed as heavily emphasizing male honour and reputation. It is expected of the male characters to be bold, strong, and in charge, and of the female characters to be subservient, obedient, and moral. The social and cultural structure of Turkish society is firmly rooted in the gendered division of roles and expectations, which is upheld by institutions like tradition, family, and religion (112).

Shafak skilfully crafts the narrative with the dexterity of a skilled storyteller. Given that her son Iskender was the son that her mother Naze could never have, Pembe—who is described as "a woman of untenable thoughts and unfounded fears" (56)—treats him as her greatest accomplishment in life. "[Pembe] had turned superstitious abruptly, almost overnight: the night Iskender was born" (64), despite always being more aspirational and rebellious than her identical twin Jamila. "While Iskender craved to control the world and Esma to change it once and for all, Yunus wanted to comprehend it" (211), she says, astounded at how different all three of her children are from one another. Iskender is a man who is counting the days he has left

in a London prison after killing his mother, when the tale begins. When he killed her for the sake of family honour, he was just 16 years old. The topic of honour killings may strike some readers as being overly overt, or they may think that the author is trying to capitalize on the widespread belief that honour killings occur on a regular basis in Muslim communities. Shafak, however, speaks for the youth of Turkey. Young women tend to identify most with her brand of feminism because it allows them to express who they are without having to worry about whether or not the two genders are equal.

Iskender, the oldest son, feels betrayed and ashamed when he finds out that his mother has been having an affair. This illustrates the notion that, in patriarchal society, males are supposed to protect the honour and reputation of their families, and that, if they deviate from this ideal, their authority and masculinity are threatened. Religion and belief play a significant part, but Shafak is once again deft and impartial; even the most extreme beliefs seem to fit into the lives she depicts within their respective circumstances. She doesn't minimize the deeply held beliefs some of her characters hold, but she also doesn't overdramatize or hold God responsible for human actions that are done against their better judgment. Relationships between family, friends, and lovers are also major themes, as is love. That's saying something in a novel this complicated because there wasn't a single connection in the book that felt forced for the plot or unrealistic. Although there are many dishonourable acts that men do, it is women who bring shame to the family. In *Honor*, Elif Shafak avoids simplifying the moral core of her story. Her depiction encompasses both good and bad people of both sexes—men with brains and moral character, and women who either accept or defy social norms about honour and shame (174). Shafak delicately addresses several important topics without resorting to didacticism, including nationalism, religious fanaticism, the pressure from society to adhere to Western ideals of beauty, the perils of strict gender roles, and the widespread effects of capitalism. These topics, which provide a multi-layered critique of the sociocultural fabric of Turkish-Kurdish society, naturally arise inside the story.

To sum up, Shafak's novel reveals the ways in which society limits the agency and independence of women and emphasizes the critical necessity for these norms to

be challenged in order to provide spaces where women can freely express their identities and aspirations. The four siblings in the book are shown as growing up in a conventional Turkish home with a strong father role. The siblings' lives are impacted in many ways by the father's rigid commitment to patriarchal ideas and views, which also define the relationships within the family. When their mother confronts these expectations by expressing her wishes and seeking independence, she is chastised by Adem and the greater community. Iskender feels emasculated by Pembe's quest for independence and wants to assert his power over her through violence. The novel illustrates the harmful repercussions of this system and the urgency of confronting it to establish a more equal and just society. Therefore, women are often objectified, silenced, and repressed, as their experiences and viewpoints are rarely appreciated or acknowledged.

Elif Shafak's novel *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in this Strange World* recounts the narrative of Leila, a sex worker who has been murdered and her body left in a dumpster. The novel dives into the lives of Leila's friends who seek to give her a dignified funeral and come to terms with her loss. In the first minute following her death, Tequila Leila's consciousness begins to ebb, slowly and gradually, like a tide receding from the shore. Her brain cells, having run out of blood, were now utterly starved of oxygen. But they did not shut down. Not right away. For Leila, each minute after her death brings a sensuous memory: the taste of spiced goat stew, sacrificed by her father to celebrate the long-awaited birth of a son; the sight of bubbling vats of lemon and sugar which the women use to wax their legs while the men attend mosque; the scent of cardamom coffee that Leila shares with a handsome student in the brothel where she works. Each memory, too, recalls the friends she made at each critical stage in her life - people who are now anxiously attempting to find her.

The harsh reality that Leila and her group of female friends—all of whom work in the sex industry—face are depicted in Elif Shafak's *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World*. These women must negotiate a legal and sociocultural framework that is set up to take advantage of, isolate, and demean them. Men in positions of social and institutional power subject them to systematic violence, abuse, and discrimination. While male domination continues to affect public discourse,

female voices are often muted, their stories erased or ignored. Because Leila's murderer is a man with a history of gender-based violence and the police officers assigned to her case are presented as callous individuals who reject her identity and humanity due to her status as a sex worker, the novel highlights the complicity of men in maintaining such oppression.

Therefore, the narrative shows the experience of Tequila Leila as a victim of the patriarchal culture. Tequila is a sex worker who is killed and dumped in a garbage, although her story is not merely one of victims. Through a series of flashbacks, we see the perseverance and strength of her character as she builds tight ties with her fellow sex workers and finds moments of joy and happiness despite her harsh circumstances. Moreover, the novel shows how the patriarchal society also oppresses other marginalized groups, such as LGBTQ individuals and religious minorities. By depicting Leila's broad group of friends, Elif Shafak challenges conventional gender norms and society prejudices in this novel. One of her friends is a transgender man who experiences systematic abuse and discrimination from his family and society at large, and another is a member of a religious minority who is shunned by her own group. By featuring male characters who exhibit emotional depth, empathy, and vulnerability, the book further challenges traditional gender norms. Notably, despite his own mental health issues, Leila's closest male friend, Nalan, is shown as a kind and sympathetic person who helps Leila and other sex workers. Shafak highlights the complexity of identity, marginalization, and resistance while criticizing strict gender binary thinking through these depictions (136).

The male characters in the novel, especially those in positions of authority, embody a masculine system of meaning. They are perceived as assertive, dominating, and controlling, asserting their entitlement over women's bodies and lives. Conversely, the female characters are marginalized, mistreated, and subjected to violence and cruelty. The novel's protagonist, Tequila Leila, works as a sex worker and is murdered in the first chapter. However, her memory lives on through her five close friends, each of whom tells a chapter of the story. Through their narratives, we witness how the women are compelled to navigate the symbolic system of masculinity and the various forms of violence it perpetuates. Leila is compelled to leave her home

at a young age and survive on the streets, where she is constantly at risk of abuse and harassment. Additionally, the character of Humeyra, a Kurdish woman, is forcibly sterilized by the state as part of its efforts to control the Kurdish community.

Using Butler and Irigaray's theoretical frameworks, this chapter has critically analysed the idea of the male signifying economy, showing how patriarchal institutions, cultural norms, and language codes uphold binary gender hierarchies. These theoretical paradigms receive practical depth through Elif Shafak's narrative universe, demonstrating how masculine-coded institutions that marginalize alternative gendered existences are maintained in both traditional and contemporary situations. Shafak's literature reveals the mechanisms by which identity is controlled and normalized by emphasizing the performative aspect of gender and the recurrence of culturally acceptable behaviours.

The chapter essentially demonstrates that gender performance is an active negotiation of power within patriarchal contexts rather than a passive act by bridging theoretical analysis with textual interpretation. This comprehension flows seamlessly into the following chapter, "Butlerian Agency in Shafak's Novels," which moves the emphasis from structural criticism to personal resistance. The upcoming discussion delves into how Shafak's characters, who operate within constrictive social orders, reclaim autonomy, resist dominance, and redefine the contours of selfhood through performative subversion, are illuminated by Butler's concept of agency—as a dynamic and oppositional process.

Chapter III: Butlerian Agency in Shafak's Novels

This chapter seeks to examine Judith Butler's theoretical framework on agency and power as applied to the novels of Elif Shafak. Shafak conceptualized a fictional realm characterized by an abundance of female characters that grapple with the challenges of resisting patriarchal power structures and the prevailing discourses inside society. According to Butler, the notion of agency may be understood as an expansion of performativity, since it necessitates the first performance of an action by an agent, which thereafter becomes performative via recurrent enactment. Furthermore, Butler posits that agency is the active construction of one's own identity and the deliberate resistance to dominant power structures, societal conventions, and normative frameworks. According to Butler, an individual assumes the role of an agent when they engage in behaviour that deviates from the norm.

In her seminal work, *Bodies that Matter*, Butler posits that agency originates from the subject, denoted as the 'I', and is intricately linked to power dynamics and discourse. Butler argues that agency is formed when the 'I' resists or opposes prevailing power structures. She argues:

The "I" who would oppose its construction is always in some sense drawing from that construction to articulate its opposition, further "I" draws what is called its agency in part through being implicated in the very relations of power, indeed enabled by the relations of power that the "I" oppose is not as a consequence to be reducible to their existing form. (*Bodies that Matter* 122)

The paradox of agency in Butlerian theory is emphasized by this quotation: the subject ("I") cannot exist independently of the discursive power structures it aims to oppose. This realization suggests that resistance is not something that exists outside of power but is rather facilitated and moulded by it, and it critically reveals how Shafak's protagonists obtain their agency from within the exact patriarchal structures they oppose. Gender is a sociocultural construct that arises through the process of socialization and the impact of cultural norms. It is through social interactions that individuals acquire and internalize the notions of femininity and masculinity.

To refute the idea that social conceptions were primarily impacted by biological considerations, the act of separating sex and gender was performed to foster liberty (Sveinsdóttir 48). For instance, a person could exhibit male actions and have a masculine perception of himself despite having physiological traits that are frequently linked with femininity. When gender is viewed as a construct that is separate from and unrelated to biological sex, it takes on a detached condition because it has no set associations and can be applied to any object to represent it. Butler (*Gender Trouble* 10) claims that the phrase ‘feminine gender’ refers to a variety of bodily forms, including masculine and feminine bodies.

Power, rightly controls Butlerian subjectivity and agency, as well as the organization and possibility for resistance of the act of ‘countering’. Butler contends that the creation of the subject or agent takes place within the constraints of a powerful discourse that determines its very being (*The Psychic Life of Power* 17). This suggests that the subject is fundamentally given life by a powerful someone whose act of hailing sets them in a position of subordination. In her book titled *The Psychic Life of Power*, Butler meditates on the development of agency just to investigate the ways in which people challenge the governing framework that supports their emergence as subjects. On the other hand, the focus of Butlerian theory is a kind of subjectivity that actively transforms itself while continually resisting its own development within the confines of heteronormative rules. In particular, the Butlerian ‘subject’ lacks agency or the capacity to exert choice, which places the construction of the subject in opposition to the conditions of its own existence. Magnus’s description of the Butlerian paradigm might be summed up as follows: “Butler emphasizes the centrality of the subject's power to reinterpret the imposed words in order to form a foundation that extends beyond her own self, building on her earlier claim that an act inherently entails repetition” (“The Unaccountable Subject” 87). Further, Magnus continues: “The person must start their speech by using the terms that have been assigned to them, and their contribution may only be seen in changes or reinterpretations that fundamentally go against the meanings those terms already have” (87). Butler, simplifies agency to resistance and depicts action as merely reaction, presents gloomy view of agency. She defines an individual’s authority in terms of their ability to repeat, recite, or reframe their actions.

The subversive potential inherent in personal rituals, nonverbal communication gestures, and physical motions is not adequately taken into consideration by Butler's theory on agency, which mostly focuses on linguistic performance. Her theory excludes non-linguistic forms of intervention and resistance from her idea of subjective agency since it restricts the range of performative acts to language-based expressions. Butler contends that a wide range of behaviours cannot be simply characterized under this paradigm, including physical contact, visual observation, knowledge acquisition, physical aggression, naming, public humiliation, theft or deprivation, delivering assistance, and giving support (*The Psychic Life of Power* 88–89). It follows logically that one could contend that eliminating the concept of sovereign subject as the primary source of intentions, desires, and actions as well as reducing the subject's material and physical identity, that enables it to creatively assimilate elements from the relational dynamics of other physical beings, even within extensive discursive networks, ultimately reduces the subject's capacity for creative agency to the extent of manipulating and marginalising it.

The concept of 'woman' is an ontological subject that cannot be dissociated from its origins in various social contexts, historical circumstances, and the construction of femininity. The process of becoming a woman involves navigating the complexities of class, nationality, religion, sexuality, and other forms of social identification, which exert disciplinary influences on the individual (Balint). The issue of women's decision-making also appears to be clouded by the logic of developing one's creative identity. In her writing, Butler advances the idea of a 'subject' who is forced to use language without their own free will as a result of the collapse of the traditional metaphysical subject. She does not, however, effectively address the possibility that the agent might exercise their own agency while operating inside the discursive framework of regulatory constraints (*Gender Trouble* 90). The subject's rejection of the idea of choice seems to imply that they are unable to exert agency within the context of speech, as Magnus astutely points out. However, the idea of redefining words as a way to oppose ingrained structures becomes nonsensical if the subject really has no control over the content of their speech. By choosing the way, when, and context in which they want to redefine and reinterpret language terms, people can exercise performative agency, according to Butler's idea of agency.

However, if the person deliberately chooses her language and those linguistic expressions successfully carry out actions, it appears that she has some agency that is not entirely distinct from rational decision-making (91).

Thus, Butler's theory of agency emphasizes reiterative language acts as the main tool for performative opposition, in which the subject, enmeshed in discursive systems, performs performances that are resistant and have the power to undermine normative frameworks. Butler allows for a faulty and surpassing subject—one that breaks the regulatory order and surpasses its causal constraints—instead of seeing the subject as wholly manufactured and instrumentalized by discourse to legitimize its authority through enunciative modalities. It might also be suggested that for a subject becoming conditioned by discourse is not a complete foreclosure of its conditioning as the performative enactment of gendered subjectivity is always in the process of becoming, and it is not mutually exclusive to affecting the discourse with whatever little, mundane, yet resistive potential the subject carries internally, even though the performative acts must work within the regulatory regime using the linguistic and gestural tools to confront the conventions to creatively perform an intervention. Thus, the relational dynamics of defective people actively participating in the process of resignification might be used to discover a creative type of agency. A resistant and flawed subject with the ability to reformulate and resignify prevailing linguistic standards is required for this performative agency. A process of political intervention that marks a crucial rupture within the framework of heteronormativity is initiated by such a subject recontextualizing and redeploying utterances and gestures through acts of subversive enunciation.

Therefore, power is the combination of several factors that develop its own structure and organization. 'Disjunctions and inconsistencies' (92) are another characteristic that sets power apart from the rest. It is applied to institutions to build state apparatuses, establish norms and regulations, and develop social structures that serve as regulatory frameworks.

Butler claims that the idea of agency is rethought as an investigation into the processes of signification and resignification (184). The positioning of gender performativity and the possibility of agency within signification processes are both

examined in Butler's work. Butler contends that because gender and gendered actions are essentially 'signified', language and cultural norms around gender are crucial in shaping them (Salih 80). Instead of being signified and given meaning individually, gender-specific performative acts are given significance when they are included in a citational chain, which refers to a collection of signifying relationships (Marquez-Gallardo and Rovira-Lorente). Pink clothing is frequently seen as a sign of feminine expressiveness and as a gendered habit. Butler contends that this action's perceived femininity is not attributable to any intrinsic or objective definition of femininity, but rather to its conformance to pre-existing gender norms and traditions. Therefore, gendered behaviours are classified according to where they fall in the citational chain, becoming temporalized regulation of socio-symbolic norm.

Based on Foucault's concept of 'subjectivisation', Butlerian agency is the capacity to interfere with or obstruct signalling processes through which norms are materialised. Agency can be viewed as a resignification process that entails absorbing pre-existing meanings and then subverting them. When examining performativity, which can be seen of as the process of indicating, this idea is especially important. Agency is shown through acts of subversion and resignification, in which people have the power to question and reject social conventions and create new possibilities for the production of gender. Butler (*Gender Trouble* 185) contends that because the act of picking up a tool is made easier by its availability, it can only be done when it is already available and available. Butler's metaphorical portrayal of norms as tools clarifies how repetition and conformity to established standards are necessary for the creation of the subject. As a result, under this framework, the task of producing innovative tools becomes impossible.

It is clear from Butler's examination of agency that her conception does not include a fully autonomous person who may choose any gender they want through a lengthy and unfettered process of self-creation (11). Butler's agency exhibits a paradox because it originates from inside the power apparatus. Although it is impossible to stop the established rules that regulate our existence from occurring, it is nevertheless possible to reiterate these rules in a different way, undermining their validity. There is hope in this confined being. Not whether to repeat something, but

rather how repetition is carried out, is what needs to be the main focus. Additionally, it incorporates the act of repetition itself, which, through a significant feminization, helps to question and undercut the established gender norms that support the repetition process (89). Because of the numerous character interactions in the chosen literary works written by Elif Shafak for this research, agency is therefore accurately depicted in this chapter.

A contemporary, non-Western examination of the relationship between perceptions of the female body/subject as other and the spectacles of the woman as agency that have served to prioritize logocentric standards of bodily normativity can be found in Elif Shafak's novel *Mahrem* (translated as *The Gaze* in the English version). Narratives of physical difference are juxtaposed with a story about the exploitation and presentation of the imprisoned other., Shafak allows the historical reality of the exhibition of agency spectacle to become a multivalent trope through which binary oppositions of self and other, East and West, colonizer and colonized, normal and abnormal, and even human and non-human are confronted and dismantled, to suggest an alternative imaginative space capable of new ways of seeing and performing.

Shafak's commitment to this revisionist agenda is demonstrated in her deliberate rejection of conventional Western narrative conventions (traditionally defined as linear, logical, moral, and consciously representative of 'progress') in favour of a constellation of interlocking stories, which can be likened to the 'mansion with forty rooms' in *One Thousand and One Nights*. Shafak has described the novel as a "conscious reinterpretation" of this tradition (qtd in Chancy, 73). The narrative shifts between contemporary and late nineteenth-century Istanbul, early nineteenth-century France, and seventeenth-century Siberia, and between 'reality', dream, legend and myth, conflating colonial exploitation, with its persistent fascination with the implicitly primitive other, the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire's Westernising project, with its contrary fascination with the Western and the 'new', and the contemporary world, with its obsession with physical conformity. The stories that are brought into being and then destroyed can be resembled to rooms that are opened and

then closed, denying the Western convention of narrative completion in favour of a circular, amorphous and 'formless form' (qtd in Chancy 73).

Within the novel, stories of the gazer and gazed-upon are inserted into a narrative frame, alternately carnivalesque and traumatic, constructed by the female storyteller/narrator, an obese woman living in late twentieth-century Istanbul, who at first represents an object of the hostile and judgemental outside 'gaze, and finally becomes a subject able to confront and scrutinize its effects. The novel focuses intensively on the theme of the body as grotesque in its excess, or as otherwise transgressing boundaries of acceptable physical appearance thereby counts itself as agency which lacks hermeneutic dimension. The narrator recalls her traumatic sexual abuse as a child, which she is convinced was witnessed by what she imagines as a punishing divine gaze, and her deliberate self-transformation into an obese, repulsive and rejected body.

According to Shafak, her novel *The Gaze* is an examination of "the sacred, and the female body that must search for its elusive autonomy while being encroached upon by the Gaze- of a masculine God, of society, of the lover" (*The Gaze* 64). As colonial and patriarchal authority are both represented by the gaze throughout the novel, the concept of agency and power underscores the indeterminacy inherent in otherness is implicitly projected onto female subjectivity constructions. The narrator sees her world through the perspective of her body, much as she claims that when people look at her, "they begin thinking with their eyes rather than with common sense" (85, 241).

Postcolonial investigations into otherness are implicitly projected onto female subjectivity constructions since colonial and patriarchal authority are both represented through the gaze throughout the book. According to the narrator, she is one of those who "exist without existing, who are not seen in public because they are put on display; dwarves, cripples, fat people...all people who are strange to look at...Those who hide from outside eyes...Those who spend most of their time hiding from the gaze of others" (233).

Shafak emphasizes this dynamic interaction between gazer and gazed-upon, so that objects appear to be partisan rather than to be objectified beings living the

vulnerability of agency and power. Shafak says that since “religious teachings of sin and repentance are deeply related to our perceptions of our own bodies” (66), this concept of the gaze is particularly problematic for women as they establish their sense of self. Feminist theory holds that as women inspect their own bodies to assess whether they are about to commit sin (by eating chocolate cake, for example), they internalize the interventionist God’s gaze (66).

Feminist theorists have paid close attention to Lacan's focus on the act of perceiving. According to Lacan, the newborn develops into a ‘I’ and gains significance in relation to the outside world through his misidentification in the mirror (Lacan, 1-2). The mirror stage is therefore interpreted as the “threshold to the visible world” (3). According to Lacan, the act of looking is tied to language acquisition and cognitive development as well as determining how others should be valued and perceived. Because of this, people who are judged to be physically odd or unusual end up adopting the cultural codes that are forced on them by those who define them in line with the standards of normalcy set by the symbolic order. Elizabeth Grosz contends that the female subject is prevented from recognizing and identifying with the image that allows a “fragmented body to become a total, unified, completed image” (Grosz 42). According to Judith Butler, women who view themselves through a system of signification that is dominated by men run the risk of having their identities hidden or completely erased, which results in a symbolic erasure within patriarchal discourse frameworks. (*Gender Trouble* 71, 50).

Shafak compares Hegel’s slave-master relationship, which represents a struggle basically for the masculine gaze directed upon the feminine subject to harm her own body since she is powerless to change or reject this system (Chancy, 66). The purpose of this thing is to fulfill desires whether the agency be those of God, society, or the masculine. The construction of subjectivity and the establishment of relational contexts between that subject and his or her social world order, according to Fuery and Mansfield, are all mediated by the body (71). Like Foucault, Fuery and Mansfield emphasizes the body as “central to formations of meaning” (86). Similarly, Stoler has described the body as a “marker of difference,” either biologically or culturally determined (*Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power* 165-87). For Stoler:

[the body's] visible characteristics are charged with meanings of unseen, invisible properties. Nationalist, racist, sexist and sexual discourses draw on ideologies that see a direct relationship between outer form and inner essence...All hinge on visual markers of distinction that profess to - but only poorly index - the internal traits, psychological dispositions, and moral essence on which these theories of difference and social membership are based. (132-134)

Shafak challenges the hegemonic domination of the implicitly masculine, rational, Western eye, the “gods of society”, by exploring the potential of difference, darkness, and/or invisibility to resist its homogenising effects (Chancy 65). The author has characterized the Turkish title of the book, *Mahrem*, as an indispensable instrument for understanding the fundamental nature of a deeply ingrained framework of Islamic societal settings and personal traditions. The aforementioned expression concerns a delineation that establishes a boundary, beyond which persons who do not belong to a specific group are advised to abstain from observing or entering. This idea is frequently associated with women, families, and the domain of femininity (65). The title emphasises Shafak's feminist project, and anticipates her narrative of imperial conquest and display. As Braidotti has noted, the masculine discourse of scientific rationality was only able to evolve once some of the taboos concerning the study of the body were removed. One of the ways in which this field of knowledge, based on the visual, was able to evolve was by consigning woman to the realm of the other, the foreign and monstrous, against which the male body/subject could be defined (*Nomadic Subjects* 33).

The narrator's recollections of the childhood events that have driven her to transform herself into an outsider, a visible sign of transgressive bodily difference and unmapped materiality, are interspersed with a narrative of her love affair with B-C, a dwarf, artist's model and author of the *Dictionary of Gazes*. The figures of the fat lady and the dwarf can both be associated with the tradition of the freak show in travelling fairs or carnivals: as spectacles of grotesque difference, they are aware that they provide visual entertainment for others. However, while the narrator continually hides from the gaze of others, B-C deliberately displays himself, posing naked for an artist

and his students at a local studio. When he transforms himself into a spectacle, the narrator reveals, B-C feels like a slave, during his journey to be traded at a festival...The individual experienced a profound emotional response, recognizing that they would never witness the reflection of a past period in their life when they possessed the ability to engage in running and hunting activities, as depicted in the falcon mirror (*The Gaze* 77). In displacing his own identity as exotic object of the gaze into the collective memory of the colonised other, B-C replicates the psychological consequences of imperialism, through which the enslaved is alienated first from his oppressors and then from himself: The individual gazed with a sense of despair onto the assemblage of merchants and customers present at the auction. The identity of the purchaser, whether it be one individual or another, had no discernible impact. With an air of apathy, he assumed a posture towards individuals with whom he lacked familiarity. The protagonist's motivation for attending the dismal studio and exhibiting such behaviour remains unclear to him (77).

In the artist's studio, the function of the gaze is stripped to its most objectionable basics: "B-C and the students cannot recognize each other, hindered by "the strangeness of his eyes" and his refusal to meet their gaze. Our narrator then remarks that, "Since I was already fat enough to attract the attention of anyone who saw me ... I should go and display myself out of spite"" (81). The identification of exotically dominated self-display with rebellious self-assertion (the demand to be recognised) emphasises B-C's desire to invert the power dynamics of the master-slave relationship which Shafak identifies as central to the operations of the exoticizing gaze. Similarly, his dedication to the compilation of the *Dictionary of the Gaze* repeatedly challenges the binary distinction between object and subject of the gaze. As B-C tells the narrator: "Our lives are based on seeing and being seen. All of our troubles, worries, obsessions, our happiness and our memories...our very existence in this world too...and also our love...everything, I mean everything, has to do with seeing and being seen. Well, the Dictionary of Gazes is going to demonstrate this entry by entry" (91). In Elif Shafak's *The Gaze*, the gaze plays a crucial role in creating subjectivity. This assertion by B-C is consistent with Butler's performativity theory, which holds that identity is mediated through repeated social interactions and outside perceptions. By representing the heteronormative and patriarchal systems that

keep an eye on, classify, and control bodies—especially female bodies—the "Dictionary of Gazes" supports the performative enactment of identity in a masculine signifying economy.

In a similar context Elif Shafak's another novel *The Bastard of Istanbul* is considered her most controversial novel for having blunt views on Turkishness and the Armenian Genocide explores themes of discursive politics played by social structures and witnesses women voices muffled and victim of social agencies. However, Shafak was acquitted in Turkey for allegedly insulting Turkishness through this novel. In a report, on 22 September 2006, the newspaper (Washington Post) says that the EU warned Turkey for restricting the writers and Journalists from free speech that can harm Turkey's endeavours to join the bloc. It raised the brows of ultranationalists as they condemned the EU as fascist. The Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, adjusted with both the views and on the one hand, he supported the idea of improving Article 301 of the European Union. Butler claims that "identity categories are fictional products of the regimes of power, power/knowledge or power/discourse rather than natural effects of the body" (*Gender Trouble* 17).

The titular "bastard" of *The Bastard of Istanbul* is Asya Kazancı, a daughter born out of wedlock because of her maternal uncle Mustafa raping her mother Zeliha incestuously. In Istanbul, Turkey, Asya grows up in an all-female home where the lack of men is explained by a strange curse that kills the family's male members in their early forties. Gulsum, the matriarch of the Kazancı family and Asya's maternal grandmother, is in charge of the home. Her five children include – Banu, Cevriye, Feride, Mustafa, and Zeliha. The novel begins with Zeliha's attempt to abort her pregnancy at the age of nineteen in a newly opened hospital in Istanbul where some free facilities are offered. On her way to the hospital, she becomes the victim of eve teasing at the hands of the common people of Turkey, some of them are Taxi drivers and others are onlookers. Here she recalls the three Prudent Practices for a Female Istanbul Resident, 'golden', 'silver', and 'copper Rule'. These rules show that to what degree females living in a particular space are suppressed. The 'Istanbulite' women are advised not to mention that they are harassed, not to remember or recall, and not to object or curse their harasser as all of these attempts only lead to the enhancement

of their troubles. So, Zeliha reaches the hospital late due to the harassment (which she does not want to reveal before others, not even the receptionist) and the broken heel of one of her high heel-heeled shoes in rain.

The hospital setting, which is infused with the dominant Turkish patriarchal ethos despite being a neutral institutional place, is another instance of culturally and sexually biased delineations. When Zeliha goes to the hospital, she is thrust into an awkward and closely watched situation when the receptionist asks her why she is there and whether she is married. Her reaction disturbs the two women and one guy in the room, underscoring the social unease and criticism experienced by women who don't fit the mould, especially when it comes to issues of parenting and sexuality. Her silence makes her notice a circumvent discomfort in hospital waiting room that is accomplished by "the obese blonde on her right and the head-shaven woman on her left" (*The Bastard of Istanbul* 12). She feels out of place/space while on the hospital bed for abortion, "Zeliha had the impression that the other persons in the room were not in the same space as her. She entered the Morpheus kingdom" (19). She in a state of reverie asks the doctor to stop the procedure and later on finds that some supernatural power or agency may be Allah made her stop it. When she was given the anaesthesia, a few minutes later she heard prayers from different corners of the city and she takes it a message from Him of letting this child live her life. The reader is kept musing about the biological father of the child till one-third novel. This female psychological hysteria dominated the major part of the novel and the assorted sub-plots enumerate it further. According to Butler, the act of agency completely undermines the traditional separation between one's internal and external psychological realms, so successfully ridiculing both the concept of gender expression and the idea of an authentic gender identity. (*Gender Trouble* 174). The ideas of performative agency employed by Butler as a potent metaphor to illustrate the idea that all gender is, in a way, performative. This means that all gender identities and subjectivities are enacted, suggesting that we all engage in the act of drag.

Zeliha is called auntie by her daughter just the same way as she calls her other three maternal aunts. Asya knows her mother but Zeliha's rebellious nature (made evident through her attire and way of living) makes her daughter call her with a word

suggesting a distant relationship between them. Zeliha's character is a mixture of Turkish and western ideology as she loves her cultural cuisine as well as loves to dress in western outfits, mostly miniskirts. Her smoking habit, wearing a nose ring, stockings, love for towering high heels, and being a tattooist in the orthodox society of Turks, is posing her as a rebellious soul. She is an irreligious person, questioning most of the ways of the world around her. During her childhood, she only wanted to have a blood sister relationship with God (Allah), which she used to share with her only friend. She informs bluntly about her strange experience and being unable to abort the child to her female family members. She interprets her inability as a message from Allah, while she fell unconscious after anaesthesia. At that movement, she overhears the voices of prayer (aazan) coming from all four directions and in a state of emotional frenzy she starts shouting to stop and the doctor takes it as her denial for abortion. The news of her pregnancy without a marriage breaks the hearts of a lot of people. Her mother Gulsum takes it as a shame for her family name. Her sisters have a mixed reaction. Banu and Cevirye don't find any reason enough to keep the baby whereas Feride is suffering from acute depression, so she is not able to comprehend the idea of seeing a doctor. One can only successfully establish his or her gender through acting, or doing things repeatedly. Gender is neither an innate characteristic nor does it take the shape of the essence. Butler claims that gender is "a tenuously constructed identity in time, introduced in an outer place by a stylized repetition of deeds" (191).

Feride's interpretation of even the simplest things is completely different than the others. She usually switches the colours and the styles of her hair; these changes mirror her state of mind. Doctors study these fluctuations to read her psychology. Early in her life, she is diagnosed with a stress ulcer but with the passage of time, her mental health declines. She develops a major depressive disorder and doctors suggest a rapid sweeping movement forward to its borderline. The word 'border' is configured multifariously as a space by the Kazanci family. For their mother, Gulsum, the term is associated with controlling authorities like police and customs officers and she looks at her daughter as a 'felon foreigner'. For Feride's three sisters, it stands for the edge of a deadly cliff from where she may fall anytime, thus needed to be handled with immense care. Whereas for their grandmother, Petite-Ma, it is the trimmed edge

of latticework and she is unable to understand what exactly the disease from which Feride is suffering, leaves the subject pitying her granddaughter. Feride shrieks and starts laughing hysterically at the breaking of the news of the pregnancy of her younger sister. Ironically, she is described as an insane person with approximately all sane symptoms. Her dreams are a collage of various forms and colours with multiple possibilities, “She makes patchworks at night in an array of vibrant colours and geometric forms. The universe transforms into a sphere of limitless possibilities as the wind blows fiercely and the ocean currents flow by” (*The Bastard of Istanbul* 220).

She accepts the heterogeneous nature of the universe and her country. Similarly, she accepts unorthodox views and all sorts of queer possibilities around herself. Unlike her mother, she loves Zeliha and her daughter regardless of the circumstances. She seems to be a caricature of Shafak as she has adopted the polarity of the environment around her, as Shafak talks about her childhood experiences in one of her TED Talks ‘The Politics of Fiction’: “I grew up observing two different kinds of womanhood, on the one hand was my mother, a well-educated, secular, modern, westernized, Turkish woman. On the other hand, was my grandmother, who also took care of me and was more spiritual, less educated and definitely less rational” (*The Politics of Fiction* 00:01:15–36). Her exposure to the contradictory ideologies and finding of one’s elements in another turned her into a rational person; as she has tried to find out the positive elements from each of them. As from her maternal grandmother’s work as a spiritual healer, she learns about the science or power of circles.

Elif Shafak discusses her early encounters with her spiritually healing maternal grandmother in her TED Talk, *The Politics of Fiction*. Shafak remembers how her grandma was frequently visited for conditions like bad acne and warts. Her grandmother carried out these healing rites through Arabic prayers shrouded in what she calls a “cloak of inky darkness”. Shafak says it's amazing that no guest ever departed feeling let down. The warning power of circles—“all it takes to obliterate anything in this world... is to enclose it in a solid wall”—was one of the most important lessons she learnt from her grandmother. The interior will dry out. In

addition to expressing a spiritual worldview, this metaphor quietly criticizes social structures that repress emotions and isolate people (00:01:39-45).

She warns her female readership not to draw boundaries around them, whether they are cultural, ethnic, political, psychological, social, and so on. She promotes the need for cross-cultural communication for their overall development. She asks the readers to have a fluid personality:

We all live in some kind of a social and cultural circle. We all do. We're born into a certain family, nation, class. But if we have no connection whatsoever with worlds beyond the one we take for granted, then we too run the risk of drying up inside. Our imagination might shrink; our hearts might dwindle, and our humanness might wither. If we stay for too long inside our cultural cocoons, our friends, neighbours, colleagues, family – if all the people in our inner circle resemble us, it means we are surrounded with our mirror image. (00:02:55- 03:20)

Her work serves as an example of how stereotypes interact to create unique experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and challenges for women. Our research questions current presumptions of both Turkish and Western culture's views about women and Islam by examining how various self-identities develop and function in society while possessing certain identical traits. Additionally, this study makes a substantial literary contribution. It seems Shafak has drawn various characters on her own experiences, as she commutes between East and West without any stereotypes and cultural ghettos thus some of her characters also reflect similar views. If some are not exact replicas, then somewhere some similar parts and portions compel the reader to draw parallels; as Shafak's grandmother can be assumed as an inspiration for Banu's character as it relates most of the traits attributed to her personality. Banu is the eldest of all the Kazanci siblings and after the death of her twin male kids at a very young age, lives with her mother and sisters in Kazanci ancestral house. She also visits her husband but doesn't live with him (unable to abandon him completely). When she visits him occasionally, she cooks, cleans, and cares for him. Soon, she starts living according to Islamic traditions, wearing a hijab, and starts following her intuitions, and becomes a

genuine soothsayer. She is a religious person and prays strictly according to the Islamic rule of five times a day. She talks to the djinns and seeks knowledge of past happenings through her two djinnis – Mrs. Sweet and Mr. Bitter. The second elder sister of Zeliha is Cevriye, a national history teacher in a private school. She also had a troubled marital relationship as she married the love of her life but that man dies in his youth accidentally. So, Cevriye also joins her maternal family. She is a critical thinker, talking frequently about the historical past of Turkey and its present repercussions.

In *The Bastard of Istanbul*, Mustafa, the sole male heir of the Kazancı family, is depicted as having had an excessively sheltered and spoiled upbringing. Considered valuable from birth, he is protected from the alleged family curse that kills Kazancı males early in life. His character is characterized by profound internal contradictions; he acts like a king at home and exercises power there, but he finds it difficult to socialize and gain confidence in the outside world. He has psychological distress as a result of suppressing his sexual urges, which manifests as hypersexuality. Mustafa's desire to satisfy his sexual cravings and his disgust at them both contribute to his internal conflict. Interestingly, he refrains from masturbating from the ages of thirteen to nineteen during his youth. However, he eventually develops compulsive behaviour, exercising obsessively out of fear that his parents will watch him.

His carnal desires so overpowered him that one day he dreamt of masturbating before his father. Soon, he started looking for prostitutes in the safest hidden space of the city. It led to his self-confinement, as he considered the urge a disease. The lack of communication or miscommunication brought these complications to Mustafa. During his circumcision ceremony when he was eight years old, his father taught him that "a man does not cry no matter what, and now, with this ritual, he has stepped into manhood." Mustafa adopted a strict definition of masculinity based on emotional reserve and quiet after that, and he stopped talking about his feelings and confiding in others (Shafak 144).

The extended Kazancı family's female members came to the conclusion that Mustafa might be able to break free from the family curse that killed the male heirs too soon if he was sent to a far-off place. He was consequently transferred to Arizona

to study Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering. In a grocery there, he ran upon Rose, an older divorced woman. Mustafa avoided her at first, but Rose was drawn to his Turkish identity—especially since her ex-husband and his family were Armenian, traditionally seen as enemies of Turks. Without giving it any thought, she developed an emotional bond with Mustafa, a young guy whose horrific background was still a distant and repressed memory.

Mustafa engages in a type of self-imposed forgetfulness or purposeful amnesia in which he deliberately avoids thinking about his previous life in Istanbul. His deliberate denial of his previous identity serves as the foundation for the mental space he creates. He eventually weds Rose, and the two of them stay in Arizona. Even after they get married, Mustafa never goes back to Istanbul again. He only communicates with his family via letters and phone conversations, during which he presents Rose. Mustafa deflects Rose's questions regarding his extended family with evasive or ambiguous justifications, demonstrating his ongoing unwillingness to face his history (212). It is after he arrives in Istanbul to take Armanoush back to Arizona, his past is revealed to the reader - the habit of masturbating in odd situations, going to prostitutes, and rape of his own younger sister, Zeliha. One of the reasons behind his refusal to come back to Istanbul is the memories of these incidents that he can neither bear silently anymore nor express his remorse (as his confession would reveal it even before the unaware people like Asya).

Gulsum, Asya's grandmother, is a god and society-fearing lady. She spent her childhood in scarcity and depraved state but married into a much wealthier family. She feels the burden of the family name and fame on her shoulders when comes to know about the 'lineage prone to disaster. The burden of giving birth only to sons takes a heavier toll on the lady as she produces three girls back-to-back. Mustafa's birth proves the only respite to her aching heart. She got everything except love. Married to a strict man at an early age. The basis of the marriage has never been love rather the fulfilment of the desire to bear the male child to continue the lineage. First of all, she never gets love from her husband, and with every girl child, even the interest that he has in her also vanished. She recalls how Levent Kazanci used domestic violence to maintain discipline (217). When all hopes of getting her

husband's love dispersed, she switches to her motherly love and care to Mustafa, who also finds himself unable to reciprocate. She pampers him, soothes him by satisfying every desire that ultimately spoils him. She favours him over all the four girls. Her vibrant mood at that time soon fades into the darkness, when he leaves Istanbul forever for the United States. Gradually, Mustafa's letters and postcards replace her beloved son as never returns to Istanbul to meet his mother for a long period of twenty years. Eventually, she becomes very bitter about certain things and people, specifically. As she questions Zeliha for her blunt way of living, her choice of clothes, her way of talking, and whatnot. She reprimands her time and again and reminds her of her shame.

All five children of the Kazanci family suffer psychological trauma throughout their life. They feel the presence of an unspeakable force that regulates their behaviour and actions. The pathetic conditions of all these five people somehow lead the reader to look upon their strictly disciplined childhood. Levent Kazanci is represented as an authoritarian father. He is a gentle bureaucrat outside the house but a rude and overpowering father at home. The moment he returns from work, he makes all the children stand in a straight line as a small regiment and stare at them one by one for a significant amount of time. This threatening gaze made them shiver and is a warning that they should not be ill-behaved throughout the day. The kids in his presence can't speak aloud or shriek even when in pain. He hates children's clamour.

Once their grandmother, Petite-Ma tells them that the reason behind their father's anger is his suffering. During his childhood, his mother abandoned him. He is the child of an Armenian Christian mother and a Muslim Turk father Riza Salem. Every child of the Kazanci family needs to learn first and foremost the principle of DAD' that is 'Deliberate Ache Deferment'. This is the crux of their relationship with their father. The father and child equation is highly symbolic of the rigid and irritable political father figures of Turkey like the long tenure of eighteen years of Recep Tayyip Erdogan; as the entire generation of Kazanci siblings have never been able to avoid the authoritative figure of Riza Salem, even though it is invisible; similarly, almost a whole generation has not seen any other political leader on the political landscape of Turkish. On the other hand, it is also a reflection of the strained

relationship between Shafak and her father, who abandoned her mother; while her mother never remarried, her father married a French Woman and started a happy life altogether again with his two sons. The dualistic nature of her father disturbed her throughout her 20's. She sums up the indifferent behaviour of her father in these lines in an interview with Rachel Cooke. She wants to ask why they still feel his presence and out of habit lower their voices during the day. Another restriction is that there is no space for privacy. They are not allowed to shut the doors of their rooms. For him, privacy means suspicious activity. Whereas Zeliha always seeks a personal space and wishes if she can't get it.

Through the matriarch Shushan Stambouljian, who was later renamed Shermin Kazancı after she married Rıza Selim Kazancı, Shafak creates a genealogical link between the Kazancı and the Tchakhmakhchian lineages. After witnessing the atrocities of the Armenian Genocide in Turkey in 1915, Levent Kazancı's biological mother leaves him during his early childhood. A Turkish woman and daughter rescue Shushan when she collapses during her escape into Aleppo and tend to her until she recovers. Later, she is transported by bandits to a local orphanage, where she is given the new name Shermin. Rıza Selim, a disciple of her uncle, recognizes and takes her as his wedded wife. He respects and loves her but for her, his house is only another refuge in the course of events. Most of the time, she remains silent and soon realizes her pregnancy. She gives birth to a boy and Rıza Selim wants to give him the name of his master, Levon, out of respect for him. Later on, he does some changes to it due to its implications to a Christian name and renames him as Levent. Shermin Kazancı still lacks the feeling of belongingness to Turks and Kazancıs. She is "as silent as a displaced stone" (325). The feeling of being displaced makes her leave her toddler boy for her extended Armenian family in America. Her decision makes her relationship with her husband and son (and their relationship with others) bitter. Rıza Selim marries Petite-Ma but has never been able to trust and love anyone. Levent Kazancı becomes a troubled soul throughout his life. As he faces suffering and harsh life, he practices violence, suppression, authoritative behaviour on the people around him.

Drawing on the principles of radical feminists *Forty Rules of Love* reveals how Elif Shafak appropriates Rumi phenomenon for her purpose to assert her literary androgyny. *The Forty Rules of Love* highlights the companionship between two scholars – Rumi and Shams of Tabriz and how their relation transforms Rumi a renowned Sufi poet through Sufi teachings of true love for God and humanity. The novel contains forty rules of love which have allegorical meaning working on two surfaces – for beloved as well as God.

With a dual narrative structure, the main plot revolves around Ella Rubinstein, a middle-aged lady in her forties who seems to lead a comfortable existence that is characterized by wealth, stability in her family, and luxury. Ella feels a profound sense of existential and emotional emptiness in spite of this apparently perfect life. She has absorbed a concept of feminine subjectivity based on moral obligation and domestic servitude, having dedicated her adolescence to the role of a self-effacing caretaker. According to Judith Butler's theory of performativity, her careful home maintenance reveals a performative repetition of typical gender norms.

Ella's awareness of her husband's adultery, which she wilfully ignores to maintain peace in the home, emphasizes even more how brittle socially created feminine identity is. However, the façade of stability collapses when her oldest daughter picks a relationship against Ella's wishes, causing the breakdown. Ella's gendered performance undergoes a crisis at this point, demonstrating how subjectivity is never really independent or coherent but is instead continuously negotiated within familial and societal discourses of normativity and power (*Gender Trouble*). She wants her to focus on her career and personal growth instead of falling into the traps of transitory and fleeting carnal passions which she calls love. She unintentionally challenges her daughter and her boyfriend about their relationship which boomerangs the fragility of her relationship with her husband, this thing shakes her completely and she decides to shift her attention from her household problems to her professional life. Historiographic meta-fiction is applied in the novel as real historical characters and events are fictionalized, as Rumi and Shams of Tabriz are actual historical personalities, whose life events are explored in this novel. All the details cannot be portrayed by the historical facts thus to make these events more realistic.

Shafak challenges Ella Rubinstein's creative potential by encouraging her to overcome her cultural insularity and latent complacency through the character of Michelle. Michelle argues against literary provincialism as she addresses Ella's reluctance to interact with *Sweet Blasphemy*: "That is a flawed strategy. You believe you can accomplish more with the literature you are familiar with? In no way! You can't expect to edit solely books set in Massachusetts just because you live here, can you? Isn't one of the benefits of good literature the ability to introduce readers to foreign locations and cultures?" (*The Forty Rules of Love* 13). This criticism acts as a turning point that sets Ella on a path of self-examination and change. Shafak aligns literature with the act of crossing cultural, national, and personal borders by using this narrative turn to advance her concept of transcultural empathy and global readership.

The metafictional transition of the book to "the city of Konya in Asia Minor around the thirteenth century" (14) opens a conversation across time and space, connecting the Sufi mysticism of Shams of Tabriz and Rumi with the life of a contemporary American housewife. According to Butlerian theory, this change represents a performative upheaval of Ella's socially constructed subjectivity. Butler contends that the self is constructed through discursive and cultural acts rather than being predetermined (*Gender Trouble*). Through reading, introspection, and a slow break from conventional notions of femininity and domesticity, Ella's encounter with a drastically different worldview allows her to reconfigure her agency. As a result, her grief and discontent are not just psychological; they also reflect the bounds of her previously performed identity, which is currently being questioned and reconstructed as a result of her exposure to stories that undermine the borders of gender, location, and belief.

The novel frames the socio-political unrest of thirteenth-century Konya by giving a general overview of the attacks by the Crusaders and Mongol invaders on Constantinople and the larger Islamic world. Shafak highlights the transformational impact of Shams of Tabriz's presence on both land and people by charting his influence throughout a variety of locations, including streets, inns, and spiritual institutions. According to Geraldine Bedell, Shafak emphasizes shared spiritual ground by depicting Islam as a tapestry of overlapping faith traditions—Salafi, Sufi,

Christian, Jewish, and Buddhist—set against the backdrop of historical battles like the Crusades and Mongol invasions.

Shafak creates a story in *The Forty Rules of Love* in which Shams of Tabriz serves as a spiritual catalyst, changing the lives of everyone he meets, including the innkeeper, a worker, and the disenfranchised prostitute Rose. Acts of truth-telling, spiritual counselling, and emotional healing interspersed throughout his journey undermine normative moral dichotomies ingrained in the socio-religious systems of 13th-century Konya. Shams' teachings on divine love upend the hegemonic dichotomies of sinner and saint, male and female, and self and other as he moves between sacred and profane settings. He is ultimately killed by Rumi's son in a symbolic act of patriarchal resistance to spiritual subversion because of his extreme honesty and rejection of orthodox religiosity, which inspire both awe and contempt.

At the same time, Ella's experience with the book “Sweet Blasphemy” and its author, Aziz Zahara, turns into a performative quest for self-awareness in the contemporary framing narrative. Through affective and intellectual reorientation, Ella regains her agency after being constrained by the discursive boundaries of domesticity and marriage expectations. Ella's metamorphosis illustrates how subjectivity can be resignified via love, self-awareness, and spiritual awakening, which is consistent with Judith Butler's idea of agency as a repetitive act inside limiting discourse. Through her relationship with Zahara, she can challenge conventional ideas of age, marriage, and gender, representing a flawed but strong subjectivity that engages in internal resistance.

This dual narrative framework, which traverses both time and space, provides a thorough analysis of Butler's theory of agency. The characters' resistance arises from within power systems rather than being absolute or external to them. Through persistent acts of rebellion, spiritual pursuits, and emotional transparency, their agency is performatively performed. Butler's idea of iterability and performativity as subversive strategies is mirrored in Shafak's portrayal of defective subjects in Shams and Ella, who resignify hegemonic discourses and strive toward emancipatory redefinitions of self.

Traveling to distant physical and geographical Spaces over time is a recurrent theme manifested through both the plots of the novel. The motif of journey encompasses both the physical and the spiritual world of the characters which is equally affecting them irrespective of the Spaces and times they are living and narrating their stories. It is a quest for self-journey of the protagonist of the novel, Ella Rubinstein, who after completing twenty years of marriage, identifies the void in their relationship and starts afresh on the long road of self-realization of the place of love and faith in human life and having this realisation to prevail in women who jostles with various agencies and powerful discourses is a merely an unstable discursive node and gendered norm demanded for cultural contexts (*Gender Trouble* 57).

Ella reflects that “in a marriage, there are other factors that are more crucial than desire and love, such as comprehension, tenderness, and compassion. And forgiveness...” (*The Forty Rules of Love* 2). This instance perfectly captures Ella's early assimilation of patriarchal language that places a higher value on obligation than desire in a marriage. Her self-effacement, viewed through a Butlerian perspective, illustrates how normative performances that are expected of women in heteronormative systems influence subjectivity. The performative limitations placed on female agency in domestic settings are exemplified by her conception of forgiveness, which serves as a regulatory ideal by framing emotional endurance as virtue.

She thinks that love is a pleasurable entity that can only be cherished in ideal representations of the world that is in books and romantic movies. She has set her priorities as to nurture her three children and also cater to the domestic needs of her urban household in the lavish settings of Northampton, Massachusetts, USA. Her domestic space is full of pleasurable things fulfilling all their materialistic dreams, “The Rubinstein family dwelt in a grand Victorian residence, characterized by its ample space and luxurious amenities. Notably, the property included an outdoor Jacuzzi, five bedrooms, three bathrooms, polished hardwood floors, a three-car garage, and elegant French doors” (2). Despite her views on love as an insignificant thing to lead a financially secure, stable, and contented life, as it is love that becomes the primary reason behind her filing for a divorce case in 2008. It enters into her life

in the form of a book to be reviewed and transforms her. Shafak has also tried to configure the world differently in this novel, as through Ella's experiences of visions and voices of this mundane world Shafak tries to relate them to the whole universe, to establish a co-relative between this and the other world, "Birds were singing outside her kitchen window on that balmy day in spring. Afterward, Ella replayed the scene in her mind so many times that, rather than a fragment from the past, it felt like an ongoing moment still happening somewhere out there in the universe" (5). This contemplative section marks the start of Ella's metamorphosis as she grows more conscious of her own subjectivity. According to Butlerian theory, the scene serves as an example of how memory and lived experiences continuously shape identity and agency rather than fixing them. The performative aspect of time and selfhood is shown by Ella's mental repetition of the experience, which implies that emotive re-engagement with past moments shapes and re-forms the self, allowing for subversive potential in everyday home life.

Through the dual narration of Ella and Shams of Tabriz, Elif Shafak weaves together two temporal and spatial tales in *The Forty Rules of Love*: 13th-century Turkey and 21st-century America. The reader is taken through a variety of physical and symbolic locations while Ella reads the metafictional book *Sweet Blasphemy*, including the streets and mosques of Baghdad, an inn in Samarkand, a brothel in Konya, and a well in Alexandria. The narrative traverses both external and interior, metaphysical landscapes that question cultural boundaries and established identities through Shams's visions, which include a premonition of his death. Here, Shams of Tabriz's reflection - "My eyes were fixed on the moon as though I were anticipating a heavenly justification for my killing" (27)—captures Judith Butler's idea of subjectivity as both created and shattered in a discursive context. Even though Shams is aware of his inevitable death, his upward stare conveys an existential need for purpose that goes beyond human brutality. Butler's theory that agency is enacted within power structures is demonstrated by this performative moment of introspection, where even the expectation of death becomes a location of resistance and meaning-making.

The abstract Spaces (planned spaces of architects, city planners, executors, and so on which act as mediums of agency) of visions and interpretation of dreams for fortune-telling and seeing someone's past by Shams and the spatial presentations of ghost world envisioned by Kimya (she sees Rumi's first wife's ghost and it plays a vital role in her life) are employed through the technique of magic realism. Shams had visions since he was a boy and used to talk to God and He responded to him every time. First of all, it is his father who calls his visions a sheer act of imagination as he was terrified by the complaints of neighbours and their kids, which leads him to abandon his home and this was the moment when the whole world becomes his home.

She travels to these far away Spaces of past so easily as if there is no demarcation of time and space; life is a free flow into time as if time has no linear progression rather Shafak has projected a limitless and inordinate extreme of Time and Space in the novel, where characters become a current flowing in its desired direction. Her journey is both internal and external, but it is the internal journey that takes the traveller into the spaces which are beyond time and space. As the tenth rule of love by Shams sums up the idea, "It doesn't matter whether you're facing east, west, south, or north. No matter where you are going, just remember to make every journey an internal one. Traveling within will take you wherever in the world and beyond." (86). It is only through this internalization of the symbolic journey that most of the characters are changing their lives and the social spaces around them, whether it is Ella, Baba Zaman, Kimya, or Rumi. Ella and Rumi change the preconceptions of love that are working on the interplay of physical/sexual gratifications; rather they understand the significance of a sheer companionship and attachment with the soul instead.

The relative production and alteration of social spaces and personality of the traveller are suggested by Aziz as he tells Ella about the changes in his perceptions through his visit to Guatemala, Central America. He feels so much in the Spaces he visits that till the time of his departure, he starts feeling as if some part of his self has remained behind with that particular place (lived space); it all happens as relates himself with the customs, traditions, physical location and culture of the spaces to the extent of absolute assimilation that is oneness. He writes to Ella about his experiences

– “Each time I say goodbye to a place I like, I feel like I am leaving a part of me behind. I guess whether we choose to travel as much as Marco Polo did or stay in the same spot from cradle to grave, life is a sequence of births and deaths. Moments are born and moments die. For new experiences to come to light, old ones need to wither away” (92). This passage supports Judith Butler's argument that identity is formed via repeated behaviours in changing circumstances rather than being fixed. The speaker's analysis of movement and emotional fragmentation implies that memory, departures, and transitions shape the self in a relational and temporal sense. According to Butlerian theory, this exemplifies performative agency as a becoming process that arises via ongoing negotiation of place, time, and loss.

So, the agency as ‘powerful structure’ or ‘discursive construction’ are not the containers in themselves, as Lefebvre says that the meanings are attributed and attached to them (Spaces) through human thoughts, emotions, relations, values, and actions, and so on. The way any Spaces perceived or received makes the all difference, as Shams greets the saints of the new places first, irrespective of the perceptions of its inhabitants about him. When he enters the town, Konya, on 17 October 1244, he thinks – “Before passing through the gates of a town I’ve never visited, I take a minute to salute its saints – the dead and the living, the known and the hidden. Never in my life have I arrived at a new place without getting the blessings of its saints first. It makes no difference to me whether that place belongs to Muslims, Christians, or Jews” (100).

By considering all spaces to be the property of saints and relating to them on a humanistic and mystical level, Shams creates a gendered and spiritual sense of space. He sees his interactions with the natural world—like the wind answering his greetings—as an indication of more profound, heavenly contact. His reception by opposing forces—pure hatred and pure love—is hinted at by this spiritual vision. The ethical and intellectual frameworks that form and occupy social areas are represented by these extremes.

Similarly, some agencies are constructed based on desire, utility, and at the same time with a sort of regulatory measures by keeping them apart from the main social apparatus such as Brothels, which are seen as undesirable places where the

human beings visit as non-existent personalities or absolute strangers. When women are excluded from cultural and religious venues that are nevertheless open to men, the gendered orientation of areas is made clear. The character of Desert Rose, a harlot who is publicly chastised for entering a mosque—an act considered a violation of religious norms—serves as an example of this in *The Forty Rules of Love*. Patriarchal ideas that limit female agency and uphold gender-based spatial segregation are reinforced by the perception that her presence is a spiritual contamination and a bad omen. Her treatment at the hands of two absolute stranger males for her courage makes it evident how the space is produced differently; as a female, she cannot be beaten before the preacher in the mosque. In the street, one can misbehave with a harlot, but doing so in a mosque would question their religiosity. This is the way social spaces are constructed.

Gendered Spaces are the spaces that are allowed to and not accessed by females and are specifically, the aforementioned areas of social existence that are deemed “unliveable” and “uninhabitable” (*Gender Trouble* 14). Gender roles and work become the sole basis for permission to certain public and private spaces. Similarly, in this novel, Shafak elaborates over such spaces, as one of such spaces is already discussed above as Desert Rose has been denied entry into a mosque, where Rumi’s preaching has been going on. Another instance of such a restriction is evident when Rumi denies his wife, Kerra to touch his books and asks her not even to enter his library. She is most of the time depicted as cooking and doing household chores and it is when she enters into his library to dust those books, at that moment she is denied access to his library forever. It leaves a deep impact on her mind, “I avoided going to the library ever since, even when nobody was home. I recognized and accepted the fact that I would never be able to succeed in the world of literature” (*The Forty Rules of Love* 168).

In Muslim culture, girls are controlled, dominated and confined in limited areas while boys are considered like leaders or kings. They have the traditional idea that a boy can reprimand a girl privately or publicly. It does not become issue when a boy has relation with many women but for a woman it is a taboo. The author of the novel wonders why society overlooks a man’s extramarital affairs and yet forbids a

woman from dating after her husband leaves her. Women are dominated by male counterparts inside and outside of house. It is proved that gender role is cultural setting rather than natural because it differs from one culture to another. A particular society determines the roles of men and women. Marriage, and child bearing are crucial entities for women to survive in the patriarchal society. The most part of their life is spent with children. She finds the new society frustrating because she feels that she does not find the appropriate society to adapt with

The plight of females can be assumed during the thirteenth century of Baghdad and Konya, from the fact that even the females of a reputed family and wives of a reverend and learned person like Rumi are not allowed to educate themselves even at home. Kimya, the adopted daughter of Rumi, who has the mystical powers of seeing the ghosts is the only female to be allowed to get an education and liberate herself but to meet a very horrific end just for not controlling her carnal desires for her learned husband, Shams of Tabriz. Females during those times could only be either object of pleasure who are exploited both physically and emotionally and were not allowed to change their ways of life; or the housewives bound to the four walls of the house, who since their childhood reared up, to be trained wives, and mothers. All sorts of individualistic identities and ambitions have been denied and they never realized what they are and what they can be? It is only the Shams who treats both the genders equally and looks at their soul which needs to be illuminated. He shows the direction to Desert Rose and motivates her to take a step towards her ultimate journey on the path to God. He awakes her soul from a deep slumber to realize her true worth, which is beyond her gendered work of satisfying others' carnal desires. He also liberates his wife Kimya and respects her as a scholar. As Shams answers Kimya's question regarding the treatment of women as mentioned in Al-Nisa verse of the Holy Quran, which is misinterpreted by most of the people, his alternate interpretation seems based on reason;

Men are the support of women as God gives some more means than others, So, women who are virtuous are obedient to God and guard the hidden as God has guarded it. As for women you feel are averse, talk to them persuasively; then leave them alone in bed (without molesting

them) and go to bed with them (when they are willing). If they open out to you, do not seek an excuse for blaming them (196-7).

Later on, when Shams talk about the differences between the two genders, it seems Shafak is projecting her idea of feminism. For her, there is no gender disparity as per the creation by nature and thus she suggests that there should be no discrimination based on gender and her feministic approach is inclusive of both the genders, as he provides an extended interpretation of the Al-Nisa; "...you'll see that the verse is not about women and men but about womanhood and manhood. And each and every one of us, including you and me, has both femininity and masculinity in us, in varying degrees and shades. Only when we learn to embrace both can we attain harmonious Oneness" (198). Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, which questions strict dichotomies of male and female identity, is reflected in this quotation. Shafak challenges essentialist gender norms and advances a flexible, inclusive view of identity by arguing that all people are both feminine and masculine. In line with Butler's theory that gender is manufactured and enacted rather than intrinsic, the idea of achieving "harmonious Oneness" through the embrace of dualities permits the subversion and resignification of prevailing gender discourses.

It is a Sufi definition of genders in the Thirteenth century, the modern concept of feminism is portrayed through Ella, described as a working woman, financially strong person but later on she leaves her job just to give a proper upbringing to her children, which she regrets in middle age as she even suggests her elder daughter Jeanette not to sacrifice her career for love. She resumes her job to remain busy and restricts herself to her private space so that she can find herself. Contrary to the thirteenth-century liberated feminine space, who were asked to remain inside the four walls of the private spaces, not allowed to explore the outside world and find a place of their own; Ella's quest for self, completes only after a perpetual introspection by confining herself to her private spaces. She attains personal goals only in absolute isolation. Now she could see the things around her quite evidently.

This is how the configuration of performative representation of gender alters when studied with the interplay of time – two different centuries, two different perspectives, and a lot more gendered problems, freedoms, solutions, and domains;

and no doubt different sets of personalities and their traits. As for Kimya, after a self-degrading attempt of consummating their marriage (she goes naked before Shams to arouse sexual sentiments in her husband Shams of Tabriz) and Shams' hatred for keeping carnal desires above the emotional bonding in a marriage, she opts to die of shame instead of asserting her views. On the other hand, Ella ends her marriage after twenty years for the lack of emotional attachment in it and she finds the new meaning of emotional bonding in a relationship while communicating with Aziz through E-mails. She is a completely different person at the end of her journey, who now finds that instead of financial security, emotionally secure relationship is better and long-lasting. The last chapter of the novel opens in Konya, Turkey in 2009, Ella is with Aziz travelling to various Spaces together, meanwhile, their stay in Konya is due to Aziz's suddenly deteriorating health and he dies. When he dies, she was all alone beside him but without any fear or inhibitions about death. Aziz's funeral processions carry similarities to that of Rumi's, not only of the cultural space but of sentiments as well; "First she arranged for the spot where he would be buried – under a huge magnolia tree in an old Muslim cemetery. Then she found Sufi musicians who agreed to play the nay and sent an e-mail to Aziz's friends everywhere...It was a warm, joyful ceremony, attended by people of all faiths" (348). Ella's metamorphosis through love, sadness, and spiritual awareness is summed up in this passage. In keeping with Judith Butler's idea of performative agency that arises through relational, fluid identities, the inclusive funeral service, which was attended by individuals of all religions and enhanced by Sufi music, represents a transcendence of religious and cultural borders. The planning of an unconventional, multicultural memorial demonstrates Ella's defiance of social norms and her acceptance of a more expansive, humanistic philosophy that questions hegemonic standards of love, grief, and religion.

Finally, Ella finds a confident and open-minded traveller inside her, who wants to experience a lot more things at her own risk. She bluntly denies to support her husband and yet there is a sort of void in her heart as she misses her kids. She feels the outside world within her and leaves controlling life around her, only to follow her compassionate heart equally touched with the experiences of nomadic life. She wants to flow with the current of time and her fate, as she is sure of her

destination, improving every minute, eager to do new things, as she tells her daughter Jeannette, ““I am unsure my sweetheart, I have no intention of making arrangements. I want to have a life where I concentrate on living each day without thinking about the past or the future. I'll take into account my emotions' and my own intuition's advice”” (349). This quotation, which resonates with Judith Butler's view of agency as performative and changing rather than fixed, captures Ella's ultimate acceptance of a flexible, present-centred identity. Ella challenges the socially enforced scripts of gendered responsibility and household predictability by defying planned strategies and relying on her feelings and instincts. Her decision challenges linear conceptions of womanhood formed by duty and sacrifice and represents a reclaiming of selfhood founded in affect and spontaneity.

A mixed Turkish-Kurdish family is the subject of the story Elif Shafak's *Honour*. The novel is narrated from the perspective of many characters. This is the story of Naze who gives birth to eight children in the expectation of giving birth to a baby boy. She fails to give birth to a son. Multiple pregnancies become the cause of her death. Her twin daughters play significant role in the novel. They are named differently from their mother and father and with meaning. They are Pembe and Jamila. The novel focuses the honour of the family, which migrates to London and faces problems such as cultural split. *Honour* presents the story of a Muslim family, who believes that women cannot represent whole family. Naze, the protagonist of the novel, is victim of male dominated society who has to give birth to eight children with the expectation of son. Alev Adil argues that this novel is like the handwriting of the author.

The novel begins with Iskender's pastime in a prison who is imprisoned for killing his own mother at the age of sixteen. Embarrassed from her mother's insatiable desire for the son, Pembe considers that having a son is one of the greatest achievements in her life. As she gives birth to her son named Iskender she does not have limitations of happiness and pride. However, her three children have different reactions: Iskender is very proud of being male who wants to dominate the world; her daughter Esma wants to bring change in him and Yunus wants to understand the cause of these activities.

According to Butler, power is exercised through creating a binary framework for discussing gender and sexuality. The terms ‘man’ and ‘woman,’ ‘heterosexual’ and ‘gay’, etc., that this binary frame generates are not innate characteristics and are not, therefore, objective realities; rather, they are categories that culture has established for the everyday performance of gender identity (*Gender Trouble* 8). In the first section of her literary work titled *Gender Trouble*, Butler raises an inquiry into the ontological status of femininity. Specifically, she probes whether the state of being female can be seen as an inherent and immutable verity, or whether it is instead a socially constructed performance. Furthermore, Butler explores the possibility that the notion of “naturalness” is engendered via the constrained and discursive nature of performative actions, which in turn shape and define the corporeal existence within the confines of sex-based categorizations. According to the source cited as (8), Moreover, it is worth considering how language contributes to the construction of the fictional and erroneous notion of ‘sex’ that reinforces the patriarchal structure of society.

Shafak's narrative prompts an inquiry into the societal perspective that disregards a man's extramarital relationships while simultaneously denying a woman agency in matters of romantic involvement. In some cultural contexts, there exists a disparity in the treatment of young boys and girls, whereby males are often accorded a privileged status akin to that of kings, while girls experience various forms of oppression. In this respect, Maakie Voorhoeve interrogates how women are dominated in Islamic country. He postulates:

Can it be that by inheriting, this same woman forfeits her claim to the inheritance, along with her daughters, because her husband keeps it to himself and leaves it to his male children, regardless of whether they are rich or bad? When she was the lady of the house, why was she left behind to live in the house of the separated while others reaped the benefits of her good fortune? Is this the type of justice Allah has ordained? Some husbands who have no male heirs may leave no bequest at all to their wives and daughters in favor of other family members. (*Family Law in Islam* 41)

Thus, Voorhoeve says that Allah does not discriminate between men and women. He implies that males do not have right to say women are not equal to them in patriarchal society. Judith Butler explains this process of reduction: when woman “does not accomplish anything,” when she is told “that she is nothing [...] empty and unlimited,” she will “seek to reach from within her nothingness to attain all (*Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* 231).

Gender roles are not innate; rather, they have a cultural context. In other words, the roles of men and women are set by the culture in which they live. Therefore, the role of both men and women varies from society to society. Numerous elements, including culture, religion, time, education, and others, influence the gender role. In the majority of countries, women are not regarded as actual people until they become mothers. Women were viewed as being contingent, illogical, weak, and dependant in ancient civilization. Therefore, when they get married and have children, they are joyful. On the other hand, if they are unable to conceive, they view themselves as failures. According to Judith Butler, patriarchy cannot provide a universal meaning for gender. “The notion of a universal patriarchy has been widely criticized in recent years for its failure to account for the workings of gender oppression in the concrete cultural contexts in which it exists. Where those various contexts have been consulted within such theories, it has been to find ‘examples’ or ‘illustrations’ of a universal principle” (*Gender Trouble* 6). In this way, she argues that gender is cultural notion. People socially construct it. Therefore, it is different from one culture to another.

Judith Butler, a pioneer in the field of gender studies, examines how gender practices are sites of critical agency constructed in society as a ritualised norm to trap and determine oppressed like women. According to Butler there would be no gender at all if not for the numerous acts that constitute it. This is because gender is not a truth, there is no “essence” that gender displays or externalizes, and gender has no objective ideal to which it aspires (140). As Butler explains, gender is not actuality but the notions generated by humans about it. Men are used to define and assess women. Tyson says: “Traditional gender roles show men as rational, powerful, protective, and decisive; they cast women as emotional (irrational), weak, nurturing,

and submissive” (*Critical Theory Today* 85). These gender roles have been quite effective in defending injustices that persist today, such as denying women equal access to positions of leadership and decision-making.

Talking about gender roles in Muslim culture, Jasbir Puar argues that men dominate Muslim women. Puar poses: “Gender exceptionalism works as a missionary discourse to rescue Muslim women from their oppressive male counterparts. ... More insidiously, these discourses allude to the unsalvageable nature of Muslim women even by their own feminists, positioning the American feminist as the feminist subject par excellence” (*Terrorist Assemblages* 5). Puar implies that Muslim women suffer much more than other women do. According to him, even feminists are not able to uplift the condition of women in Muslim society. He claims:

As feminist scholars we also recognize that Muslim women in Britain and France have varying histories depending on which part of the world they or their families and communities originate from and that these histories may include individual, family or collective political struggles in favour of women’s rights whether in anti-colonial movements, as in India and Algeria, or postcolonial liberation and prodemocracy movements such as in Bangladesh or other Middle Eastern and North African countries. (24)

As they present, the position of women also depends upon the pre-colonial and postcolonial era. They show great concern that Muslim women are excluded from other women from the power holder position. Joly and Wadia also raise the political involvement of Muslim women and they say that women’s participation is a must for making their rights certain. They are not ready to believe that women should be dominated and play less role to involve in war. Puar continues: “It is widely assumed that women are less interested than men in politics, as recounted by Duverger: ‘they think that politics is mainly a man’s thing, because everything encourages them to think this: tradition, family life, education, religion, literature’” (29).

Muslim women face particular types of gendered oppression that are influenced by certain sociopolitical, religious, and cultural circumstances. For example, culturally ingrained patriarchal norms, the pressure to have male children in

order to maintain their marital status, and traditions like veiling all represent unique difficulties. Since these women's identities and experiences differ greatly depending on the environments and societies they live in, it is impossible to lump them all into one group. Fundamentally, Muslim women have identities that are flexible and contingent on context, defying essentialist interpretations.

Gender study deals with the women how they are different in terms of sex from one culture to another as the gender is socially constructed phenomena. The researcher presents some evidences how Muslim women are treated in their houses and outside of the houses. The research also focuses on how women are treated if they give birth to the daughters instead of sons. In this research, the focus is on the Turkish-Kurdish Muslim women how they are victimized in many respects such as compulsion to bear sons, to be confined within the houses; their cultures follow together wherever they go.

The novel *Honour* presents the problems of Muslim women who are victims of males. Men take women as playthings manipulating them in their own ways. Such play of women takes place when Adem has feelings for Jamila but decides to wed Pembe since he believes Jamila's honour has been tarnished. Both subsequently learn that the union didn't make either of them happy. While Jamila decides against getting married and begins assisting women during childbirth, they relocate to London. The story is really about immigrant life that preserves and upholds local customs and beliefs. Shafak's depiction of diasporic life in London is comparable to that of authors like Hanif Kureishi, Zadie Smith, and Monica Ali who provide perspectives on the difficulties faced by immigrants in London. Iskender, the son of Pembe, explains their philosophical conundrum in this way. Shafak skilfully spins the narrative web like a skilled storyteller. Pembe views her son Iskender as her greatest accomplishment in life, likely because he was the boy that her mother Naze could never have. Pembe sees herself as a woman of unrealistic thoughts and unjustified anxieties. While Jamila, her identical twin, has always been more rebellious and ambitious. She is astounded by how dissimilar all three of her children are from one another. Iskender is a man who is counting the days left in a prison in London as the book begins. He is there for the crime of killing his mother. When he murdered her in the name of family

honour, he was just 16 years old. A society oppresses girls while treating young boys like kings. The topic of honour killings might be perceived by some readers as being overly overt, or as having been written with the intention of capitalizing on the perception that they occur frequently in Muslim communities. Shafak, however, speaks for modern Turkish women.

Naze, has assimilated as a subservient to her husband. By defending herself, she says to Berzo about her daughters: “My daughters will never desert their husbands. If she does, even if I’m already dead, I’ll beat her to the pulp, I’ll return as a ghost!” (*Honour* 11). Her confidence shows that her daughters will follow their husbands without qualm. Muslim culture is guided by the thought that sons are more important than daughters. Men and women both crave for male babies because they think that they can control everything in the society unlike girls who are dominated and exploited: “Pembe was seventeen years old when she became a mother –young, beautiful and apprehensive. ... Here was a son – the son that her mother had craved, and prayed to have throughout her entire life” (17). The fact that Pembe became a mother at the age of seventeen highlights how strongly ingrained gender norms influence female identity in patriarchal societies. Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity holds that identities are created via repeated social activities rather than being innate (Butler, *Gender Trouble*). Given this, Pembe's function as a mother—especially the mother of a son—is not only a biological occurrence; rather, it is a performative act that satisfies social and familial conventions that favor male children. Pembe is placed inside a gendered script that dictates her value through motherhood and the male child she bears, as evidenced by her mother's lifelong yearning for a son, which is representative of a cultural discourse that values masculinity as the continuation of honour and lineage.

From the statement, it can be implied that the desires of having sons is burning in every Muslim woman. They take pride of being the mothers of sons rather than daughters. Moreover, women are dominated, exploited and even beaten if they give birth to daughters. The desire for sons was so great in Naze that she thought every time about them. She continuously gives birth to nine children, all females but she dies at last before her dreams are fulfilled to give birth to sons: “Naze didn’t make it.

The infant, whose gender she had been guessing all along, didn't either for very long. Another girl, her ninth child, was the one who killed her before gently dying in her crib" (19). Pembe is very proud because she gives birth to a son. She compares the child to Alexander the Great. They are Kurdish-Turk, because of this, they refer to him as Askander in Kurdish and Iskender in Turkish: "And so it was that her first kid, the apple of her eye, would become Askander in Kurdish and Iskender in Turkish. He went by the name Alex when the family moved to London, and this is the name that both prisoners and staff at Shrewsbury Prison would call him there as well" (25). They change the name to Alex after to going to London. In other words, they change their attitude, name, language as they move to London.

There is no disagreement among Muslim women regarding whether they wish to marry or not. According to their systems, women are ready to become second, third, fourth wife, etc. They are used by males as their property. Moreover, they compare women after certain age like thirty to a melon gone badly: outside fine inside rotten. Therefore, a girl who has passed marriageable age must marry a man of any age. It is because of gender discrimination. The narrator describes: "Even so, she could marry a disabled or elderly man, just as she could agree to become someone's second wife – or third or fourth, though that was rare. Only the wife who had been married first was legal, of course, and could go to a hospital or courtroom or a tax register office and claim to be a married woman with legitimate children" (34). This quotation exemplifies the pervasive legal injustices and patriarchal systems that control women's life, particularly in polygamous societies. It demonstrates how women's identities are controlled by institutional, legal, and social discourses that establish legitimacy and status in the context of Judith Butler's theory of performative agency. The hierarchy among wives reinforces gendered power dynamics by illuminating the regulatory norms that establish whose functions and connections are acknowledged. Instead of establishing new subject positions, women's agency in this context is limited to selecting among predetermined roles within the masculine signifying economy.

Thus, women are considered children producing machines thereby culturally imposed norms govern the materialization of bodies; and women always rethink and

run this process by which a bodily norm is assumed, appropriated (*Gender Trouble* 14). They do not have position higher than that. If they cannot produce children, they are regarded good for nothing women. There is always domination over women. Women are treated differently. Men think that women should be under men otherwise they fall down from the top. The Muslim culture discriminates men and women in such way. Roxana experiences such thing in the society of patriarchy. The narrator explains: “She made Roxana up on her own. She had discovered her identity, including her name (Roksana, Roxane, or Roxie, as men referred to her), her nationality, her past, her future, and a tale to tell. Like a Victorian lady's petticoat, the truth, her truth, was not masked by numerous layers of clothing” (*Honour* 59). It shows how difficult it was to struggle in her life. She has hidden her identity to be away from difficult situation. She pretends to be Russian or Brazilian while dancing in London. It implies that she does not feel happy in the society where patriarchy rules.

Muslim have unconscious concept that men are strong, confident and protective. Women are under their control. Although women are becoming strong gradually physically and mentally, they still are limited to their incapable psychological trait. It may be the reason that Muslim woman always desire for giving birth to sons. They do not stop bearing children until they get sons. Naze is the example: “One sunny day Berzo had taken his eight daughters to visit a consecrated pool in Urfa. Naze was about to give birth again, despite her age, and the family had gone there to pray for a son” (187). This quotation highlights the societal pressures and gendered expectations that women face in patriarchal settings, where a woman's worth is frequently determined by her capacity to have male children. According to Butlerian theory, cultural standards that value male children limit Naze's identity and agency, making her body a performative site of patriarchal wants being repeated. Her repeated pregnancies demonstrate how gender norms are constructed and reinforced by society power through familial and reproductive responsibilities, leaving little opportunity for resistance or independent self-definition. Here, we can find that women are presented as timid and dependent as they huddle together. Psychologically, women think that they are weaker than men. They should be protected by men in many cases.

However, there is a gap between man and woman because they can understand similar things when they have similar sex. In other words, a woman can understand another woman, Therefore, women can exchange everything with people of the same sex. Jamila, for example, gives her daughter the same name as her dead twin to remind her of her twin sister. She is happy to give birth to her daughter though culturally it is not widely accepted.

Thus, women in Muslim cultures are treated differently from other cultures around the world. Although the preference for daughters is decreasing in other cultures, but in Turkey women are still not treated well if they do not give birth to sons. Their living is troublesome because women are not allowed independent spaces. Women are punished for the crime they never committed because the male societies are guided by prejudice over women. Naze, one of the principal characters, is victim of male chauvinism in the Turkish-Kurdish family though they are migrated to England. The novel, thus, portrays the female characters who are only actors in Muslim culture. They are becoming slaves in their own houses. they do not have any say in their own houses. Male counterparts victimize Muslim women. The women are used as only child producing machine. To show them who they are women have to go beyond patriarchal rules and prove themselves as capable being.

In *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World* Shafak chronicles the lives of "outcasts" who live in the renowned metropolis of Istanbul. Tequila Leila, the protagonist and an outspoken prostitute, is killed. The first section of the book walks the reader through the memories and ideas that fill the protagonist's head after her heart stops pumping. Her childhood memories show that she had an upbringing that was primarily influenced by religion and tradition. Shafak has once more utilized her work to speak up for the voiceless, in this case the Istanbulite women, particularly the sex workers. Leila and her five pals who were social outcasts were victims of the environment and patriarchy. However, they are stigmatized, oppressed, and excluded from mainstream society without any fault of their own. The book also depicts various vices of Turkish society that impact women, such as virginity tests, polygamy, preference for male offspring, religious weddings (which were not recognized by the courts), physical and mental abuse, and honour killings.

There has been significant discussion about Muslim women's difficulties and position in general. Women have been accused of being curbed and imprisoned by the religion itself, which imposes limitations on their appearance, contact with males, marriage, education, and other aspects of their lives. Islamic feminists, according to Weir, are “academics and political activists in various contexts who are advocating equality and justice for women inside Islam” (*10 Minutes 38 Seconds* 98). Islamic feminists, in contrast to secular feminists, emphasize the Quran as their core text and advocate equality in both the public and private worlds. They recommend rereading the Quran and maintain that, despite acknowledging the different perspective for both men and women to play, the holy book does argue for the equality of men and women. Because of who has read and preached the Quran (mainly men) and how it has been understood for their benefit, neglecting the layers of meaning, it is thought to have been construed as a text that supports patriarchy. As a result, western feminism believes it is insufficient to address their problems.

The Islamic feminist movement has reacted differently to the question of whether or not the Quran supports comprehensive gender equality. They concur that some of it works and some of it doesn't (particularly in regards to wife beating, men protecting women, etc.). The entire human dignity of women is a topic on which the Quran has more verses than any other, according to Wadud (*Quran and Woman* 205). She is backed by authors like Riffat Hassan who contend that the holy text places a high priority on freedom and human rights. Hidayatullah states that the concept under discussion is deemed incompatible with the principles of sexual equality and justice (*Feminist Edges of the Qur'an* 152). According to Weir, there has been significant progress in the development of Islamic feminism, characterized by a critical examination of the Quran's authority and a growing embrace of the concept of freedom. Islamic feminists have also recognized the importance of social justice, advocating for the eradication of oppressive relationships among individuals. Furthermore, they have come to perceive social justice as a manifestation of divine will (“Islamic Feminisms and Freedom” 8).

Under the direction of Mustafa Kemal, the country's founding father and a leading reformer, numerous changes were made to better the status of women in

Turkey. However, there is still room for significant advancement. The implementation of a civil code, the extension of voting rights, and the establishment of equal rights in the domains of marriage, inheritance, and child custody were among the notable advancements seen. Turkey, a predominantly Muslim nation known for its relatively progressive values, grapples with several societal challenges, including instances of honour murders, child marriages, forced marriages, domestic violence, and high levels of illiteracy. Secular feminists and religious feminists disagreed as feminism gained ground; the latter insisted on religious freedom in matters of dress, particularly the headscarf. Nevertheless, both teams collaborated on other urgent problems and initiatives to raise the status of women in the neighbourhood. Accordingly, it can be surmised that the Turkish Islamic feminist is concerned with reducing violence, enhancing employment prospects for women, and improving educational options for them. "Leila was raised by her father's first wife and had the misfortune of calling her real mother "auntie". Her father, Haroun, was orthodox in his thoughts and expected his family members, especially the women, to obey him" (*10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World* 27). This section is consistent with Chapter III's discussion of Judith Butler's theory of performativity and subject construction in hegemonic discourses. Leila's upbringing under a patriarchal ruler who expects complete obedience—especially from women—shows how gender roles are enforced and perpetuated by societal and familial norms rather than being intrinsic. Her forced misidentification of her biological mother as only an "auntie" serves as an example of how language and power interact to define identity and roles in relationships, stifling female agency and maternal ties within inflexible patriarchal frameworks.

Further, the novel depicts "He expected his wives and daughter to be obedient, docile, pious, chaste, modest, untainted and respectable. When Leila was born, he named her 'Leyla Afife Kamile'; her middle name meant chaste and untainted. He expected her to make him proud by being true to the religion, nation and him" (27). Leila's chaste and unadulterated name, "Afife Kamile," illustrates how identity is discursively created within a patriarchal framework that predefines what constitutes acceptable femininity. Because of her father's expectations, she is positioned as a subject shaped by recurring standards of purity, piety, and obedience. This supports Butler's argument that gender identity is a controlled performance influenced by

sociocultural power dynamics rather than an expression of inner reality, with names serving as instruments of ideological inscription and symbolic control. The fashionable clothes and accessories that her father sold to make a living were never promoted to the women in his family. He held stereotypes of liberal women and believed that all women were delicate and weak.

As the story progresses, he becomes more pious and restricts the women in the house—especially Leila—more. He opposed women going to school and believed that it was better for women to stay at home and take care of household duties. When they did go outside, as was expected of ‘respectable’ women, they had to wear hijabs. To him, the hijab was “their package, the armour that covered women from tempting stares and unwanted touches” (38). He foolishly believes the Sheik’s statement that women are similar to tomatoes and that no one wants their tomatoes to be handled, squeezed, or tainted by other customers (38).

As she grew older, Leila became increasingly defiant to growing restrictions. As a sort of protest, she got a tattoo, bleached her hair and brows, refused to wear a hijab, and filled her notebooks with pictures of singers. When her father saw her wearing lipstick, he called her "a filthy whore" (103). Leila swiftly comes to the conclusion that everything she has gone through has either been done to her against her will or has been predetermined by ingrained familial norms. (180) Her biological mother Bennaz serves as yet another illustration of patriarchy in the narrative. Because she hailed from a low-income household and wanted to lessen her spouse's financial burden on her family, she got married young. On the night of their wedding, her husband presents her with a chain with three gold pieces, signifying the characteristics she was expected to bring to the home: “youth, docility, and fertility” (24). She had to tolerate her unhappy marriage because she was aware that her family would not accept her return because it would shame them. Bennaz fears society and its standards because she depends on her husband for financial support. She is frequently told that she needs to have kids, particularly boys. She struggled to read and felt out of place in her own house. She had a number of abortions; when she finally gets pregnant with Leila, the kid is forcibly taken from her and given to her husband's first wife to raise and fight for her life like a tragic hero.

When Leila was six years old, her uncle sexually molested her and then used that as a bargaining chip to get money out of her. This occurred repeatedly over the years during family gatherings, and eventually she became pregnant. Her family members accused her of bringing the family into dishonour when she told them. They were going to 'fix' the problem by having her marry that uncle's son. Leila responds fiercely and makes her way to Istanbul to start anew. She sadly ends herself in a brothel and quickly becomes one of Istanbul's most in-demand prostitutes. She adopts Tequila Leila and grows into a self-assured, gregarious woman. Leila assists Shafak in demonstrating the prejudice and discrimination that exist in the city against prostitutes. They are frequently the victims of brutal attacks; one such incident ends with Leila's death. Prostitutes commonly end up in brothels because of their powerlessness and the fact that their families frequently desert them, and in this novel prostituting is a means to defy the social norms and live up to the expectations of their emotions.

In this novel, the author also calls our attention to the problem of prostitution. Seshu and Pai, citing feminists, claim that over the years, "sex work transforms the female body into an item of sexual pleasure to be exploited in the marketplace by any male" ("Why Is Sex Work Not Work?"). While attempting to escape the forced union her father has arranged for her, Leila is betrayed and sold into a brothel. As a result, she falls in social standing and endures mental and physical torment in addition to being ridiculed. She is buried in the "Cemetery of the Companionless" because her family has abandoned her and won't even take her remains. She receives unfair treatment since she works as a prostitute, and she is refused respect even in death. No Islamic funeral rites would be performed for this woman. She refused to have her hands purified by her kin or to have them carefully placed over her heart as a symbol of everlasting peace (*10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World* 189).

Leila's life is determined by the decisions made by men, and as she has no control over the outcome, she is unable to lead a happy existence. Taheri provides an explanation for the prevalence of male-centric domination, acknowledging that "the fate of a significant portion of female characters, including Leila, is determined by oppressive norms that prioritize men" (29). The sole prominent character in the

narrative is the female pharmacist, who possesses qualities of strength, independence, and self-assurance that are met with disdain by proponents of patriarchal ideologies. Attulah comments that the novel prioritizes "beautiful, tactful, homely girls" while disregarding significant concerns such as education, women's economic rights, financial stability, and individual freedom ("Gender and Power" 577). Mehdi and Abbasi assert that Leila's prospects for the future were determined and solidified solely by her gender, as she was born into a society characterized by significant male dominance. The societal and cultural perception of women who have experienced sexual assault through trafficking has witnessed an exacerbation and increased prevalence (*10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World* 76). The female characters depicted in the literary work consistently encounter persistent societal, familial, and religious expectations that dictate their conformity to established gender standards. Gender roles are established by the varying expectations placed on individuals depending on their sex, as well as the ideals and attitudes towards gender within various civilizations (Blackstone 335). Gender roles are a product of the dynamic interplay between individuals and their surroundings, serving as indicators of the expected behaviours deemed suitable for each gender. Leila's existence is regulated and shaped by the patriarchal culture and Islamic law that her father, who consistently seeks guidance from preachers, imposes upon her. The individual in issue exhibits a strong and vivacious personality, which presents increasing challenges as she navigates a familial environment that consistently scrutinizes her autonomy and capacity for decision-making.

The act of defiance exhibited by the individual in question had a particularly adverse impact on her father, mostly due to his desire to cultivate her into an exemplary Muslim spouse who would provide him a sense of satisfaction and pride. According to Rehejeh, among traditional communities such as the Turkish culture, the prevalence of collectivistic values has significant influence on families, compelling them to maintain secrecy regarding incidents of sexual abuse, particularly when perpetrated by a member of the extended family ("Unequal Destinies" 80). The family expressed concern over the potential negative impact on their reputation among the local community due to their daughter's contamination.

Leila experiences adverse consequences due to her uncle's actions, as there is no investigation or retribution carried out against him. The individual expressed bewilderment at the notion that her family felt her actions might be justified by entering into matrimony with the son of the perpetrator. The emotional distress caused significant anguish for her, prompting her to make the deliberate choice to go from her residence. It is noteworthy to observe the discrepancy between the father's consistent encouragement for female members of the family to uphold modesty as a means of deterring unwanted attention, and his subsequent failure to protect his daughter following her experience of sexual assault inside the confines of their shared residence. The decision-making process of Leila's family is influenced by their aversion towards conventional societal norms. The father prioritized the family's prestige over his daughter. The individual opts to withhold belief in his daughter's account due to concerns over his social standing, coupled with the false belief that arranging her marriage to his brother's son will somehow rectify the act of rape. He expresses the intention to terminate all connections with Leila in the event of her refusal.

According to Islamic teachings, many civilizations perceive a female who escapes from her abuser as being more dishonourable compared to those who opt to marry the abuser. In addition, the novel includes the characters Zainab, Nalan, Humeyra, and Leila. Shafak's analysis of these members demonstrates the differential moral standards used by society towards women and transgender individuals. Binnaz and Humeyra experience a lack of access to a high-quality education as a result of their early marriages. Humeyra is likewise a recipient of spousal abuse. Due to the mistreatment and servitude imposed upon her by her husband's relatives, she was compelled to pursue asylum in Istanbul.

However, due to her actions that bring shame onto her family's reputation, she experiences persistent anxiety at the possibility of her spouse discovering her transgressions and resorting to lethal measures. Zainab, who possesses a little physical stature, embarks on a journey away from her hometown with the aim of seeking improved opportunities in Istanbul. However, as a result of her physical disability, the urban environment exhibits differential treatment towards her, ultimately leading her

to engage in prostitution. Upon being compelled into an unwanted marriage with a woman, Nalan, once identified as male, elects to sever ties with his familial relations. In Istanbul, the individual undergoes a gender transition but encounters societal barriers that impede their progress.

Islamic feminists argue for a hermeneutical approach to the holy book, aiming to foster a re-evaluation that upholds the inherent dignity of women, exemplified by figures such as Leila, and to actively endorse their fundamental human rights. In order to ensure the well-being and advancement of women globally, it is evident that a re-evaluation and elucidation of the Quran is necessary, namely through a lens that prioritizes the perspectives and interests of women (Gurkan and Barut 491).

The narrative presents disconcerting concerns pertaining to the circumstances that compel women to engage in prostitution and the inequitable and harsh treatment they endure inside society. The religious affiliation of these women renders them susceptible to exploitation, a phenomenon that is perpetuated by advocates of Islamic feminism. The early religious and patriarchal indoctrination of women leads to individuals who have a sense of unhappiness and are unable to fully express their authentic self. According to Nihad's analysis, the law of social behaviour in Middle Eastern countries dictates that women are consistently defined in reference to one of their male relatives. In the context of Turkey, women are perceived as the "other," as Nihad contends ("Elif Shafak: The Voice of the Other" 2902).

Individuals are consistently compelled to engage in self-censorship as a means of conforming to societal standards, so impeding their ability to achieve personal aspirations and aims. To preserve familial honour, individuals are required to exhibit qualities of gentleness, submissiveness, and obedience. Bennaz, Leila, and their companions, who are marginalized individuals within society, assume the role of spokespersons, symbolizing the stifling conditions and absence of autonomy experienced by women in repressive environments. According to Al Salami, Shafak's portrayal of women as passive persons who conform to a script authored by males prompts the reader to reconsider their treatment of others who are less privileged ("Silenced Voices" 30).

Butler in 2011 stated in the *'Big Thinks channel'* that “The notion that gender is performative deviates slightly, as the notion of being performative entails the generation of a series of consequences.” (43), means that the first impression that someone has of us is whether or not we act and speak like a lady or a guy. based on Butler's interview experience. When she initially came in Berkeley several years ago, a young woman yelled at her from windows as she walked down to the street. You're a lesbian, right? Butler's acting in a way that makes her appear to be a guy allowed the young woman to consider that. Butler also asserted that gender is performative, which means that no one is truly born with a particular gender. That is an act that is continuously produced and performed (*Bodies That Matter* 23). The claim leads the researcher to the conclusion that gender is a repeat of an individual's behaviour. The act of repetition causes someone to change their gender. Butler views performativity as a process of self-creation rather than coercion.

Hence, one may posit that the notions of gender, agency, and power exhibit a significant interconnection. When an individual develops their gender via actions rather than mere verbal expression, they might render it performative by engaging in repetitive acts. According to Butler, when an individual within a given environment attempts to challenge the prevailing discourse and societal norms, they are said to exercise agency.

Elif Shafak's characters either represent or resist this process within socio-political and religious frameworks, as demonstrated by Chapter Three's examination of Judith Butler's concept of agency as a performative and contextual response to prevailing power systems. Butler's focus on the relational and limited character of agency, as seen through the prism of *The Psychic Life of Power*, highlights how Shafak's protagonists—who are frequently marginalized in society—challenge normative frameworks by expressing resistance through their lived experiences. These figures demonstrate that agency is a negotiation within the constraints of cultural, political, and patriarchal forces rather than an independent force, whether through overt disobedience, covert subversion, or personal development. The performativity of gender and identity is further reinforced—and frequently limited—by heteronormative institutions, even when agency enables these characters to interact

with and confront power structures. Thus, by focusing on the fundamental heteronormative presumptions that shape gender roles and relationships in Shafak's novels, the following chapter, *Matrix of Heterosexuality and Shafak*, expands on these findings. In the setting of a conservative Turkish society, it examines how these presumptions govern identity, desire, and social visibility. It also looks at how Shafak's fiction challenges and undermines the heterosexual framework that establishes acceptable gender expressions.

Chapter IV: Matrix of Heterosexuality and Shafak

Judith Butler has made a foundational impact on the fields of gender studies, feminist theory, and cultural studies. Through seminal works such as *Gender Trouble*, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*, and *Undoing Gender*, Butler systematically articulates the key elements of her gender theory. By following its theoretical foundation, critical interpretations, and literary expression in Elif Shafak's works, this chapter critically examines Judith Butler's concept of the matrix of heterosexuality. The first definition given in the chapter is that the heterosexuality matrix is a discursive and social framework that creates gender and sexuality as complementary and binary. As the only acceptable type of desire, heterosexuality is normalized inside this matrix, and deviations are either ignored or made invisible.

The normative framework in which sexual orientation, gender identity, and biological sex are intricately intertwined is known as the "matrix of heterosexuality." People are assumed to be either male or female by this system, and they are expected to fulfill gender roles that correspond with their sex, to eventually want the "opposite" sex. It marginalizes people who don't fit in by reinforcing strict dichotomies that uphold societal institutions.

The term was made popular by Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble*, and it was expanded upon in *Bodies That Matter*. Butler challenges how cultural discourse normalises binary genders and requires heterosexuality, drawing on the theories of thinkers like Michel Foucault, Adrienne Rich, and Gayle Rubin. Butler's more performative examination of gender and sexuality was significantly influenced by Adrienne Rich's earlier definition of "compulsory heterosexuality" (Rich 11). Similarly, Butler's contention that gender is an outcome of repeated social performances within a heteronormative framework rather than an innate identity was made possible by Rubin's investigation of the "sex/gender system" (Rubin, "The Traffic in Women" 168).

Butler's analysis has been built upon by numerous academics. In *Epistemology of the Closet*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick explores how Western epistemology and social

structure are shaped by the binary oppositions of heterosexual and homosexual (Sedgwick 1-2). The way heteronormativity structures public life and excludes LGBT lives is criticized by Michael Warner in *The Trouble with Normal* (52). To challenge the dominance of heteronormative institutions, Lauren Berlant and Warner also suggest "queer world-making" (Berlant and Warner 558). The heterosexuality matrix is a lived system with real socio-political repercussions, as these critical discussions highlight.

Butler claims that the heterosexual matrix is a system of rules that uses social, political, and cultural norms to force people into inflexible gender roles (*Gender Trouble* 151). Butler further examines how people are subjugated to norms through social power mechanisms in *The Psychic Life of Power*, which results in the internalization of dominant expectations (*Psychic Life* 3). According to her, performative actions that conform to heteronormative standards are what define gender identity. But according to Butler, these same actions also create opportunities for subversion and resistance, enabling the redefining of gender and sexuality outside of binary oppositions.

The literary creations of Elif Shafak offer a critical perspective on the ways in which heteronormativity is expressed in Turkish society. Shafak examines how patriarchal and heteronormative ideas control women's lives, bodies, and social identities in books like *Honour* and *The Bastard of Istanbul*. By presenting them as structural results of a strict heterosexual grid, her stories reveal problems like as honor killings, virginity tests, incest, and sexual assault.

Shafak demonstrates how Turkish cultural norms, which are firmly anchored in conservative ideals, limit women to roles that are focused on procreation and male gratification. Violence or social exclusion are often outcomes of breaking these expectations. Butler's theory that heteronormative performances are imposed by social forces is echoed in Shafak's work, which also makes literature a potent vehicle for minority voices to be heard and for resistance. Shafak challenges how gender norms are created and enforced in a patriarchal culture through her complex depictions of masculinity and femininity. Her art promotes greater acceptance of gender and sexual diversity in Turkish society while illuminating the lived effects of heteronormativity.

Butler explains that gender is not fixed but an open-ended process of reiteration of norms which restrain the condition of a socially acceptable and intelligent subject status, most importantly the interdependent conditions of the binary of gender (masculine/feminine) and heteronormativity. Butler explains how subject is constituted. According to her: “the subject is the effect of very norms . . . the reiteration or repletion of norms by which a subject is constituted . . . it is not freely chosen but rather forcibly compelled” (“Performative Acts” 126).

The process of subject formation is socially and legally regulated. Although it is frequently taken for granted, the binary structure of gender is a social construct. One term always predominates over the other in this binary system, which strengthens hierarchical relationships. Within social structures, heteronormativity helps to institutionalize and legitimize binary gender norms. Lauren Berlant, and Michael Warner explain:

Heteronormativity is more than ideology, or prejudice, or phobia against gays and lesbians; it is produced in almost every aspect of the forms and arrangements of social life: nationality, the state, and the law; commerce; medicine; and education; as well as in the conventions and effects of narrativity, romance, and other protected spaces of culture. [“Sex in Public” 8]

The establishment of gender norms for individuals of different genders can be attributed to the influence of heteronormativity. Through the repetition of conventional discursive practices associated with heterosexual masculinity and femininity, the individual establishes their identity as a subject that conforms to social and cultural norms, so gaining social acceptance and recognition. Michel Foucault, in his seminal work *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, published in 1972, presents the concept of discursive practices to describe the interconnectedness that enables the formation of objects:

These relations are established between institutions, economic and social processes, behavioural patterns, systems of norms, techniques, types of classification, modes of characterisation; and these relations are not present in the object; it is not they that are deployed when the

object is being analyzed; they do not indicate the web, the immanent rationality, that ideal nervure that reappears totally or in part when one conceives of the object in the truth of its concept. They do not define its internal constitution, but what enables it to appear, to juxtapose itself with other objects, to situate itself in relation to them, to attain irreducibility. (59-60)

The “intelligible genders” are those, according to Butler, “which in some manner initiate and sustain relations of coherence and continuity among sex, gender, sexual activity, and desire” (*Excitable Speech* 23). These coherence and continuity linkages are not organic; rather, they are a result of the violent influence of some gender norms.

Butler also outlined how masculinity and femininity are produced and presented as natural in *The Psychic Life of Power*. The development of sexual maturity produced the ideas of masculinity and femininity. Boys who grow up normally will act like men, and girls who grow up normally will act like women. So, a person’s sexual preference is not something they choose on their own, but rather something that comes from social and cultural norms. Similarly, earlier on, Kate Millett in *Sexual Politics* had explained the process. She states, “Implicit in all the gender identity development which takes place through childhood is the sum total of the parents, the peers and the culture’s notion of what is appropriate to each gender by way of temperament, character, interests, status, work, gesture and expression” (31). Therefore, creating stereotypes has developed into a key tactic for the male to oppress the feminine, according to Millett when people go outside of social and cultural standards, they face violence, punishment, and social exclusion. Butler asserts, “A subject is formed and then invested with a sexuality by a regime of power. ... a founding prohibition that prohibits a certain desire but itself becomes a focus of desire, then a subject is formed through the prohibition of sexuality, a prohibition that at the same time forms this sexuality – and the subject who is said to bear it” (*The Psychic Life of Power* 103).

So, it can be argued that subject is the result of prohibition. Butler explains the terms ‘subject’ and ‘Subjection’, in *The Psychic Life of Power*. According to her,

“subjection means the process of being a subject as well as the process of getting subordinated by authority” (2). Power creates the necessary conditions for existence. Specifically, power is “what we depend on for our life and what we harbour and preserve in the creatures that we are”. Not only what we oppose. (2). Thus, power constitutes identity and constructs socially viable subjects. Women cannot challenge the power structure because they are dependent on it for their existence. Hence their challenging is considered inappropriate. Butler explains the process further. She says, “Within subjection, the price of existence is subordination. Precisely at the moment in which choice is impossible, the subject pursues subordination as the promise of existence. This pursuit is not choice, but neither is it necessity” (20). This quote echoes how individuals internalize heteronormative expectations—not out of free will, but as a necessary condition for social recognition and survival within a patriarchal system. Further, she states, “Subjection exploits the desire for existence, where existence is always conferred from elsewhere; it marks a primary vulnerability to the Other in order to be (21).

Butler expostulates that “power at first appears external, presses upon the subject, pressing the subject into subordination, assumes a psychic form that constitutes the subject’s self-identity” (3). This means that the very identity of the subordinated subject is dependent upon the relations of power that shape it. Talking about the importance of power, Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* says, ‘Power produces realities. It produces domains of objects and rituals of truth’ (194). Following Foucault’s insights, Butler affirms, “We understand power as forming the subject as well as providing the very condition of its existence and the trajectory of its desire, then power is not simply what we oppose but also, in a strong sense, what we depend on for our existence and what we harbour and preserve in the beings that we are” (*The Psychic Life of Power* 2).

According to Butler women in heteronormative societies are compelled to accept subordination as a necessary part of life since their options are essentially limited. Since the social structure represents these positions as normal and unavoidable, this submission frequently takes place without overt opposition. Butler also contends that a child has to build an emotional bond with a caregiver, usually the

mother, to grow emotionally, physically, and intellectually (*The Psychic Life of Power*). The subject's mentality is shaped by these core dependencies, which make people consider even subordinate attachments as essential to survive. In this sense, subordination is internalized as a structural state based on emotional need and social recognition rather than as a conscious decision.

Butler argued that gender is an identity. It is formed through the laws of prohibition that are foreclosed from the beginning in society. Some of these laws of prohibition have been discussed by critics. Talking about the incest taboos as both a prohibition and sanction, for instance, Gayle Rubin in “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the ‘Political Economy’ of Sex” says, “The incest taboo forces exogamy and alliance as societal goals upon the biological processes of sex and reproduction. The incest taboo separates the world of sexual preference into groups of acceptable and unacceptable sexual partners” (173).

The incest taboo not only prohibits sexual relations among kin but also reinforces a compulsory heterosexual framework, where homosexuality is simultaneously stigmatized. As Rubin argues, “Gender is not only identification with one sex; it also entails that sexual desire be directed toward the other sex. The sexual division of labour is implicated in both aspects of gender – male and female it creates them, and it creates them heterosexual” (180), highlighting how societal structures produce both gender identity and heterosexual desire as normative.

Thus, taboos specify what is permitted in our society and what is not. Taboos also play a significant role in determining one's psyche. Commenting on Butler's insights, Sara Salih states: “Gender identity is acquired through the repudiation of homosexual attachment... Heterosexual identity is founded on prohibited desire... to desire the same sex is to panic gender” (“On Judith Butler and performativity” 57).

Salih claims that Butler also explains how social and power regulation affect psychological development (60). Being a woman subject makes it nearly impossible to avoid or overcome the power structures within which subject-formation occurs. Therefore, social identity in the current power structure can hardly exist without subjugation. Butler covers the idea of subject-formation in *Giving an Account of Oneself*. She says: “my constitution and its modes of self-observation, within a

certain historical ontology, are necessary for a pure and unmediated relation of myself to my will, defined as free or not” (109). Butler explains that being a subject one is compelled by the persisting norms in culture and society to conform. A person is not able to tell, who she or he is without being aware of the rules and regulations of her or his being. Thus, norms and rules in the given society are essential prerequisites for identity formation.

Butler contents that a woman being a subject is dependent on them for recognition, visibility and space in society. Women cannot go beyond the existing power structures that favour men and are biased against women. What women should feel, think, and do is actually decided by power and the prevailing culture. Women’s psyche is restrained by power and cultural factors that establish male superiority. Consequently, these structures compel women to follow performative norms that are assigned to their gender. Women are expected to be inactive, passive, polite, emotional and cowardly. Men, on the other hand, display more dominant behaviours including aggression, bravery, daring, assertiveness, intolerance, activity, and fearlessness. To establish male superiority, the power system favours masculine traits over feminine traits. Boys and girls are taught appropriate gender-specific behaviour, play, attire, etc. beginning in infancy. The psyches of men and women are significantly influenced by these cultural variables. This training is ongoing and generally subtle, but, when necessary, it may also involve punishing those who do not act in accordance with the gender roles that are expected of them. Whether they want to or not, women are forced to behave in certain ways and adhere to certain traditions. As a result, women’s wants are controlled through cultural and societal regulation. Commenting on Butler’s insights, Stephen White says: “That one comes to ‘be’ through a dependency on the Other – a Hegelian, and indeed, Freudian Postulation – must be recast in linguistic terms to the extent that the term by which recognition is regulated, allocated, and refused are part of the larger social rituals of interpellation” (“Chapter Four JUDITH BUTLER’S BEING-IN-TROUBLE” 93).

In other words, bodies and subjects only become part of society when they are interpellated. According to Jagger, Butler believes that language produces the categories through which we give the world form rather than having them pre-exist in

the mental structure (*Judith Butler* 71). When primary reliance on power and language is established, desire transforms into a desire for existence or survival. This is accomplished through the formation of cultural norms and social regulation, and about the oppression of women, Butler argues that they should not be ignored and need to be protected. She encourages them to raise their voice against their oppression. She says, “When people join across racial lines to build communities of equality and defend the rights of the vulnerable, it must happen “in the street, the office, the home, and in the media.” Only through such struggle can we grasp “all the lives that really do matter” (“What’s Wrong with All Lives Matter?”).

Butler has used terms such as psyche, agency, taboos, homosexuality and heterosexuality. It is essential to be familiar with these terms to have a better understanding of her gender and performativity theory. In psychology, psyche stands for the mind functioning as the centre of thought, emotion and behaviour and consciously or unconsciously adjusting or mediating the body’s responses to the social and physical environment. A common trend runs through feminist groups that a male undermines a woman’s psyche by projecting her with patriarchal notions. Feminists want to represent feminist spirit and character in a completely different manner, thereby portraying the different shades of the feminine psyche (*Gender Trouble* 3).

Heterosexuality refers to romantic and sexual attraction or behaviour between individuals of distinct sexes. Inside most cultural frameworks, it functions as a normative standard, utterly positioning heterosexual orientation as the default or expected mode of sexuality. As a result, individuals are socially accustomed to conforming to heterosexual norms, often in opposition to homosexuality or other non-normative sexual identities. According to Judith Butler, this phenomenon is known as heteronormativity, a regulatory framework that regulates gender identities and manifestations in a way that only favours heterosexual relationships.

Comprehending these concepts helps to understand Butler’s theories in a better way. Butler expertly demonstrates how cultural norms shape women's self-perception as inferior to males rather than acknowledging the intrinsic equality of both sexes. Additionally, because these are areas they deeply comprehend and

occupy, women writers frequently choose to focus on examining the lives, perspectives, and issues of women.

This study's impetus comes from the idea that the literary world amply captures the fundamental aspects of Turkish women's identity that change through time. The most well-known literary works of the time were unmistakably reflective of the social discussions regarding women's status that, for the first time surfaced on the agenda in late Ottoman society. Furthermore, this pattern has continued throughout the Republican administration. Here, the emphasis is on the canonical women's writing from the late 1960s to the mid-1980s, acknowledging literature as a critical area to trace the creation of female identity in Turkey. The key category that will be used to unravel the particulars of Elif Shafak's work is sexuality. The subjectivities of the female characters created by women writers are treated as constitutive of sexuality. Sexuality may initially appear to only be a private matter despite being a complex, universal phenomenon.

In addition to sexual trauma, the Turkish-Armenian conflict is another major issue in the *Bastard of Istanbul*, the novel highlights other issues as well related to Turkish socio-political discourses. Elif Shafak was asked if she agreed with Judith Butler's suggestion that there exists a "woman's language" in an interview with J. A. Chancy. Shafak responded, "I do believe there are women's languages, but I do not believe there is a woman's language—not a singular discursive practice shared by women of all races or social classes" ("Migrations"). Women are liberated from patriarchal language in this way, which confines them to traditional, stereotypical, and singularized identities.

In *The Gaze*, Shafak has managed to remain very political and societal. In this novel, a fat woman and her lover want to change things in the world and for themselves. This lover is a dwarf and therefore a social outcast like the fat woman. The action takes place in Turkey. The male goes out dressed as a woman, while the woman goes out sporting a man's moustache, in an effort to bring about change and make a statement. Their choice to switch roles is what led to it. The symbolism here is to examine what is obscured from the public's view, what is not frequently recognized and seen by the public. There is another substory, that of the dwarf who is writing his

own encyclopaedic book of gazes. It is in turn multi-layered. It is through the eyes of the dwarf that the reader goes through the stories of many men caught in the vicissitudes of time and the travails of place. Once again, Shafak is reinforcing the importance of sub-cultures in the national life of Turkey, the presence of the other, the tolerance of diversity.

Shafak's exotic narratives conflate patriarchal hate for women, the traditional association between women and the monstrous, and discourses of imperialism, but suggests ways in which alternative ways of looking can undermine the established binary thinking that consigns woman, with the physically abnormal, to the negative realm of difference.

Shafak's novel depicts exotic authors and actors gradually taking control of the external gaze under which they have traditionally been constructed, by deflecting this gaze on to the world that has defined them. As a Scheherazade figure, shape-shifter, and narrative eye viewing the world from a new imaginative and empathetic perspective, erasing boundaries between East and West, sameness and difference, and past and present, the female-storyteller is able to challenge the homogenising effects of the imperialist, phallogocentric gaze. For Shafak, fiction offers a particular kind of freedom for women: since they are fluid in nature, fiction is a way of destroying the 'I' signifier. The fiction-writer, like the narrator, can tell lies and adopt new personae, blurring the boundary between the imaginary and the real (qtd. in Chancy 72).

Ironically, Shafak's fiction opens up aspects of the Eastern world for the Western gaze. However, rather than accepting the role of what Graham Huggan has described as purveyor of "literary exotic" – an implicit extension of the traditional discourses of marginalization – Shafak insists that her work enables a positive, regenerating two-way traffic between East and West: "I want the knowledge produced in the West and the knowledge produced in the East to flow into one another, to change and influence each other" (qtd. in Chancy 68).

Shafak's depiction of Istanbul as a multicultural site, incorporating Turks, Gypsies, Jews, Circassians, Arabs, Armenians, Persians, Russians and Europeans, also tries the boundary between East and West, normal and other. Shafak has suggested that the early Turkish Republic attempted to repress and deny its

multicultural past, just as it rejected the feminine (qtd. in Chancy 65-68). Shafak claims that “Turks generally are too obsessed with the idea of how they look to the eyes of foreigners, to the eyes of Westerners. Too busy to prove how different they are from the Arabs or other Muslims, too preoccupied with their image to reform and heal the content of the regime” (*The Gaze* 68). This quote from *The Gaze* displays Butler’s view that identity is performatively constructed through external recognition, as Turks shape their national and cultural identity not from within, but through the gaze and expectations of the Western “Other.”

The narrative of Memiş Efendi responds to these phenomena, creating a dual exhibition of ugliness and beauty, carrying La Belle Annabelle from West to East (France to Istanbul) and the Sable Girl from East to West (Siberia to Istanbul). His goal is to satisfy the “greatest yearnings of women,” who he says need to see something even more repulsive than themselves, with his presentation of “ugliness itself...the strangest of creatures, the despicable, plague-ridden Sable-Girl” (*The Gaze* 45, 29). The Sable-Girl is related to the Sable-Boy who was caught in Siberia in 1648. Like Turkey, Siberia is depicted in a moment of transition, gradually being devoured by Russia’s expansionist, imperialist policies. Russia aims to strengthen its empire by purifying, standardising and homogenising its territories, wiping out superstitions and native cultures in the process (48). As Russian explorers attempt to map and define Siberia, whose “lands...lie naked and unconquered”, the unseen North-East of Siberia acquires a special value for the hunters and trappers seeking their fortune: “They said it was a paradise of furs” (51). The exotic unknown Siberia becomes associated with legends of strange plants, lights, mermaids, monsters and primitive natives, “who had no necks, so their heads looked like they might fall off at any moment, and whose sexes couldn’t be told apart” (51-52).

The ruthlessly ambitious trapper who aims to discover and exploit the resources of the Pogicha river, a place he imagines as a magical land “promised to him alone,” can also be associated with the colonising imperative. The trapper stumbles on an upturned basket in which a boy is undergoing a mystical test to discover whether he should become his tribe’s next shaman. The boy’s tribe, having lost its female shaman, believes that her migrating soul might inhabit the body of her

brother (55). Having waited for a magical “visitor,” animal, plant or human, to arrive and “grant him superhuman powers or destroy him,” the boy has begun to combine his soul with that of the sable that has entered the basket, beginning the “ancient dance” in which their souls should combine, leaving their bodies separate (57). When the hunter opens the basket and looks inside, his avaricious gaze breaks the spell: “...they could neither step back and return to their former states, nor could they step forward and complete their transformation” (59). The trapper brings the hybrid Sable-Boy to the nearest colonial outpost and sells him to the military governor, who stages a lucrative nightly show of his captive. Subsequently, the Sable-Boy and his descendants are exploited by generations of the governor’s family, until Memiş Efendi acquires the Sable-Girl and brings her West, to exhibit in Istanbul (66). The governor’s words (“[t]his kind of ugliness is something everybody has to see”) recall the terms in which displays of native exoticism or strangeness were routinely displayed both the East and the West, and again draws attention to the parallel gaze of the colonizer, explorer and scientist (62). As the narrator emphasizes, “No matter how ugly she was, she had the right to remain anonymous and keep herself away from prying eyes so that she wouldn’t become a spectacle. She wouldn’t have been as hideous if she hadn’t been noticed, for sure” (46). Displaying her body on the stage in Pera, the Sable-Girl expresses the rage of the colonized body:

She would be left stark naked. She’d approach the edge of the stage and, making strange sounds, would rain centuries-old curses upon the audience. Like all of her ancestors she fearlessly displayed her monumental ugliness. Like all of her ancestors she was fearlessly ugly. The top half of her body belonged to a woman, and the bottom half of her body belonged to an animal...Suddenly, like a caged animal, she would let lose all her rage...And at the least expected moment, she pawed at the eyes surrounding her. (73)

In her aggressive self-display and subsequent terrorising of her audience, the Sable Girl turns the hostile imperial gaze back upon itself, so that the audience leaves the tent in terror. This focus on the politics of recognition links the experience of the

exotic other, displayed as grotesque object of the gaze, to the narrator's experience as devalued other (doubly devalued, by both her gender and her physical abnormality).

Braidotti has linked the Western 'monster' as 'the physical embodiment of difference' with what she terms 'phallogocentric' conceptions of woman as a sign of 'abnormality' and therefore inferiority: "Woman/mother is "monstrous by excess," transgressing norms; "monstrous by lack," lacking masculine unity; and "monstrous by displacement," as a sign of ambiguity and otherness" (Braidotti 79, 83). Braidotti's depiction reflects the instability and constructedness of gender norms that Butler critiques, revealing how femininity is marked as different when it resists heteronormative frameworks.

Shafak's narrative, shifting between depictions of the female body as monstrous by 'excess' or by 'lack', demonstrates this parallel, and the associated mechanisms of binary oppositions that underlie masculine systems of representation. The audience's dual reaction of horror and fascination when confronted by the Sable Girl is paralleled in masculine perceptions of woman as monstrously other, as exotic outsider, but simultaneously an object of desire. "Memiş Effendi stages a second exhibition for men, believing they need to see something more beautiful than themselves. La Belle Annabelle, born of a supernatural desire, is rejected for her unearthly beauty. Sold to travelling players, she eventually reaches Istanbul" (*The Gaze* 142). La Belle Annabelle's refusal of her unearthly beauty echoes Butler's theory that normative identities are constructed by excluding what is deemed unintelligible or non-conforming to social norms.

Shafak's attention to physical otherness as a location of fluidity, metamorphosis, and resistance further exemplifies her dedication to alternative, feminist ways of perceiving. Shafak has identified Bakhtin's concept of the carnivalesque as a significant influence on her literature, and the relationship between the bizarre and grotesque and freedom from hegemonic discourses suggests that idea.

Shafak portrays Hovhannes as "Hovhannes Stambouljian, a renowned poet and columnist, was secretly writing a book entirely outside his main field. He could be rejected, ridiculed, or reviled at the end" (226). Shafak's depiction of Hovhannes as a celebrated writer secretly authoring work beyond his public persona reflects Judith

Butler's notion of performativity, where identity is not fixed but constituted through repeated acts that may confront societal expectations. Shafak further continues, "At a time when the entire Ottoman Empire was sated with grandiose undertakings, revolutionary movements, and nationalist divisions, at a time when the Armenian community was pregnant with innovative ideologies and ardent debates, he in the privacy of his house was writing a children's book" (226). Shafak's portrayal of Hovhannes writing a children's book amidst political upheaval highlights Butler's idea that subversive acts—like choosing tenderness over resistance—can destabilise dominant cultural narratives and redefine modes of agency.

The major Armenian character who dwells in the literary world of Shafak's book is Armanoush, a self-described "bibliophile" (*The Bastard of Istanbul* 96). But this causes the Tchakhmakhchian family much distress. Armanoush is aware that her family has a complicated and malicious reason for disliking her for being a reader: "She was expected to resist twice as much from becoming a bibliophile not only because she was a woman but also because she was an Armenian" (96). This is about "a fear of survival", the irrational desire for society to restrain her from shining too brightly because writers, poets, artists, and other creative types were among the first to be wiped out by the Late Ottoman Empire. Oddly enough, this painful memory never really leaves us: "Like too many Armenian families in the diaspora, safe and sound here but never truly at ease, the Tchakhmakhchians were both elated and vexed when a child of theirs read too much, thought too much, and swerved too far away from the ordinary" (44). Shafak now demonstrates an essential component of novel writing that has the innate capacity to overthrow power structures through her narrative.

Shafak exhibits on the power and peril of fiction, noting that novels are especially dangerous because they immerse readers in a fluid, unpredictable world of imagination. For minorities, who must remain vigilant in oppressive systems, such imaginative detours risk disconnection from harsh realities. Imagination becomes both a refuge and a threat—"a dangerously captivating magic"—for those forced into silence, echoing Butler's view of subjection where desire and danger are inextricably linked.

We have seen how the author's ability to offer a decolonial voice enables her to examine the violence of the modern/colonial power matrix as well as the disparities between colonial and imperial societies that have been mediated by movements like modernism, civic nationalism, and secularism. Shafak's novel has attained literary importance and has helped to bring attention to the ongoing suffering of Turkey's marginalized and stigmatized Armenian minority. Last but not least, Rubina Perroomian draws attention to the paucity of Turkish-Armenian literature. However, via the writings of authors like Elif Shafak, Orhan Pamuk, Mehmet Uzun, and many others, artistic representations can portray the ongoing agony of these rejected subjectivities (*And Those who Continued Living in Turkey After 1915* 6).

The fact that the literary domain abundantly reflects the core elements of Turkish female identity that change over time served as the drive for this study. The issues over women's roles in society that first came up in late Ottoman culture were fully reflected in the most well-known literary works of the time. Additionally, this pattern has persisted during the Republican administration. Here, the focus is on classic women's writing from the late 1960s to the middle of the 1980s, embracing literature as a vital source for understanding how Turkish women's identities came to be. Women writers see sexuality as a distinguishing aspect of the subjectivities of their female characters. Examining how female sexuality is represented in contemporary women's writing—especially in contrast to dominant discourses in Turkey from the late nineteenth century to the 1980s—can offer valuable intuitions into the developing discursive landscape of female sexuality in the Turkish context.

Although it is a complicated, universal phenomenon, sexuality may at first seem to be merely a personal concern. However, recent findings have profoundly altered the social scientific view of sexuality, elevating it out of the personal and placing it at the centre of social and political inquiry. The centrality of sexuality in social science research is supported by a variety of theoretical frameworks. Early in the 20th century, Freud claimed that sexuality has a significant influence on one's life and that modern society suppresses this essential desire. Later, in the 1950s, Reich and Marcuse developed this oppressive notion and denounced the sex-neglecting structures of modernity. Marcuse, Reich, and Freud are considered to be the main

proponents of the repressive theory of sexuality in this regard. Another paradigm shift for the study of sexuality would be the application of a Foucauldian and Butlerian perspective. In 1978, Foucault initially put forth the idea that sexuality is created discursively (*The History of Sexuality* 3). This argues that sexuality is a combination of biological urges that must be satisfied and a social construct acting in the domain of power. By incorporating sex into a structured system of knowledge, modern civilization, according to Foucault, has turned sex into a discourse. He also shows how power and sexuality have been intertwined since the seventeenth century. Moreover, Foucault notes that prescription and provocation, which are more crucial in the creation of sexuality discourse, are also used to regulate sexuality in addition to prohibition. He argues that the nineteenth century, rather than being a time when sexuality was frowned upon, was a time when new sexual terminology was being created as a result of categorizing sexual behaviours. Foucault's understanding of productive power, the power/knowledge relationship, and sexuality seems to be fairly in accord with the feminist goal because he examines micropolitics at the individual level. This lends credence to the notion that patriarchy reproduces itself at the deepest level of the feminine experience (Bartky). In large part because of how it addresses the relationship between power and the body, it is also relevant to the feminist endeavour. The Foucauldian view of the body as the principal site where power functions give feminist talks new directions to investigate.

Some feminists, however, sharply criticize the Foucauldian conception of sexuality because, like other thinkers who subscribe to the repressive hypothesis, it neglects to take into account how sexuality differs for men and women. In this way, it minimizes how sex is socially constructed or regarded as being harmful, and how male sexuality is typically superior to female sexuality. Since the 1970s, feminist scholars have emphasized how males have appropriated female sexuality and claimed that this is a significant aspect of how women are oppressed. This is because the feminist agenda has expanded to include sexual politics, which argues that unequal power relations between the sexes result from male dominance in the sexual realm. Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* offers a foundational analysis of how male dominance is entrenched in cultural and sexual systems. She asserts: "Sexual politics obtains

consent through the ‘socialization’ of both sexes to basic patriarchal politics with regard to temperament, role, and status” (26).

Men’s control over women’s sexuality, men’s perception of sexuality as a male entitlement, men’s appropriation of female bodies, and men’s ubiquitous predisposition to sexualize relationships with women are all examples of patriarchy that is deeply ingrained in sexuality, according to a key principle of sexual politics. This branch of feminist sexuality theory examines a wide range of topics, such as prostitution, domestic violence, rape, incest, birth control, and pornography. Furthermore, topics like sexual pleasure, sexual identity, and sexual assault are covered. By adopting this perspective on female sexuality, it acknowledges that it may be both a place where women are subjected to structural oppression and a source of resistance to male dominance and heterosexual hegemony. In this approach, it looks for the true desires and expressions of feminine sexuality.

It would be wrong to accept Turkish women's sexuality as a single, homogenous category and to try to apply broad discursive codes to it. Women have historically and socially been categorized as a group. ‘It is believed that oppressive gender relations are a common experience for all women, uniting their experiences as women. Depending on a woman’s age, class, power, occupation, nationality, sexual orientation, ideology, or culture, she may experience oppression to varying degrees’ (Krekula et al.). Feminist concerns shifted in the 1980s from the disparities between men and women to those among women. The assertions that second-wave feminism was limited to white, middle-class women brought to light the unique struggles that black, working-class, or third-world women faced. In addition, post-structural narratives contributed to the dissolution of the notion of women as a single entity. It is crucial to understand how many other aspects of identity, including social class, religion, and ethnicity, intersect with and profoundly influence women’s sexuality in this context. The current feminist movement away from totalizing, unitary concepts transform woman into ‘women’ and sexuality into ‘sexualities’ (Del Cuvillo et al.).

By combining the concept of sexual politics into feminist discourse, radical feminist movements of the 1970s successfully demonstrated the inextricable link between the personal and the political. What may appear as private, sexually unequal

relationships are, in fact, indications of broader structural inequalities embedded in patriarchal society. This recognition has since become a foundation stone of feminist theory. In this context, the present study examines the sexual politics evident in the narratives of contemporary Turkish women's writing, with particular emphasis on Elif Shafak's works. The representation of female sexuality in her novels is analysed not in isolation, but as part of the wider socio-political discourse that continues to shape and constrain women's agency and subjectivity.

The post-war demographic boom and rising affluence are cited as key elements during this time to that extent as they contributed to the development of a mass market, democracy, and greater flexibility in attitudes. The development of the sexual revolution was significantly influenced by the transformation of women's increasing influence in society, from the workplace to the home, as well as changing economic, political, social, and demographic structures. As a result, academics and movement organizers strove to eliminate any traces of the Victorian morality that despised and repressed sex. A few concepts are revealed in the language they use. For example, the word 'inhibition' is frequently used to allay women's concerns regarding sexual behaviours (Pinxten and Lievens). This philosophy's guiding principle is that sexual activity should be unrestricted and should be enjoyed without interference from anyone or anything. Another significant purpose of the revolution was to increase the availability of pre-marital sex and the sexuality of unmarried women.

The emergence of the feminist movement and the use of sexuality as a feminist problem was encouraged in part by the implications of the sexual revolution as well as women's politicization within leftist groupings. The majority of second wave feminist activists are descended from the leftist activism that ignored female sexuality and delayed feminism's demands until after the revolution. Leftists' contention that capitalism is fundamentally to blame for women's subjugation infuriated feminists. To support the assertion that many second-wave feminists were frustrated with leftist movements that prioritized class struggle over gender issues and sidelined women's sexual autonomy, Marlene Dixon states: "The subjugation of women serves as a 'natural' restriction upon the employment of female labour, and thus partially controls competition in the labour force" ("Left-Wing Anti-Feminism").

This focuses on how leftist frameworks often viewed women's oppression primarily through the lens of labour and class, neglecting the specificities of female sexuality and gendered power dynamics. An autonomous feminist movement was essential since the left did not address male dominance in the home, marriage, and sexuality. This movement would not define gender inequality as an issue to be solved after the revolution but rather as the primary concern and offer women a voice to assert female sexuality.

The Turkish context was also affected by the evolving discourse about sexuality in general and female sexuality in particular. The feminist movement in Turkey reached a turning point in the 1980s. In the liberalizing atmosphere of the time, the new feminist movement revived the female perspective, contested androcentric narratives in previously dominant discourses like Westernization, nationalism, and Kemalist ideology, and paved the way for new themes crucial for the formation of female identity such as sexuality, romantic love, domesticity, and male violence (Zhang). In this context, the growth of the new women's writing, which mirrors the shifting discourses on sexuality in the West and at home, begins in the 1960s as a current on the cusp of a new feminist movement in Turkey.

It is alleged that significant macrosocial and governmental undertakings in Turkey have strategically addressed female sexuality. The big discourses of Westernization, Islamism, nationalism, the Republican mission of modernization, and socialism all attempted, in one way or another, to include female sexuality in their overarching goals. They saw female sexuality as either a supporter of their ideals or a symbol of the limits of their ideologies.

Discussions regarding women in Turkey first gained prominence during the 19th century, largely as a result of efforts to Westernize Ottoman culture. The Tanzimat period, which runs from 1839 to 1876, is notable for the Imperial Rescript of Gulhane (Gulhane Hatt-I Humayunu), which ensured that all Ottoman subjects had the right to life, honour, and property regardless of their race or religion. To communicate their opinions on the Western impact on Ottoman society, the modernizing elite of the time operationalized female identity. The status of women in Ottoman culture came to be equated with cultural fidelity or backwardness (Ringer).

During this time, topics like marriage, love, and family came up. Male intellectuals challenged arranged marriages, the subservient status of women in marriage, family life, and society, particularly the Young Ottomans who were the first cadres attempting to apply ‘Enlightenment’ concepts to the Ottoman modernizing framework (Karpat).

Also, throughout this time, female intellectuals and activists started associations and published a variety of women’s journals, becoming increasingly important. Following the Young Turk revolt in 1908, there were less press censorship laws, more women’s periodicals, and more discussion of topics like women’s clothing, family, marriage, education, and job. Women’s associations had a wide range of objectives, ranging from feminist unions, political party women’s wings, and charitable and cultural organizations to associations promoting women’s employment. The variety of publications addressing women’s standing in society and rights was also impressive. There were over forty women’s journals unearthed up until the Republic’s founding. Examples of these include *Aile* -1880, *ükufezar* -1886, *Hanmlara Mahsus Gazete* -1895, *Demet* -1908, *Kadn* -1908, *Kadnlar Dünyas* -1913:25, *nci* -1919, and *süs* -1923. One may argue that women’s publications and organizations were crucial to Ottoman-Turkish feminism because they established a public space dedicated to women’s issues.

Sexual crimes are like an ever-bleeding wound deep in the heart of Turkey, too pervasive to be cured, and while they are conspicuous because of how often they occur, they remain a taboo subject. Nevertheless, this does not mean that they always go unspoken. Literature is one alternative way of speaking out about issues that are difficult to openly discuss because it has the power to represent to readers that which is often inexpressible and inaccessible. As such, it is able to render audible the voices of those who have been silenced. In that regard, literature can serve a means of raising awareness about sexual crimes, supporting victims, and threatening perpetrators. The works of Elif Shafak often delve into issues concerning minorities, sexual violence, male and female victims of patriarchy, and people with physical disabilities. As she says, “The land of storytelling is a land of compelling truths told in the form of little lies” (“Storytelling, Fake Worlds, and the Internet”), which reflects her belief that

fiction in particular is a site of struggle for freedom. She makes use of fiction to examine themes that she could not express otherwise. Rape, incest, and honour killings are among the most common gender-related traumatic events that are difficult to speak about. Shafak uses various narrative techniques in her trauma novels to convey different aspects of trauma to readers. She uses the power of literature to raise awareness about the destructiveness of patriarchy and examine how it encourages sexual crimes, while also exploring how most sociocultural norms contribute to the dissemination of patriarchal ideas. She does so by allowing the characters in her books to speak up for those who have been traumatized and silenced.

The novels selected for this study scrutinize key concerns such as the narrative strategies and structural devices employed by Elif Şafak in her fiction, as well as her depiction of the relationship between gender-based and sexual trauma and Turkish sociocultural norms at the thematic level. This chapter examines how Shafak portrays the complex relationship between sexual trauma, recovery, and the sociocultural conditions in which the characters are embedded. Since all selected novels explicitly depict Turkey as having a strongly patriarchal society, one wonders if patriarchy is represented as promoting sexual violence. This chapter analyses how Şafak's novels explore the effects of gender-based and sexual trauma within the context of gendered parenting and sexist discourses. It cross-examines whether Şafak posits a correlation between such sociocultural factors and the experience of trauma. Also, it investigates her stance on the matrix of sexual heteronormativity and gender, questioning whether responsibility is attributed solely to men or whether both men and women are represented as participants in sustaining patriarchal systems. Given that conservative societies often hold victims accountable for sexual violence, this study also explores Şafak's depiction of such dynamics in Turkey, a representative conservative Muslim society. The concept of 'honour' as it pertains to both men and women is critically examined. While Şafak's works have attracted academic and non-academic attention, there remains a gap in scholarship regarding her fiction through the lens of trauma theory, particularly regarding these questions.

To understand how Shafak approaches sexual crimes, especially in addressing the issues of rape, incest, and honour killing, it is necessary to provide a sociocultural

introduction to such crimes in Turkey. A narratological analysis of her novels demands familiarity with how Turkish society responds to the trauma caused by sexual crimes, how common those crimes are in Turkey, how Turkish culture affects the causes and effects of traumatic events, and how effective Turkish Law is in penalizing perpetrators and compensating victims. The sociocultural norms of a society cannot be ignored in studying representations of trauma because society and individuals play dual roles in the construction of what trauma means (Abrutyn). The traumatic events that Şafak focuses on in her novels show that while women are usually the victims, men also suffer from traumatic events that are rooted in society and are strongly related to the power struggles in that society. Victims' struggles continue not only in the private sphere but also face challenges in the public sphere. On the other hand, through the construction of her novels and portrayals of her characters, Şafak demonstrates that recovering from trauma requires bridging the gap between society and individual, past and present, because cultural pain is internalized at an individual level and facilitates the victimization of people, which is especially true for women in Turkey (Uğur). In short, a brief sociocultural discussion of rape, incest, and honour killings in Turkey will help us better understand the literary treatment of these crimes in Şafak's novels.

Şafak's works are inclusive of both female and male characters, many of whom share the common feature of being kept in the margins, silenced, and shunned. However, the female characters outnumber the male characters. She is deeply interested in gender inequality in both the domestic and social domain. After completing her bachelor's degree at Middle East Technical University in Turkey, she finished her master's degree in gender studies at the same university. In that way, it can be seen that her interest in gender studies is not only a part of her fictional world but also her education. Later she taught classes such as "Sexualities and Gender in the Muslim world" at The University of Arizona and at several universities in Turkey and abroad. In 2005, she got married to Eyüp Can Sağlık, a journalist. The claim has been made that Eyüp Can Sağlık is the foster child of the leader of FETÖ (the Gülenist Terror Group). Though he denies the claim, he admits that Fethullah Gülen had an influence on him as he grew up. For that reason, Şafak has been accused of being "the daughter-in-law of Gülen" (Uğur) and criticized as such. Unlike her husband, she

has neither denied nor verified those assertions. Because of such claims and her criticism in *The Bastard of Istanbul* of the Ottoman Empire's role in the Turkish-Armenian conflict, she has been harshly critiqued by some people like the journalist Nihat Genç, who once asked, "When will the daughter in-law of the Cemaat be arrested? Şafak has two children, Şehrazat Zelda, who was named after the character Scheherazade in 1001 Nights and Zelda Fitzgerald, and a son, who is named Emir Zahir. She lives in London and visits Istanbul frequently. She often uses those two cities as the settings of her novels.

Şafak's *The Forty Rules of Love*, originally written in English and translated into Turkish, deals with the life stories of Mevlana Jalaleddin Rumi and his spiritual love for Shams Tabrizi. By adapting Rumi's life and works, Şafak builds a bridge between the desires and dreams of women in the ancient and the modern Silk Road and though Islam and Persian poetry have been an inseparable part of the Silk Road (Beckwith 229), Şafak tries to focus on the controversial aspects of religion and literature on the modern Silk Road. There are four main parts in the novel: earth, water, wind, and fire. The narrative shifts back and forth between the years 1200 in Konya and 2000 in Boston through multiple narrators. Şafak not only discusses Sufism in the book but also depicts the origins of the Mawlawi order through the lives of the latter two characters. In an interview, Şafak described how she drew on Sufism:

Sufism isn't presented in my book as a dense body of theory. It is an engaging, dynamic story. In that regard, I'm curious about what Sufism means for the modern world right now, for people like myself. Even though we seem to be miles, centuries, and civilizations removed from Rumi's philosophy, I wanted to highlight how it still resonates with us today. (*The Forty Rules of Love* 51)

The love between Aziz and Ella brings them together, even though they have different backgrounds—while Ella is from America, Aziz is a Scottish Sufi. Their love breaks down the walls between cultures and becomes multicultural. Şafak draws attention to the power of love, which does not view difference as 'other' but

rather as ‘a half’ uniting with its other half. In that regard, the most important love is its transcendental nature, which goes beyond physical reality.

Another issue Shafak frequently deals with in her novels is identity. The characters in her novel *The Saint of Incipient Insanities* are all alienated lost individuals with no sense of belonging to anywhere; regardless of where they go, they are both at home and strangers. The book was published in Turkish with the title ‘Araf’, which means “purgatory” in English, the hinterland between heaven and hell. The people are neither good nor bad, as the good and evil deeds they committed in their lives balance each other out. Consequently, they belong neither to heaven nor to hell. The title ‘Araf’ firstly refers to where Turkey is geographically situated, belonging neither to Europe nor to Asia (Uğur). Straddling two continents, Turkey is in precisely such a geographical state of limbo. Just like the main characters of the novel, Turkish university student Ömer and his American girlfriend and future wife Gail, Turkey does not have a sense of belonging to a continent. That point is further emphasized in the novel when Gail commits suicide by jumping off the Bosphorus Bridge, which hangs suspended between Asia and Europe. Gail has no attachments to her home country America and feels estranged everywhere else, and ultimately, she takes her own life.

The domain of reproductive sexuality encompasses the convergence of regulatory frameworks and limitations, resulting in discernible effects. This movement promotes the occurrence of reflux, ultimately resulting in the emergence of non-normative sexualities such as baby sexuality, unconventional conduct exhibited by men and women, and acts of sodomy, among others. The perimeter forms are compelled to vocalize their thoughts and opinions and are subject to attentive listening, whereas the conjugal sphere is expected to adopt a submissive and subordinate role, ultimately being silenced through adherence to rigorous norms and regulations. Consequently, the concept of the “unnatural” is ultimately recognized as a distinct facet within the domain of human sexuality (*The Saint of Incipient Insanities* 39).

Another important aspect of the novel are the characters’ names, as well as the connotations of and people’s feelings about names. Gail, who is introduced to readers

as Zarpanit at the beginning of the novel, uses various names throughout the novel because she feels estranged from her name/names: “But why is it that a person is given a once-and-for-all name when she or he might have been called any other thing, even with the same letters of that name huddled in a different order? When was the opportunity to rename everything around us, including ourselves, taken from our hands?” (5). The arbitrary and permanent nature of names given at birth are questioned in this piece. It considers how naming rules can limit the flexibility and diversity of the self by limiting individual identity. According to Judith Butler's performativity theory, identity is created via repeated social performances rather than existing as a permanent essence. Shafak continues: “How can I manage not to worry about being permanently stuck to my name, when my only consolation for being me is a chance to the contrary? I am anchored in a world that fixes names forever, where letters are not permitted to be in frenzy” (5). The inevitability of a preset identity is a source of fear for Shafak. Being "anchored" alludes to a lack of flexibility or mobility to remake oneself. This supports Butler's claim that social systems frequently leave little opportunity for divergence from strict gender standards and identities. Further she states: “But every time I thrust my spoon into the alphabet soup, I hope to fish out new letters to recompose my name, and along with that, recompose my fate” (5). The urge to regain control over one's identity is depicted in this striking illustration. The process of "fishing out new letters" from the "alphabet soup" is an effort to reinterpret oneself outside of predetermined parameters. This is consistent with Butler's idea of subversion, which holds that people can use performance behaviours to challenge and reinterpret social norms.

In *The Bastard of Istanbul*, Zeliha, the sister who gets raped, keeps the incident a secret and refuses to discuss it with any of her family members. When her sister Banu finds out about it, she also keeps it a secret. There is a strong tendency in Turkey to avoid talking about incest. One of the reasons for that situation is that people are afraid of the reactions they will face if they discuss it. Conservative Turkish society is only bothered about its prestige and honour. People are afraid of losing their “family honour,” which represents a major risk if a case of incest comes to light. This is probably the reason why Zeliha’s sister keeps it a secret after she learns about what happened. As for Zeliha, as someone who does not care about

family honour (as evidenced by her lack of qualms about giving birth out of wedlock), she knows that no one in her family will support her if she reveals her secret. The biggest reason why she is condemned to silence is the patriarchal family structure, and her mother's unconditional love and support for her son leaves Zeliha no opportunities to share and heal.

The greatest advantage that incest aggressors have over their victims is undoubtedly masculine authority. That is why the statistics discussed above indicate that the most pressing danger is at home. The highest percentage of aggressors are fathers and older brothers. In cases in which brothers are the perpetrators, parents may try to see the case of incest as acceptable by representing it as an act of innocent adolescent curiosity or the result of a psychological burden as a means of protecting their sons, and they may accuse the daughter of tempting the perpetrator. If the perpetrating brother is the breadwinner in the family, the possibility that the incident of incest will be tolerated is much higher. John Borneman notes:

The despotism and power of fathers in families with incestuous experiences are very dominant. Another notable fact is that society usually blames the child/adolescent victimized by incest or his/her mother. Such accusations are based on the belief that the child/adolescent asked for and provoked the act of incest and he/she was either lying or willing since he/she did not disclose anything immediately. (*Cruel Attachments* 103)

On the other hand, most incest victims cannot share their experiences because they are threatened or pressured by their aggressors to remain silent because they hold authority over them. So how are cases of incest revealed? Generally, the inevitable outcomes of incest are the reasons why they are exposed. For example, the victim is no longer a virgin so getting married will pose a problem, as traditionally women are expected to strictly avoid sexual intercourse before marriage. Pregnancy and giving birth outside of wedlock can also reveal cases. The victim's parents may be driven to divorce, killings may be carried out to punish incestuous acts, and victims may commit suicide. Those are the most general reasons why incidents of incest come to light. In Zeliha's case, her sister finds out about the incestuous rape through her

communication with djinn. Although Zeliha's sister keeps it a secret, she, in her own way, punishes the rapist brother: she prepares a poisoned dessert and has him eat it. Ironically, the punishment that should be meted out to the rapist by legal means is carried out supernaturally. And since it is supernatural and cannot be "real," Shafak draws attention to the fact that rapists usually go unpunished in Turkey.

All the same, cases of incest are usually covered up and wealthy families are better equipped to conceal it than poor families, which is why most reported cases involve families with lower incomes. Moreover, research has shown that neither the aggressors nor the families in which incest occurs can be easily categorized. Aggressors are not usually paedophiles, alcoholics, or chronically unemployed, and they do not always have psychological problems. They go about their daily lives without any disruptions. The only common point they share is that they are often authoritative figures. Moreover, in most cases incest occurs in nuclear families. At the same time, however, children can be exposed to incest in large families and single-parent families as well.

The legal consequences for incest in Turkey remain a subject of significant controversy and debate. Firstly, in some unreported cases the families may opt to protect their family honour by forcing the victim to marry someone who is much older than her or marry a man who is already married as a means of covering up the fact that she is no longer a virgin or pregnant out of wedlock. If the aggressor is not legally forbidden from marrying the victim, she may be forced to marry him. For instance, it is common in eastern and south eastern Turkey to marry first cousins, so if a girl is sexually harassed by a first cousin, she may be given no choice but to marry him (Turkey). In fact, if a woman has resisted getting married to a cousin, he may rape her as a means of getting his way, as the victim's family will marry off their daughter to her cousin to "purify" their family honour. Moreover, babies that are born from incestual encounters are usually either killed immediately after birth or adopted by others (Ugur). In that way, the aggressor is rewarded while the victim and baby are further victimized.

Shafak refers to such sexist proverbs throughout her book. They are internalized in such a way that not only men but also women use them frequently.

Pembe always overvalues her son and imposes on her children the idea that boys are superior. Again, that is why mothers play a major role in honour killings; each time a young boy is exposed to a sexist saying, he becomes more inclined to believe in his superiority over women. Moreover, as children learn by experience, violence and sexism in the family is another trigger for future honour killings. Children who witness violence in their families often develop a predisposition for engaging in violence with family members in the future. That is why parents have the potential to play a major role in decreasing honour killings in Turkey. However, Turkish traditions and gender relations, both of which contribute to the maintenance of patriarchy, limit that possibility to a certain degree.

All these sexist sayings imply that just like small children who need to be protected and controlled, women do not have the psychological maturity to control and protect themselves in terms of honour which is why they need men to step in. In *Honour* it is the duty of Pembe's husband to guard her honour. However, when he isn't at home, social norms dictate that her son İskender must be the guardian of the mother's and sister's honour. In patriarchal societies, the perception of men safeguarding women's honour often decodes into shielding them from other men, implicitly framing men as inherent threats to women. This protective stance not only reinforces male dominance but also raises critical questions about the constructed vulnerability of women and the normalization of male aggression as a societal norm.

Elif Shafak's *Honour* tells the story of a mixed Turkish-Kurdish family. The novel is narrated from the perspective of many characters. This is the story of Naze who gives birth to eight children in the expectation of giving birth to a baby boy. She fails to give birth to a son. Multiple pregnancies become the cause of her death. Her twin daughters Pembe and Jamila play significant role in the novel. The novel revolves around the honour of the family, which migrates to London and faces problems such as cultural split.

Thus, gender is a performance that is in a state of flux, one can only guess at the possibilities that this can present. The gendered body, the gendered mind plays out in 'arenas of visibility and invisibility. What will and will not be included within the boundaries of "sex" will be set by a tacit operation of exclusion. If we call into

question the fixity of the structuralist law that divides and bounds the “sexes” by virtue of their dyadic differentiation within the heterosexual matrix, it will constitute the disruptive return of the excluded from within the very logic of the heterosexual symbolic (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 23).

On symbolic level, *The Forty Rules of Love* also explores and delves into this inherent paradox. Shafak asserts that love plays a pivotal role in facilitating the transcendence of characters from their predetermined identities and local contexts. The novel’s exploration of love as a central issue is deeply intertwined with the interplay between Eastern and Western cultures, as well as the reciprocal relationship between perceptions of the present and the past. The novel explores the concept of love within the context of Sufi interpretation of Islam, examining its transcendental nature and its impact on issues related to belonging. The narrative of the novel revolves around the interconnected lives of its four central characters, namely Ella, Aziz, Shams of Tabriz, and Rumi the Master. The core of the story lies in the profound friendship between Rumi and Shams, which in turn cultivates a sense of camaraderie between Ella and Aziz. The initial focus of the novel revolves around Ella’s inward metamorphosis subsequent to her employment as an editor for Aziz’s literary work titled “Sweet Blasphemy” This particular novel delves into the profound bond shared by Rumi and Shams, two historical figures residing in thirteenth-century Konya, located in the Anatolia region. While engaging with the story, Ella, an American reader, develops a sense of curiosity towards the author, Aziz, who currently resides in Amsterdam.

Ella can be characterized as a representative middle-class, middle-aged, and discontented Caucasian lady, whose daily existence is centred around her spouse and offspring. Despite residing in the wealthy suburbs of Northampton, New England, the individual in question experiences a profound sense of confinement and dissatisfaction. This sentiment arises from her husband’s emotional detachment and infidelity, as well as her teenage children’s increasing detachment from her. Aziz, an individual of Scottish descent who subsequently embraced Sufism and underwent a transformation in both name and life purpose, is a practitioner of photography and an avid explorer, embodying the essence of a nomadic dervish (324). The individual

adheres to the principles of Sufi philosophy as elucidated by Shams, who posited that love might be likened to a voyage wherein distinctions between cardinal directions such as east, west, south, or north hold minimal significance. Irrespective of the intended destination, it is imperative to ensure that each expedition is approached as an introspective excursion. According to the author (86), by exploring one's inner self, one can transcend geographical boundaries and experience the vastness of the entire universe and even beyond.

The narratives of Ella and Aziz, as well as Rumi and Shams, intertwine in alignment with Shafak's intention to transcend national and religious boundaries. The author's purpose aligns with Shams's understanding of love, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of all entities and individuals within the universe. We do not exist as a multitude of diverse entities numbering in the hundreds or thousands. The concept of "We are all One" has been expressed by Shafak (135). Shams's conceptualization of hybridity advocates for perceiving individuals as fundamentally equal, despite their unique characteristics and historical backgrounds. However, this perspective runs the risk of being interpreted and evaluated as promoting assimilation.

The inner journey that Shams describes is accompanied by a spatial journey which brings him to Anatolia, the place that Aziz writes about in the foreword of "Sweet Blasphemy". Beset with religious clashes, political disputes, and endless power struggles, the thirteenth century was a turbulent period in Anatolia. In the West, the Crusaders, on their way to Jerusalem, occupied and sacked Constantinople, leading to the partition of the Byzantine Empire. In the East, highly disciplined Mongol armies swiftly expanded under the military genius of Genghis Khan. In between, different Turkish tribes fought among themselves while Byzantines tried to recover their lost land, wealth, and power. It was a time of unprecedented chaos when Christians fought Christians, Christians fought Muslims and Muslims fought Muslims. Everywhere one turned, there was hostility and anguish and an intense fear of what might happen next (19).

From a historical point of view, Anatolia has always been a land of diverse tribes and empires, with citizens who endorsed heterogeneous beliefs and lifestyles. In order for the text to be attractive to its contemporary, first world reader, an exotic

place (from a different time) emblematic of the text's message must be inserted; this brief foreword is necessary in order to bridge the temporal and the spatial gaps between the third-world backbone of the story and the perception and expectation of the first-world reader.

The Sufi tradition, which derives its force from the idea of companionship and love, is another foundation upon which the effort to reconcile the cultures of the East (material) and the West (reader) is carried out. The rules for love that Shams lays out in "Sweet Blasphemy" are truly the fundamentals of Sufi or Islamic mysticism, which aims to bring the soul into interaction with the holiness of the other world in order to align it with divine truth. Suleiman is driven home by Shams after a night of drinking. Suleiman questions the Sufis about whether they are celebrating physical wine or metaphorical wine, Shams answers:

What difference does it make, my friend? There is a rule that explains this: When a true lover of God goes into a tavern, the tavern becomes his chamber of prayer, but when a wine bibber goes into the same chamber, it becomes his tavern. In everything we do, it is our hearts that make the difference, not our outer appearances. Sufis do not judge other people on how they look or who they are. When a Sufi stares at someone, he keeps both eyes closed and instead opens a third eye—the eye that sees the inner realm. (141)

Here, Shams advocates the notion that there are differences among God-followers, and that to comprehend these differences, one can "open a third eye" or use intuition as a way of returning to and understanding the things themselves in all their singularity and their ineffable originality. In keeping with the mystical rejection of strict moral dichotomies, this verse illustrates the Sufi focus on intentionality and inner purity above rituals performed on the outside. The "third eye" metaphor resonates with poststructuralist and feminist critiques of normative identities and moral absolutism since it speaks to the spiritual perception at the heart of Sufi thought and challenges hegemonic, appearance-based judgments.

Sufism, which is "peace-loving, affable, and convivial," is a sophisticated type of religion in and of itself, according to El-Zein, A , "It is appropriate to conceive

about Sufism's politics in terms of engaged distance—involved with society but fundamentally remote from worldly authority” (79). In this way, Shafak's use of Sufism falls short of achieving any sort of clear political relevance. That is to say, even when she uses Sufism in a way that is consistent with her own dedication to various attachments that support eschewing national allegiances, it fails to advance this notion in a way that meets the demands of the Western literary market. The Turkish author not only succumbs to the oversimplification and decontextualization of Rumi's work perpetrated by the American initiators of the Rumi phenomenon, but also employs Orientalist strategies in the ways in which she positions the East as being instrumental to the West, according to Elena Furlanetto in her article on Shafak's *The Forty Rules of Love*. The coexistence of opposing viewpoints makes Shafak's position weak and open to criticism because the hybrid vision she creates in the novel really serves to further polarize opinion on the logic of globalization (“The Rumi Phenomenon”).

The Forty Rules of Love homogenizes distinctions, making them invisible. In the novel, hybrid ties are shown to exist along a continuum, from the unity of all distinctions to the necessity of crossing borders and the pervasiveness of singularities. Although Sufi philosophy is there, it seems that there is a gap between its principles and the universe as it exists in the narrative because of the emphasis on singularities.

Honour presents the story of a Muslim family, which believes that women cannot represent whole family. Naze, the protagonist of the novel, is victim of male dominated society who has to give birth to eight children with the expectation of son. Alev Adil argues that this novel is like the handwriting of the author. He says it in his esteemed article “Honour, by Elif Shafak”: “In 2006, Elif Shafak was prosecuted under Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code for her novel *The Bastard of Istanbul*. The case attracted global attention and brought her into the spotlight not only as a literary figure but also as a symbol of political resistance in Turkey” (2). Adil argues that Shafak holds the unfortunate distinction of being the first author in the nation to face legal charges pertaining to fictional ideas.

The novel begins with Iskender's pastime in a prison who is imprisoned for killing his own mother at the age of sixteen. Embarrassed from her mother's insatiable

desire for the son, Pembe considers that having a son is one of the greatest achievements in her life. As she gives birth to her son named Iskender she does not have limitations of happiness and pride. However, her three children have different reactions. Iskender is very proud of being male who wants to dominate the world; her daughter Esma wants to bring change in him and Yunus wants to understand the cause of these activities.

The novel also describes another part of culture as well in which girls are controlled, dominated and confined in limited areas while boys are considered like leaders or kings. It does not matter if a boy oppresses a girl. It does not become an issue when a boy has relations with many women but for a woman it is a taboo. The author's account serves as a catalyst for investigating the cultural paradigm that disregards a man's infidelity and acts of betrayal, while simultaneously imposing limitations on a woman's capacity to engage in new relationships following her husband's departure.

The determination of gender rules is influenced by a multitude of elements, including but not limited to cultural norms, religious beliefs, historical context, and educational influences. In traditional societies, women have a vital role in the institution of marriage, childbearing, and family, as they are responsible for the bearing and nurturing of children. In many societies, women are sometimes not regarded as fully authentic individuals unless they have fulfilled the societal expectation of bearing children. In ancient societies, women were often regarded as possessing characteristics such as weakness, irrationality, contingency, and dependence, among others. Consequently, individuals experience a sense of happiness upon entering into marriage and conceiving a child. Conversely, in instances where individuals are unable to conceive, they perceive themselves as experiencing a sense of inadequacy. Judith Butler argues that patriarchy is not able to give universal significance of gender: The notion of a universal patriarchy has been widely criticized in recent years for its failure to account for the workings of gender oppression in the concrete cultural contexts in which it exists. Where those various contexts have been consulted within such theories, it has been to find 'examples' or 'illustrations' of a universal principle that is assumed from the start (*Gender Trouble* 6). In this way, she

argues that gender is cultural notion. People socially construct it. Therefore, it is different from one culture to another.

As a pioneer of gender studies, Judith Butler analyses gender as a fictional reproduction of heterosexuality. Butler postulates: “The absence of an inherent essence or externalized manifestation of gender, as well as the lack of an objective ideal towards which gender strives, suggests that gender is not an objective reality. Instead, gender is constructed through diverse performative actions, and without these actions, the concept of gender would cease to exist” (140). As Butler says, gender is not fact but the ideas created by people about it. Gender is not itself the word but it is defined by the people in their accords.

Elif Shafak's novel *Honour* discovers various dimensions of cultural conflict, particularly through the experiences of the Toprak family, who migrate from Istanbul to London. Upon their arrival, they carry with them the values and traditions of their Turkish heritage, which often conflict with the norms and beliefs of Western society. Themes such as falling in love, marrying for obligation, and engaging in extramarital relationships highlight the complexities of cultural dislocation and identity struggle faced by immigrant families.

Despite many related issues, the present chapter tries to focus on the role of masculinity to shape the identity of women characters. It focuses on gender role in which traditional concept of using women as reproductive beings, bodily representative and the things to provide enjoyment to men or masculinity as a whole. Moreover, the position of masculinity is individual not normative. In other words, the gender identity of femininity and masculinity should be studied individually not in a normative way as individual people have their own experience and feelings to each other. Many critics have commented the novel in various ways:

Shafak is an extremely popular novelist in Turkey, particularly loved by young, educated and newly independent women who appreciate her fusion of feminism and Sufism, her disarmingly quirky characters and the artful twists and turns of her epic romances. Born in Strasbourg to a diplomat mother, educated in Europe, the United States and Turkey, she writes some books in her native Turkish and others (like this one)

in English. In everything she writes, she sets out to dissolve what she regards as false narratives. (Freely 1)

Gender study deals with the women how they are different in terms of sex from one culture to another as the gender is socially constructed phenomena. The present chapter presents some evidences how Muslim women are treated in their houses and outside of the houses. The chapter also focuses on how women are treated if they give birth to the daughters instead of sons. In this research, the focus is on the Turkish-Kurdish Muslim women how they are victimized in many respects such as compulsion to bear sons, to be confined within the houses; their cultures follow together wherever they go.

In *Honour*, Elif Shafak looks at the cultural dislocation of a Turkish-Kurdish family across three generations after they migrated to London. The story begins with Naze naming her twin daughters Kader (Destiny) and Yeter (Enough), despite her longing for a son. Their names are afterwards changed to Pembe and Jamila by the father, who sees the original names as an omen. The twins—referred to as Pembe Kader (Pink Destiny) and Jamila Yeter (Enough Beauty)—embody the struggle of Muslim women subjected to patriarchal control. The novel focuses how men manipulate women: Adem falls for Jamila but marries Pembe, believing Jamila's honour is compromised. This leads to a hollow marriage devoid of fulfilment. Meanwhile, Jamila decides not to marry and instead dedicates her life to helping women through childbirth in her Kurdish village.

At its core, the narrative centres on the experiences of immigrants who find solace in the preservation and maintenance of the cultural values and traditions of their country of origin. Shafak's portrayal of the diasporic encounter in London demonstrates similarities to the literary works of Hanif Kureishi, Zadie Smith, and Monica Ali, all of whom offer insightful insights into the challenges confronted by immigrants living in the urban setting. Iskender, the offspring of Pembe, expresses their ideological dilemma subsequently.

Shafak skilfully develops the narrative structure with the expertise of a proficient storyteller. Pembe describes herself as an individual who experiences a sense of stress due to unreasonable thoughts and unfounded concerns. The individual

in question saw her son, Iskender, as the epitome of her achievements, possibly because he represents the maternal satisfaction that her own mother, Naze, was unable to attain. Jamila constantly exhibits higher levels of ambition and a greater inclination towards rebellion in comparison to her identical twin. The person under consideration expresses surprise at the significant differences displayed by each of her three progenies. At the outset of the narrative, Iskender is depicted as an individual who is situated within the boundaries of a penitentiary in London, where he is serving a term for the crime of matricide. The subject in question was a juvenile of only 16 years old when he perpetrated the act of homicide, allegedly driven by the notion of safeguarding familial honour.

Within the confines of this specific cultural milieu, a notable phenomenon may be observed wherein adolescent males are bestowed with a privileged position reminiscent of that held by monarchs, while concurrently subjecting females to diverse manifestations of subjugation. Some readers may argue that the problem of honour killing is presented in a simplistic manner, potentially exploiting preconceived notions about its prevalence among Muslim communities for financial advantage. Nevertheless, Shafak effectively portrays the perspectives of young women in Turkey. The type of feminism she advocates is particularly influential among young women, as it grants them the freedom to express their unique identities without overwhelming emphasis on achieving gender equality. The characters depicted in Shafak's literary works have a dynamic and fluid nature, experiencing significant transformations throughout the story. This process of ongoing evolution is a defining characteristic of these characters, since they are not limited to static identities. The personas depicted in the city of London are significantly influenced and shaped by the traumatic encounters they have endured in their personal histories.

In *10 Minutes, 38 Seconds in This Strange World* Elif Shafak conducts an analysis of societal perceptions towards women, portraying them as passive entities confined to conventional roles such as spouses, mothers, offspring, or siblings. This portrayal highlights the prevalent notion that women are often perceived as lacking autonomy and are not regarded as autonomous individuals with the ability to exercise their own choices. The obligations associated with reproduction and parenthood also

position women in contrast to men's unbridled aggression. Women's maternal bodies are seen as a source of positive values to set against male norms, stressing care and inter-subjectivity, as opposed to autonomy and duty. Women's engagement with the reproductive process is also regarded as anchoring both anti-militarism and a respect for the natural world, which puts them at the forefront of peace and ecological movements (Beauvoir 85). Judith Butler argues: "every woman is different: women do not have the same background, age, race and interests, hence the idea that they do not share the same experiences. Therefore, women with various life experiences do not fight back against sexist assumptions in the same way, because those prejudices are shaped differently in distinct cultures" (*Gender Trouble* 46). So, it is impossible to accept a supposed universal sex, "just as women have different social experiences, they do not have the same exact bodies" (46).

In Butler's literary works, the process of compelling our physical bodies to conform to societal norms is brought to light. This process is not merely a tool for individuals with pre-existing gender identities to strive towards an ideal, but rather it is the mechanism via which gendered individuals manifest themselves in whatever capacity.

Butler, aligning with Foucault's perspective, views discourse as the primary mechanism through which individuals construct and express their identities. Butler challenges the perspective that gender disparities, together with its associated assumptions of heterosexuality, are valid, have their origin in biological or natural differences. She explores, instead, how such a "naturalizing trick" is pulled off; asking by what means a unity of biology, gendered identification, and heterosexuality comes to appear natural (*Gender Trouble* 68).

This facilitates a clear comprehension for readers that these gendered behaviours are performed by women and are subsequently imitated by others based on their perceptions of femininity. These activities are executed in accordance with cultural norms that establish idealized benchmarks, which are unachievable but yet constitute the basis for our behaviours. The prevailing ideas in question serve to reinforce the hierarchical power dynamics that favour certain groups, namely men and heterosexual individuals, while marginalizing others. In society, persons who fall into

various marginalized groups, such as women, homosexual people, transgender people, those who identify as non-binary, people with varying physical abilities, and people whose bodies deviate from the dominant ideal, are subjected to stigmatization and social punishment (112).

Leila and her acquaintances exemplify how, within diverse circumstances, our physical forms can undergo changes to manifest our gender over the course of history. The individuals contemplate several approaches to conceptualize their personalities in connection to the motivating factors. Consequently, the human body actively engages in a continuous process of transformation, which is manifested within the realm of culture. The significance of each character created by the author is internalized by the reader as they are experienced. In an endeavour to demonstrate the existence of these individuals and their desire for their voices to be acknowledged, Shafak addresses various marginalized, ostracized, and oppressed communities. Irrespective of their affiliation with a specific religious, ethnic, or cultural group, the author employs her written work as a means of giving voice to those individuals who have been marginalized or silenced (Nihad 2909). Leila conscientiously endeavours to reinforce the audience's awareness of her position and limitations within the public domain. The anxieties, hopes, and frustrations expressed by the individual imply that a crucial requirement for women is a sense of sisterhood that transcends many social, cultural, and political divisions. The intricate nature of patriarchy necessitates acknowledging that women, on occasion, play a role in perpetuating this system, despite its not only being men oppressing women.

Indeed, women such as Leila's mother are entrusted with the task of transmitting patriarchal ideologies and customs to future generations due to their perception as the reproducers of the nation under the prevailing stringent cultural context. Based on the provided description, ideological reproduction refers to the process of perpetuating the community's beliefs regarding various dimensions of difference, such as sex/gender, race/ethnicity, religion, age, and class.

In the year 2013, Ozemn and Donmez conducted a study, which resulted in the finding of significant outcomes. The primary subject of their literary work revolves around issues that are intrinsic to both the human condition and

contemporary society. Shafak employs her literary prowess to cultivate readers' awareness and initiate vital discourse around our treatment of the most marginalized members of society. The author demonstrates a comprehensive comprehension of the fundamental dynamics and significance inherent in the written words.

According to Moria Gatnes, feminists assert their identities as both philosophers and women by purposefully illustrating the lack of neutrality in any philosophical paradigm. Gatnes further explores the importance of feminism's deconstructive approach towards contemporary concepts ("The Feminist Critique of Philosophy" 13). Shafak posits the idea that in order to counteract oppressive systems, it is imperative for women to possess the ability to discern and recognize diverse manifestations of patriarchal structures. Leila's uncle engaged in a breach of trust by intruding into her bed and committing an act of violation against her. He requested Leila to maintain her silence, mirroring the actions of Binnaz. The individual in question experienced ongoing mistreatment over the course of the subsequent decade. Three fundamental attributes of radical feminist reactions to rape may be identified. Firstly, they perceive the violation of women's bodily autonomy and the dominance of men over the sexual and intellectual utilization of women's bodies as a pivotal element of a society governed by males.

Consequently, the author investigates the act of rape as a manifestation of male dominance and exploitation of women's bodies, exploring the interconnectedness and collaborative nature of these phenomena in perpetuating the subjugation of women (Whisnant 156). Furthermore, the utilization of rape as a linguistic device extends beyond its literal connotations of physical force and brutality. It serves as a means to question the notion that female acquiescence implies true consent, while also recognizing the systemic ways in which prevailing structures of male dominance systematically erode women's autonomy over their bodies and sexual agency. Consequently, individuals are inclined to perceive a spectrum rather than a definitive demarcation between rape and conventional heterosexual conduct (163).

In other words, power is an instrumental concept in Leila's society that never inspects the paradoxical nature of itself. This notion is reflected in each part of the

story to provide a proper context for a heroine who is searching for individual socialization: Butler argues that when power is regarded as a separate property then it seems inevitable to compare it to a commodity that can be possessed or lost, or to a force that we control, or controlled by (Kriby 109).

Elif Shafak is characterized as an individual who is highly motivated by professional pursuits and lays significant importance on the concept of fragmented identity in the present day. The author's work posits the notion that it is feasible to simultaneously fulfill the roles of a mother and a writer, all the while upholding an additional postfeminist perspective. The author proposed that women need to embrace a sense of wholeness rather than engage in opposition to diversity. In her discourse, Shafak delves into the issue of alterity and elucidates two primary factors contributing to its existence, so establishing a causal relationship between the principal factor and the notion of the other. Initially, the apprehension towards women as distinct from their counterparts gives rise to many obstacles. Furthermore, if the patriarchal society lacks an understanding of the multifaceted nature of women's life, women may be perceived as alien beings. The character Leila, who serves as the central figure in the literary work, effectively represents the marginalized and underrepresented individuals, commonly known as the "other." The protagonist in the narrative successfully uncovers a method to transcend the societal and cultural constraints imposed upon her, as the author, Shafak, simultaneously directs the reader's focus towards her. This study has employed a comprehensive feminist framework, drawing mostly on the ideas of Luce Irigaray and Judith Butler, to examine the correlation between gender and identity. The use of several feminist ideas illustrates that the acknowledgment of novel roles for women and their unconventional enthusiasm for traditionally male domains deviates from established standards pertaining to both social class and sexual orientation. Shafak's work critically examines the notion of male as the universal human ideal, drawing inspiration from feminist critics and other female fiction authors.

It might be claimed that everyone must conform to the heterosexual system by having one of the two genders, and that feminine characteristics should be in

opposition to all other attributes. Anyone who deviates from this norm is seen to be unethical and ought to be punished.

This chapter demonstrates how Elif Shafak's novels deftly examine how gender, sexuality, and cultural identity intertwine in Turkish society. The chapter highlights how literature can be an effective tool for challenging social taboos and promoting change by examining how she depicts suffering, patriarchal norms, and the fight for female agency. By questioning established power systems and shedding light on the nuances of identity in conservative and diasporic contexts, Shafak's work also advances feminist discourse.

Judith Butler's theory of the Matrix of Heterosexuality and its applications in Elif Shafak's literary universe, where heteronormative frameworks strictly define acceptable gender roles, sexual activity, and relationship standards, have been critically examined in Chapter Four. According to the examination, Shafak's characters frequently conform to conservative Turkish social norms that uphold binary gender systems and marginalize people who don't fit into them. Any gender expression that deviates from the heterosexual norm is viewed as abnormal or invisible by this matrix, which predominantly positions women as reproductive creatures or objects of male gratification. By writing stories that address topics like honour killings, virginity tests, and sexual repression, Shafak exposes the societal forces that support the heteronormativity matrix and opposes this restrictive framework. However, the following chapter—The Performance of Intelligibility—delves deeper into Butler's concept of intelligible genders in order to fully comprehend how gender identity is influenced not just by heteronormative institutions but also by the boundaries of what is considered socially intelligible. It explores how, in a nation like Turkey, the cultural, familial, and religious constraints that govern gender performance not only limit personal agency but also establish the limits of existence.

Chapter V: The Performance of Intelligibility and Shafak

The present chapter discusses the formation of corporeal subject within what Foucault calls the juridical mode of power through a critical analysis of Judith Butler's theory of gender as a performative act of enacting, doing, one's gender. The issue of choice and theatricality are not present in performativity. To put it another way, Butler thinks that acting one's gender well doesn't always mean choosing one's favourite part to play on stage. Instead, Butler thinks that it involves doing something to counteract what has been called the linguistic idealism that women have experienced. Becoming a gender, by enacting a set of performative acts, is a creative project of interpreting cultural reality with all its deterrents, prohibitions, scripted and sanctioned recommendations.

Butler's critical intention is to create trouble for reinforced hegemonic gender hierarchies with the performative aspect of gender to show that the preconceived notions of gender and subjectivity are performatively constructed. She challenges the binary of sex and gender to postulate the concept of gender as a fabrication through a discursive procedure that establishes the naturalness of sex as pre-discursive, so that it can produce the notion that the corporeal body becomes a natural surface on which the cultural imprints of gender can take place. Through a theoretical intervention, then, the body can be reformulated, as the chapter tries to show, not as a passive medium but as a contested site capable of transformations. The body generates its significations and interpretations through the relationships of the signifiatory processes; in other words, gender is not a set of culturally and socially imposed attributes, but it is a relational term that is produced through the relationships between socially and culturally constituted subjects in specific contexts and in specific historical conditions. The gendered subject is performatively produced through the very expressions that are supposed to be its effects.

Butler's idea of performativity may not really give a boost to the notion of fluidity of gender in that it opposes the fetishising of the transsexual body as this body is seen as an agency of further driving home the duality of sex and sexuality and gender. Rather, it tells us that the roots of gendered binaries reside in the cultural, social and political regimes rather than in the natural or biological world. It lends

credence to trans accounts of feeling out of place in the bodies they were born in. But her ideas on the materialisation of the body do carry the significance of the cultural recognition that lends volubility to the material recognition of the body. This is so because the materiality of an entity cannot exist in dissociation from cultural attestation. But even in the realm of cultural attestation, what happens is that the continuous performances rob the central trope of its power to maintain its integrity as the spin offs would certainly be parodies and mutations of the norms. Also, “The elimination of gender norms would result in an increase in diverse gender expressions, causing a disruption in the formation of fixed identities and challenging the dominant narratives that enforce obligatory heterosexuality, which are centred around the concepts of man and ‘woman’” (*Gender Trouble* 187).

Critical studies available on Elif Shafak’s novels are chiefly concerned with social constraints of women, and their neglected psychological problems. These studies scarcely focus on the point how social constraints and performative norms engender stress for women. Moreover, critics are chiefly concerned with Elif Shafak’s earlier novels. Her recent novels have been neglected. So, an attempt is being made here to analyse women’s stressed condition in Elif Shafak’s recent novels, the novels of the nineties and thereafter. Butler’s theory helps to understand why women are stressed and bound to follow performative norms that are assigned to the female gender. Performative norms are the cause of women’s stressed and discriminated condition. These norms are restraining the progress of women as depicted in Elif Shafak’s novels. Thus, there is need to comprehend how women’s psyche is formulated and restrained. In this chapter, specific attention is being bestowed on those theoretical concepts of Butler that clarify how women are getting stressed in contemporary society. The chapter has been divided into sections and the first section highlights the theoretical concepts of Butler that aid us in understanding women’s psyche. Second section is about the application of Butler’s theoretical concepts to Elif Shafak’s recent novels, namely *The Gaze*, *The Bastard of Istanbul*, *The Forty rules of Love*, *Honour*, and *10 Minutes and 38 Seconds in This Strange World* to be analysed in this chapter.

Since gender itself is always changing—a never-ending process of becoming—a transcendental identity cannot come before a gendered identity. The continuous self-construction of gender into a comprehensible and physical form that conforms to the prevailing heteronormative grid of intelligibility fundamentally undermines the idea of a central, stable identity from which gendered subjectivity may be derived.

The intelligibility of a socially and culturally conformable gender adhere to the strictures and regulations of existing structures of discourses that prohibit and, at the same time, produce through rules and regulations those very forms of non-normative discontinuities and incoherencies of identities. What Foucault called the ‘reality’ of sex is produced and confirmed through the juridical discourses that stipulate the formations of intelligible identities through the relational matrices of those discourses (*Gender Trouble* 3). As Butler points out, the imposition of binarising desire, i.e., the heterosexualisation of it, engenders the production of instituting ‘discrete and asymmetrical opposition’ between what is perceived as feminine and masculine, and this perception materialises into the descriptive attributes of a female identity and a male identity. As discussed in the previous chapter, Butler contends that certain formation of identities cannot exist within the norms of cultural matrix through which gendered identity acquires its intelligibility, simply because the existing juridical structures maintain the possibility of those flawed identities as instances where some situations are inherently contradictory and cannot be logically reconciled (4).

Butler's understanding of performative subjectivity's resistance potential is utterly negative since she ignores social subjugation's creative and disruptive potential as well as its moral and political subjection. She also undervalues the beneficial, freeing aspects of intersubjectivity because, as Magnus notes in the same passage, she “associates dependency with subordination” (22). Butler, in *The Psychic Life of Power*, argues that the regulatory structure of speech determines the interiority of psychic space; consequently, hegemonic regimes' restrictive norms uphold the division between the private and public spheres, which are internalized through them.

The Gaze was first published in Turkish in 1999 under the title *Mahrem*, which means "the private." The Turkish title alludes to the harem, which is known for its exclusivity for women and its restriction on men's improper appearances. These names suggest a struggle between gazing, gender, privacy, and society by emphasizing the role that the gaze plays in the formation of individual and social identity. This struggle may be viewed to have subversive traits with the veil in postcolonial culture. It is feasible to challenge and unsettle the conventional search criteria thanks to the performative elements of feminine writing. *The Gaze* typically uses a pattern of marginalized characters, signalling a concern with the boundaries of embodiment.

Despite having unique names, the characters in *The Gaze* are utilized in a formulaic manner. The novel questions the embodiment of these oppressed people and reimagines them in diverse trans-historical and transnational contexts to make room for this investigation. The linkages between B-C and Keramet, as well as between the narrator, the Sable Girl, and La Belle Annabelle, are repeated and hence transcend temporal and physical boundaries as well as narrative boundaries since these repetitions lead to a re-definition of the characters in different bodies. By linking these individuals despite their eons of time apart and geographical dispersion, the novel defies the linearity of historical narration. It tries to challenge storytelling's boundaries. B-C and Keramet become the focus of the normative gaze because of their non-normative bodies. Keramet and B-C are identical to one another, according to the book, in that Keramet had "two thin slits for" eyes that his aunt painted and that "his eyes as always, were mute as ever". It looked like they were closing much like 'B-C's eyes had shrunk to two short, thin lines. He had expressionless eyes that made it impossible to know how he was feeling (*The Gaze* 282). They share more than just non-normative bodies that challenge societal norms since they are almost identical twins. Both characters try to bring society back into the limelight, which shows that they desire to once more embody the gaze that shapes their identities. B-C and Keramet temporarily control the gaze since they can choose who and how to look at. These non-normative characters are able to occupy prominent positions as the authority of the gaze because of their power over both the subject and object positions of the gaze.

B-C objectifies individuals in his "Dictionary of Gazes", including the book's fat narrator, and makes a spectacle out of her. B-C uses this terminology to provide his viewers a collection of tales about "freaks" without avoiding the focus. In a similar spirit, Keramet constructs open-to-both sexes tents for freak exhibitions. In these tents, Keramet hosts a public exhibition of non-normative characters. As a result, he has control over where his focus is directed. It also grants him invisibility because other non-normative objects may be viewed. Therefore, all characters only hold a temporary position of authority.

The narrator was recast as a character by both the Sable-Girl and La Belle Annabelle. The analysis of each character uncovers startling similarities in how they establish their identities despite the outward differences between them. This makes the case that the two distinctive personalities in the fictitious world are a symbol of the narrator's rage with the gaze, since both are the results of the suffering caused by the other character's glance. To get rid of the trauma and the harasser's look, the narrator overeats as a child after experiencing sexual harassment. The narrator takes on weight and becomes easily distracted. This suffering brought on by the gaze is recreated in *The Sable Girl* and *Annabelle*. Naddaff argues: "One cannot, however, posit repetition without simultaneously positing difference. No action, no matter how carefully imitated, can ever exactly repeat its precursor, for the very fact of its imitation, its repetition, necessitates its occurring at a different moment, and consequently, its having a different status" (284). The Butlerian premise that gender performativity is a dynamic, reiterative process rather than a static mimicry is critically supported by Naddaff's claim that "no action...can ever exactly repeat its precursor." This quotation highlights how even the reiteration of gender norms invariably involves slippage, variety, and the possibility of subversion within the framework of the judicial authority that Foucault outlined. It emphasizes that while if performative acts have their roots in regulating discourses, they are always carried out temporal, social, and physical contexts, which means that every repetition is a place where resistance and resignification may occur. As a result, gender ceases to be a permanent identity and instead becomes a shifting physical construct influenced by erratic discursive activities.

Therefore, in alignment with Butler's examination of gendered norms as repetitive patterns and Fanon's concept of (un)veiling as a subversive repetition, the repetition of a familiar tale with variations also has the potential for dismantling established narratives. The recurring usage of the narrator in several instances and settings implies a cyclical depiction of the gaze and trauma, indicating the necessity of their repetition to perhaps mitigate their impacts. The figures exhibit notable diversity in their embodiment, while still sharing similarities in their creation or birth. It can be surmised that it is the differences, rather than the similarities, that serve as the driving force behind the narrator's repetition in two distinct roles. In a manner reminiscent to the way in which Annabelle's mother perceived her pregnancy as a subject for a painting, Annabelle's birth occurred in a supernatural manner and continues to be a source of adoration. Despite experiencing weight gain due to a traumatic incident of sexual assault during her youth, the narrator finds herself unable to avoid becoming the centre of attention. Obesity is associated with the recurrence of pain triggered by visual stimuli. The narrative suggests that the repetitive presence of the normative gaze remains restrictive, despite its ability to mitigate the effects of trauma by consistently distorting the development of the characters.

Shafak uses the framework of postcolonial feminist literature to challenge the limitations of her narrative, drawing inspiration from Shahrazad's storytelling technique, shown in the repetition of characters with subtle variations. When the narrative transitions into the realm of fantasy, it offers a free setting in which to critically analyse these reimagined individuals. The emergence of the Sable-Boy occurs within the context of a shamanic ritual, when the young boy and the sable collaboratively engage in a transformative process. He is the progenitor of Keramet's Sable-Girl. During the process of transformation, an individual engaged in a ritual is unexpectedly interrupted by a sable hunter, so causing the enchantment to be disrupted. Consequently, the individuals in question found themselves in a predicament where they were unable to progress in their metamorphosis, nor were they able to revert back to their previous conditions. To establish a lineage combining characteristics of sable and human, the military governor engages in the exploitation of a hybrid child, compelling him to impregnate a sex worker. It is seen that throughout successive generations, those with the military governor's surname exhibit

the desired traits, while those inheriting the condition of the Sable-Boy are subjected to public exhibition. Prior to the arrival of the Sable-Girl to Keramet's tent, the Sable-Boy and his family endure persistent exploitation as a grotesque spectacle. In this context, the mechanism employed functions to provoke a re-evaluation of the prevailing impression of the Sable-Girl. The Sable-Girl exhibits contrasting behaviour to her predecessor, the Sable-Boy, throughout the tale, particularly in relation to their responses to patriarchal dominance. The Sable-Boy should possess the capability to exercise control over the appearance at all times. Nevertheless, despite its exhibition of peculiarity, the Sable-Boy adheres to societal norms. He dutifully adheres to the governor's instructions, rendering him susceptible to manipulation. The governor exploits his non-normative status to exert pressure on him to engage in reproduction. In the novel, the Sable-Girl is portrayed as a distressing spectacle, evoking a strong reaction from the audience who instinctively turn away due to her intense anger.

It is possible to read the Sable-Girl's portrayal as a terrifying presence within the tent as a purposeful performance technique that allows her to subvert the limitations placed on her identity. Her frequent outbursts of rage on stage not only demonstrate the depth of her emotions but also act as a tool for self-assertion and resistance. Given this, her rage could be seen as a unique vocal style used by postcolonial female subjects to express disapproval. The Sable-Girl regains agency through this aggressive performativity, turning her voice into a place of struggle against marginalization.

Despite the absence of speech registration, she retains the ability to vocalize. In an alternative approach, the speaker utilizes her vocal abilities to captivate the audience and encourages them to shut their eyes, so reclaiming the authority associated with visual observation. Shahrazad found herself in a very analogous predicament, as she was compelled to relinquish authority on a nightly basis through the use of her vocal abilities. She actively confronts patriarchal dominance, like Shahrazad, even if this entails her perpetual confinement within these limitations.

The developing stories of Annabelle and the Sable-Girl are examined more closely in the book's later chapters, underscoring the subjectivity of truth and the brittleness of narrative authority. The Sable-Girl's apparent absence during Keramet's

subsequent examination of the tents is a reflection of Annabelle's stories' recursive structure, which involves the constant reimagining of the initial events. A performative structure that stresses the discursive production of reality and undermines fixed meanings is produced by this repetition and variation. The appearance of the Sable-Girl depends on the disruption of ritual by an outside gaze, as discussed in the fifth chapter, which looks at the performative formation of corporeal subjects. This shows how the interaction of power, surveillance, and performance shapes subjectivity and narrative coherence.

The conclusion of the tale diverges when the gaze is not penetrating, resulting in the spontaneous opening of the basket. Upon extracting a fragment of the sable's essence and amalgamating it with a fragment of his own essence, the youthful individual devoid of facial hair materialized. He assumed the role of the tribe's shaman. The mention of Sable-Girl was absent in the discourse. In this instance, Shafak starts a fresh tale by essentially reiterating the preceding content. Nevertheless, in the absence of external scrutiny, the act of repetition in this context gives rise to a unique embodiment. The absence of a certain appearance gives rise to a novel being possessing both a sable half-soul and a human half-soul. A novel form of existence arises when individuals are liberated from the objectifying scrutiny of external observers. The young individual without facial hair had the opportunity to establish his own limitations when the observer was absent in this particular arrangement, thereby avoiding being an object of curiosity like the individual referred to as Sable Girl. Shafak employs repetitive storytelling techniques to alter the concept of embodiment and challenge the boundaries of the physical form.

This study further explores how the characters in the literary work strategically employ their physical bodies to challenge and transcend the constraints imposed by the act of observing, while also interrogating established societal conventions. This analysis further builds upon the notion of recurrence. The narrative utilizes the concept of disguise in order to establish a liberating atmosphere whereby the individuals engage in roles that have been mutually consented upon. The tale oscillates between the realms of imagination and reality due to the varying genders and social roles of the protagonists.

A subtle interaction between fragility and visibility characterizes the narrator's use of observation. Her internalized need to be seen in order to validate her subjectivity balances off her uneasiness at being the focus of attention. She expresses her ambivalence on a bus ride, feeling that she is the source of everyone's unease, especially when she is beside a larger woman whose presence exacerbates her own body image issues. Peripheral glances and internalization of public inspection influence the narrator's heightened awareness of her physical appearance. In an attempt to break free from the various gazes that define and enclose her, she withdraws from visual interaction.

At the same time, her relationship with her smaller partner shows that she wants to find herself in his eyes—not just to be noticed, but to be accepted. This dynamic, as examined in the fifth chapter, is consistent with Judith Butler's theory of performative identity, which holds that subjectivity is continuously constructed through the heteronormative visual economy's repeated actions of being looked at and the need for recognition. In *The Gaze*, the narrator considers how she sees herself via the lenses of B-C's glasses: “Whenever he fell asleep, and I took off the glasses that were sliding off the end of his nose, ... Whenever I put on B-C’s glasses, I went to the mirror to look at myself. There would be nothing different about me; my face was always the same face, my body the same body” (293). This instance is a prime example of Judith Butler's theory of performative identity, which holds that a subject's sense of self is created through repeated actions of signification and external perception rather than an underlying core. The narrator's revelation that her embodied subjectivity is nevertheless fixed within societal frameworks of intelligibility even when mediated via another's gaze—represented by B-C's glasses—is signified by the mirror's unaltered reflection. Through the "other's" perspective, this reveals the appearance of change, reaffirming how visual regimes both socially inscribe and govern gendered and physical identity.

The individual is deliberately engaging in this behaviour to attract attention. It is imperative to acknowledge her true identity rather than her desired identity. Despite her attempts to create a barrier by adopting the perspective of a non-threatening lover, she remains critical of her own image due to the internalization of the gaze of others.

The narrator expresses a sense of disillusionment with her self-perception, particularly due to her continued reliance on the perspective of B-C in shaping her identity. The narrator does not perceive her own reflection through the standpoint of B-C. However, she contemplates the potential existence of multiple identities, a concept that is further examined through the utilization of various disguises. This is a significant part of the novel because it allows the narrator to interrogate identity alongside her body image. The novel opens up the potential for creating alternatives to identity by exploring 'the false assumption that the Self is a monolithic – at least a consistent – whole'(294). This act of re-creating self through others' eyes shows how the narrator's identity should not be considered 'monolithic'.

While she was going through B-C's 'Dictionary of Gazes', she discovers that B-C indeed regards her as study material. The way B-C relates the entry 'fatty' to the woman and his deliberate inquisition into her childhood create an anxiety in her identity because her feelings of safety with regards to her body, past trauma and the gaze are destroyed. It is the realisation that B-C objectifies her as fatty which makes her question the boundaries of her embodiment further. B-C characterizes her as: "[s]he was so big that wherever she went, everyone would stop whatever they were doing and gaze at her. The way others looked at her made her so uncomfortable that she would eat even more and get even fatter" (295).

In *The Gaze*, the narrator voices a deeply internalized discomfort and alienation from her body and the world around her: "I was apprehensive about everything, but mostly about myself. [...] I was unhappy. Like my stomach, my unhappiness grew the more it was fed. Of course, it was possible to exist outside of these things; but I wasn't there. Now I am in the belly of hunger" [296]. Judith Butler's theory of the performative subject, which holds that identity is formed through repetition, lack, and ongoing norm negotiation, is reflected in this text. The inability to establish a stable self inside the discursive frameworks that define femininity, attractiveness, and worth is revealed by the narrator's discontent and metaphorical "hunger." Cultural scripts of gender and appearance are simultaneously imprinted and resisted on her body. The narrator further strengthens the metaphor of her all-consuming hunger and existential void: "I opened my mouth wide. I opened

my mouth so wide that the hydrosphere was afraid I would drink up all the water and finish it. [...] Neither water nor dirt could satisfy my hunger. I saw that it wouldn't work, so I decided to try air. I turned on the gas" (296). The narrator's bold gesture of defying containment inside normative bodily boundaries is illustrated by this idea of consuming the elements. By exposing the violence inherent in normative embodiment, this act of "opening"—even self-destruction—is a performative disruption of gendered expectations, according to Butlerian theory. Therefore, the hunger is not only physical but also symbolic—a desire to break free from the understandable grid and regain agency through physical resistance.

The occurrence of this event evidently leads to a subsequent trauma, compelling her to engage in excessive eating. In this context, the compassionate gaze of individual B-C is juxtaposed with the confrontational stare of the unfamiliar person. The narrative in this segment possesses a quality reminiscent of a dream. The narrator demonstrates the capacity to transcend her physiological constraints and consume substances that are typically prohibited to individuals of the human species. The narrator demonstrates a refusal to be constrained by the limitations inherent in the human condition, instead seeking to transcend them. The narrator's portrayal of her trauma as a consuming hunger suggests her endeavour to cleanse her psyche through the act of eating. Managing her thoughts through food becomes a complex task due to the fact that her consumption is, indeed, a response to her traumatic experiences. As a result, suicide emerges as a feasible option for her to transcend the physical and psychological limitations imposed by the trauma and to alter her position as the focal point of attention. To deal with the abuse and her disappointment in B-C, the narrator transforms her human and gender limits. The narrator turns into a hot air balloon and soars to the sky as a result of her suicide. By satisfying her hunger, the narrator's self is destroyed and re-embodied in a hot-air balloon disguise, making it challenging to describe the narrator in terms of a typical human body.

Here, the novel purposefully incorporates hot-air balloon imagery and breaks up the narrative's flow in a realistic time and space. As a kid may see the balloon grow in the sky, postcolonial feminine writing offers the opportunity to examine one's own bounds, even though it does not provide freedom from gaze restrictions. It is

worthwhile to revisit Cixous's concept of flight in this context since she suggests it as a strategy for empowering women in addition to 'stealing' the patriarchal rhetoric. The dominating emphasis on her body is not something the narrator can absorb or modify in this circumstance. In order to change both her corporeal body and her story, she discovers a 'hidden crossover' to her own embodiment. Similar to Shahrazad, the narrator's body is entwined with her story since she may obfuscate it by altering her bodily shape. As a result, the flying lends the narrator and the story a certain fluidity and enables them to transcend the lines between fact and fiction. The narrator acquires the power to command her own body, her own tale, and the mediums through which her body expresses itself via this 'flight'.

The novel makes the argument that clever concealment is subversive because it diverts attention. While (un)veiling allowed Algerian women to transcend colonial and gendered limitations, the novel employs other devices, such as a disguise, to create a liberated environment. However, how these social and gender boundaries are altered has a significant impact on how well disguise works. The narrator finds the constant scrutiny to be irritating. The narrator decides to alter her look to escape its effects: "So one day I decided to colour my hair. It was obvious that I couldn't hide the letters f-a-t-t-y, but I could make them invisible with the correct hair colour, just like a sweater that hides stains" (250).

This implies that the narrator is endeavouring to conform to a socially accepted body standard by experimenting with various bodily attributes. She hopes to fit in with the right colour choice even though dyeing her hair does not help her gain acceptance. This does not help her escape the gaze, so B-C persuades her to put on a disguise so they can go out together. This would be even more difficult for the narrator because she knew "We didn't please anyone's eyes". There was a lack of mutual admiration or support between us, even when attempting to conceal or during nighttime hours (299). This implies that the narrator's expressions conflict with her actions. She tries various disguises, but she doesn't think it would work to evade the gaze in a setting where it's crucial for her identity to be recognized by others. Because she replicates social and gender norms rather than challenging them, the narrator's attempt to fit in with society ultimately proves to be unsuccessful. Because it doesn't

challenge the ways in which her body is embodied, I would argue that this disguise fails her once more.

Luce Irigaray argues that for a woman to conform to societal norms, she must adopt the performance of femininity, which involves adhering to a set of values that are not inherently her own. In this system, she can only exist and navigate within the confines of the needs, desires, and fantasies of others, specifically men (*Speculum of the Other Woman* 133-134). On the other hand, Judith Butler posits that the essence of gender lies in the performative aspects of appearance. According to Butler, the fundamental nature of gender can be understood as the interplay of outward manifestations (*Gender Trouble* 47).

The Bastard of Istanbul provides insight into Turkish society at a deep level. It wrestles with the sinister repercussions of the nation's Armenian genocide. The internal conflicts of women that affect them in the family, society, and even the nation is also highlighted. In fact, Elif Shafak claims that Turkey is a nation that belongs to men. She said that, Turkey politics at local, regional and national level are overwhelmingly male. "It is very masculinity; it is very divisive and it is very aggressive". In her perspective the phrase sister hood is greatly acclaimed rather than feminism in Middle East. *The Bastard of Istanbul* is a powerful narration that has established a huge literary space for Shafak. Elif Shafak's second book, which is about women in the nation, addresses a number of social issues. *The Bastard of Istanbul* poses a number of intriguing questions when read in depth in which women characters and their identities are significant debate coupled with the effect of religious conservatism and secular views. Women in this novel create many rules for themselves, and those rules were antithetical to the present circumstances of society.

For many years, the Kazanci family was doomed to have male members pass away too soon. There was no male patron in the family except Mustafa Kazanci. However, he departed from Istanbul and established residence in Arizona in pursuit of advanced education. Grand Ma Gulsum, who is in charge of all family management, is the family's head. Mustafa kazanci has been treated with love and affection more than his sisters. He was revered in the family as a priceless gem. Levant Kazanci was fixated on getting a boy to say his last name. A range of efforts have been done to

safeguard him from cruel fate of early death of male relatives in the family. He was treated as a king in the family. Being a male member, his freedom was unlimited. Simultaneously, it is imperative for female individuals to exercise increased vigilance in order to extricate themselves from the clutches of malevolent forces. Treating a male child was not similar as treating a female child in that community. They eventually developed chastity awareness, which changed a safety measure to determine the woman's value.

This consistent outrage towards women is reflectively seen in *The Bastard of Istanbul*. Consequently, women become hyphenated self in a reformed society. By arguing this view from feministic perspective, undoubtedly these women are treated with prejudices. Since they are not migrants, or exiled. They are indigenous individuals themselves. But despite of the fact, their identity itself criticized by conventions of patriarchal supremacy. That directly attacks women's cultural identities and limits them with patriarchal barriers. Is it still conceivable, given this view of creation as a constitutive constraint, to ask how such restrictions not only generate the domain of intelligible bodies, but also build a realm of unthinkable, abject, and unliveable bodies? The latter domain is the excluded and unreadable area that haunts the former domain as the spectre of its own impossibility, the very limit of intelligibility, its constitutive outside. This latter domain is not the opposite of the former because oppositions are, after all, a component of intelligibility (*Gender Trouble* 10).

Immediately after their father's death and brother's departure to the University of Arizona, all four sisters left under the matriarch Grand ma Gulsum. Zeliha, Banu, Feride and Cevriye along with Asya, the illegitimate daughter of Zeliha are the typical women characters. Asya, the protagonist of the novel being treated as bastard. When Zeliha decided to protect her baby inside the womb, grand ma Gulsum exclaimed "A Bastard, you want to bring into this family, a child out of wedlock. An idiot" (*The Bastard of Istanbul* 29) The words linger in the atmosphere. Gulsum again continued to blame Zeliha on account of her pregnancy. She was ridiculed on her revolutionary decision of protecting baby inside the womb rather than just to get aborted. This pathetic condition paradoxically made juxtaposition on Zeliha's modern life style and

exhibited impropriety through her choice of attire, including high heels, a short skirt, and makeup. “This is what happens when you dress up ... like a whore” (29). Cultural hegemony enumerates through male constructed stereotypes. That typically portrayed by the character Zeliha. Among all Kazanci women she was the only one who is openly irreligious.

If there were a male patron in kazanci family, he would have killed Zeliha. Therefore, she should thank Almighty. It is an admonition, Grand ma Gulsum conveyed Zeliha. This indication vehemently confronted patriarchal power over women in society. Furthermore, with varied contexts of cultural diversity sandwiches women’s lives in Turkey. Obviously, they are advanced with Ataturk reformative implementations. However, their ethical behaviour causes them to distance themselves from the manufactured tagline known as reformation. One of the striking elements Shafak constituents in her women characters are to escape from this conventional framework. They never are fixated and follow cultural stereotype, instead there is a wide effort to implant their self.

In order to highlight this escapism Shafak assuredly represents through the characters like Zeliha, Cevirye, Asya and Armanoush. At the beginning part of the novel, Zeliha’s revolting approaches conceptualizes the difficulties to preserve women identity. Indeed, the renowned reformer Ataturk implemented measures aimed at promoting a more lenient approach towards the practice of religion and culture. However, it is worth noting that certain segments of society are still in the process of attaining the ideals of equality and equitable involvement of women in various aspects of social life. Culturally women deprivation and men amelioration is widely debated in this novel. This clash between male domination and female submission are not only pertained philosophical and intellectual discourse. But masculine strength over feminine impotence proves that women are being a hyphenated object since these biological differences exists. Ataturk concept of Turkish women was modern and intelligent in their societal outlook. On the other hand, religious conservatives strongly disputed to preserve traditional chastity of women. Similarly, the conventional methods were further tailored by the inclusion of the character Grand ma Gulsum.

Kazanci's new generation representative is an immaculate daughter of Zeliha, who gladly accepts bundle of love from her aunties. Asya kazanci labelled as bastard, because she has unknown father. Subsequently her identity also asymmetrically patterned. She realized that she was a bastard, only at the age of eight. In addition, the unequal treatment of society made her more reclusive. Asya pretends to console herself. Nearing her eighth birth day Asya plundered the pill box and swallowed all capsules she found there. It was an attempt at suicide. The individual expressed a strong belief that, given the nature of her family, she would not have been afforded the opportunity to engage in suicide. Finding consolation was finally confronted with her deep passion towards music. Her obsession towards music was a great relief from the frustrated burdens of her surroundings. Her musical fixation was Johnny Cash, an American pop singer. His songs ultimately rooted existentialistic ideas. That enabled Asya to think in contrary of current system. Eventually to be an agnostic and nonconformist, Asya kept a long distance from angelic influences for shaping her selfhood.

The Bastard of Istanbul critically examines the institution of marriage, especially as a setting that perpetuates patriarchal authority. In this context, marriage turns into a place where women are subjugated, with the husband taking on a domineering position that makes the wife's subjectivity even more complex. After marriage, societal norms and stifling techniques ensnare a woman's voice. After marrying Barsam, an Armenian American, and having a daughter, Rose lives a very oppressive life after marriage. Despite considering a number of contemporary names for her child, including Annie, Katie, or Cyndie, she finally gives in to pressure from her husband's family and gives her daughter the traditional name Armanoush, which reflects the power of family over maternal autonomy.

In view of this, dispensing women's opinion is hardly difficult one. The Barsam family, in particular, consists of individuals who have migrated to the United States. Irrespective of migrants, male chauvinism is universally perceived. By the same token, women mistreated and not even considered her opinions at least once for naming her baby. Rose effectuates many lessons from her marriage with Barsam. Over time, she came to the realization that whenever she went on dates with Mustafa

Kazanci, she underwent a profound transformation, assuming the characteristics of a reticent being in various aspects. Her own reasons are fundamentally faulty. Post marital chronic resentment not only made one quite irrational and unreasonable perfectly, but sometimes it perfectly turns into reasonable.

Shafak challenges conventional ideas of motherhood by presenting maternal figures like Zeliha and Rose through a nuanced and occasionally humorous prism. Notwithstanding their disparate cultural upbringings, these ladies represent a common experience that speaks to the unconscious of women everywhere. Asya, for example, never refers to Zeliha as "mother," instead calling her "Auntie," demonstrating a breakdown in parental identification and emotional intimacy. Their emotional distance from their daughters is clear. The difference between Asya and Armanoush, who both come to represent cultural displacement and shattered identities, serves as another illustration of this generational transition. They stand for a new generation that is characterized by unrestrained conduct and a lack of roots. The conflicts between tradition and modernity, as well as the influence of cross-cultural dynamics on the development of selfhood, are reflected in the changing cultural values and the ensuing identity reversals.

This chapter adopts the Butlerian perspective in analysing the literary text which challenges the representation of woman as the 'Other' and lack subjectivity as a part of their innate nature, The historical range of materials reflected in the traditional texts is not meant to suggest that a single heterosexualizing imperative persists in each of these contexts, but only that the instability produced by the effort to fix the site of the sexed body challenges the boundaries of discursive intelligibility in each of these contexts (*Gender Trouble* 27). Women's subjectivity has been repressed and oppressed regularly by inherited cultural norms, traditions and customs. Women have been seen as the distorted image of men: inferior and passive. Thus, Shafak throughout the character of Zeliha refutes these stereotypical representations of women and offers an alternative one which reveals women's selfhood as essential and whole. Therefore, the whole text centrally concerns the production of sexed morphologies through regulatory schemas.

Zeliha has a distinctive and strong character. She is free and autonomous. It seems that from the early time of her life she decided to be a responsible woman; she controls and manages her life according to her will, not governed by others. She is a rebel and doesn't follow the classical traditions and customs of her family who is conservative: "In Istanbul, a woman who engaged in public smoking was not held in high esteem; yet, societal opinion about this matter was of little consequence. Zeliha displayed a nonchalant gesture. Had she not previously initiated a conflict against the entirety of society?" (*The Bastard of Istanbul* 8). Zeliha's theatrical rejection of gendered standards in a patriarchal culture is made clear in this scene from *The Bastard of Istanbul*. Identity is created by repeated behaviours that either conform to or deviate from social norms, as Judith Butler contends in her theory of gender performativity. Despite social disapproval, Zeliha's public smoking breaks the conventional script associated with feminine respectability and becomes an embodied act of resistance. Her casual demeanour is a subversive performance that reveals the brittleness of gender norms and emphasizes how intentional, routine breaches can give rise to agency.

In other words, she is a maverick. Her style and look in public life denote to a crucial notion implanted in her personality: she is a secularist and modern. Her style gives the readers the impression about Zeliha, the modern woman who wears whatever she likes in anytime and without restrictions. Her clothes are exciting and draw people's attention: "Zeliha, a woman of above-average height in her city, had a strong inclination for wearing vibrant miniskirts, form-fitting blouses that accentuated her enormous bosom, smooth nylon stockings, and notably high-heeled footwear. It appeared that no external force has the ability to deter her from her fashion choice" (3-4).

Thus, these features reveal Zeliha's image as an independent woman. Her strong personality pushes her to face not only her family, but also the conservative Islamic society she lives in. she doesn't wear a veil, and parts of her body are exposed also. In addition, a part of her rebellious and naughty character can be seen in some of her behaviours inside the family. Sometimes, she utters obscene and vile expressions in her language. She also expresses her odd opinions stridently (4), she was the

inaugural female member of her family to employ pejorative language with a remarkable degree of candour, intensity, and erudition. The idea crossed her mind to invite the man to join her on the balcony for a cigarette, since she holds a strong conviction in establishing friendships with those of the opposite gender (13). In her ideology, she realizes it is a natural matter to become a friend with men, and even talk to them in public.

She declares her war on traditions, customs and conservative society. She fights alone, but with determination, power and strong belief in what she is doing in order to liberate and emancipate herself and the Turkish women from the shackles imposed upon her by the patriarchal society. In this sense, she is a modern woman and follows the French philosopher Michael Foucault's notion of modernity. Foucault defines modernity as a decisive and pivotal reaction taken toward the present in order to defeat its restrictions (35-36). According to Zeliha, and perhaps Shafak, these limits that Zeliha sees and suffers from should be abolished and erased because they are meaningless and absurd.

Moreover, it is important to know that Zeliha strongly believes in Attaturk's ideas concerning women's freedom. One of the most important and influential means in this case is the liberation of women through their bodies, and especially their styles, fashions and costumes. The notable change in all these female domains gives the readers an obvious image about the enormous change in women's form and appearance in Turkey. In this respect, Butler explains that: "The portrayal of the female body from a fresh feminine perspective, characterized by short hairstyles, elegant suits, and revealing evening gowns, assumes a crucial role in discerning the distinctions among contemporary women and the changes occurring within the realm of women's experiences" (*Gender Trouble* 199). According to Butler's theory of corporeal subjectivity, the quote demonstrates how feminine self-stylization transforms into a performative act of resistance, questioning established gender standards and reflecting changing identities.

So, Zeliha's modern style and fashion reveal the image of modern, civilized secularist Turkey through the bodies and styles of the Turkish women. Deliberately, Zeliha proposes to mirror her new identity through her body. In other words, she

wants to create a space for herself by her own body. In this sense Judith Butler argues that: “The human body is not an independent or solely objective physical entity; rather, it is a physical entity that, at the very least, conveys significance, and this conveyance is intrinsically theatrical. The term ‘dramatic’, in my perspective, pertains to the physical entity being comprised solely of material substance” (*Bodies That Matter* 521).

Zeliha is a smart woman. The notion of modernity is seated in her ideology. She alters the result of that atrocious and abominable deed which committed by her brother Mustafa into a productive and useful project. She realizes that the incest is not an obstacle which hinders her way. In other words, Zeliha's modernist ideology by having a child represents her absolute need for mothering which is considered as an essential policy. For her personality, by being a mother, although through incest, she applies the basic rules and values of modernity, so that she needs the baby though it is illegitimate. Therefore, the abortion doesn't go ahead. Unconsciously, she wants the baby because it expresses the instinct of survival inside her. This step is a modern method to defend and introduce herself. In this respect Shafak writes:

The individual emitted a loud vocalization at maximum volume, although the medical professional was unable to provide any assistance. The individual in question did not experience somnolence, but rather exhibited initial incoherent speech followed by escalating vocalization and the use of profanity. Over the course of a decade and a half, I have not encountered any such occurrences. It seems likely that the onset of the analgesic effects of morphine was delayed by a factor of two in your case. The gender of the individual in question remains undetermined, since the term “female” implies but does not definitively confirm their gender. The front desk agent spoke in a straightforward and objective manner. (*The Bastard of Istanbul* 20-21)

It is necessary for Zeliha to protect her existence as an independent entity in her society. Thus, she implements her project for a better modern future excellently. According to Yeatman's, “mothering’ and ‘primary parenting’ are distinctively late modern ideas and values” (42). So, Zeliha who is the youngest member in the family,

and who is only 19 years old, decides to be a mother out of wedlock, in a conservative Muslim family, in patriarchal society, and in modern Turkey. The contradictions in this case are vital and significant because they also refer to the most important characteristics of the radical transformation in Turkey. The change is enormous and impressive especially within the representation of the Turkish women and the realization of their role in forming the new modern Turkey. Saktanber comments on the role of women in modern Turkey:

Women in Turkish society have long been studied within a particular framework of social change in which transition from rural/tradition to urban/modern social structures constituted the backdrop to the social picture. These studies saw women as part and parcel of social development and looked at their situation in respect to relatively autonomous, mutually dependent parts of the social whole such as economy, polity education and family life. ("Kemalist Women's Rights Discourse" 45)

Zeliha realizes that what she decides to do with this taboo is her own private affair only. She believes that women should be aware and they should conceive that their destiny must be taken upon themselves since they are free and autonomous. And this is what the existentialist philosophers call 'Resolute Decision' (Heidegger). She perceives that although she fights alone against her society and family, she is able to change the incest into a felicitous project. She looks for something outside herself to become a free individual without being part of incest and to strive for women's liberation and emancipation. She decides to keep the illicit baby, takes care of it. Therefore, she decides to educate this individual in a way that reveals her determination and insistency and enables her to fulfill and continue her schema for modernity. In this sense Asya is the view through which Zeliha defines herself in life and symbolizes her endeavour to make rational decision despite dwelling in a patriarchal society.

Zeliha abrogates the role and the image of the traditional father from Asya's life. She plays the role of the distinctive mother in Asya's life: she is her mother as well as her father. She treats her as a friend. She gives her the authority to do

whatever she likes to do, and to go wherever she wants without censorship and restriction. It is a unique freedom and trust which many people dream of. As for Zeliha, she doesn't even hide her love relationship from her daughter. Zeliha knows Asya's character very well and adores her," But instead she tenderly squeezed Asya's hand, as is acknowledging that her love for a man has allowed her to better comprehend her role for her daughter. 'Sweetheart' she murmured a hint of anguish creeping in her tone. However, if Auntie Zeliha had intentions of communicating a message to her daughter, she promptly suppressed the impulse. In contrast, "she procured a fresh package of cigarettes and extended an invitation to partake in one (257). In effect, Zeliha tries to tell Asya about the incest and the fact of her birth, but she is still hesitant. Besides, there is something inside her prevents her from telling Asya the truth, so that Zeliha transformed her hesitation, shame and fear into love and energy which embrace and protect Asya from dangers around her.

In addition, Zeliha's work is impressive. She has a tattoo shop. She chooses a professional work because she believes that when a woman engages in a professional work, she gains much confidence in herself, "Ten years ago Auntie Zeliha had opened a tattoo parlour, where she had started to develop a collection of original design" (72). She is a self-made woman who manages her life perfectly and faces all difficulties thoughtfully and courageously. She is economically and financially independent, thus she depends on herself to earn her living. She hates vulnerability. She has the talent and can shoulder responsibilities, so that her grandmother chooses her, over her sister Banu to be the head of the family, according to Kazanci's customs, "Contrary to popular expectations, Auntie Zeliha, a renowned and accomplished competitor, was chosen by Petit Ma as her successor, rather than Auntie Banu.

Therefore, Zeliha in this sense abolishes all these patriarchal standards, barriers and repressed traditions and customs which tend to turn her passive and slothful. She is not afraid of declaring herself as the [Eraser] who cleans and purges all these oppressive and prejudiced ideas about women. She is the leader of the radical transformation who strives for women's emancipation and equality. She grasps her role profoundly, and implements it perfectly. Shafak in her novel sees women as the centre of society, since the majority of the characters in the novel are females. In this

context similar ideas can be found in Johann Jakob Bachofen in *Myth, Religion and Mother Right* (1861) which reads dominant role of women in civilization and sexual life. Therefore, it is not arbitrary to see the deterministic views concerning males in Kazanci's family because death is inevitable in the forties for males in this family. In fact, the most dramatic point is that Mustafa the culprit and ruffian should die, and Zeliha the strongest and liberated female should live and enjoy her life and freedom. Shafak demonstrates how gender equality must permeate all aspects of male and female relationships. When Shafak explains that every humankind possesses both femininity and masculinity at once, the adaption of Rumi's thoughts about gender equality takes on a new level.

Elif Shafak, an advocate for women's rights, promotes feminism in her best-selling novel *The Forty Rules of Love*. The novel narrates two distinct narratives that unfold concurrently, each situated within disparate cultural and temporal contexts. The central character of the narrative is Ella Rubenstein, an ordinary housewife who is responsible for caring for her two children and dealing with her wayward spouse. The entirety of her existence revolves on her family and the responsibilities entailed in upholding her household. Nevertheless, her endeavours and dedication are given the least amount of recognition. Ella serves as a symbol of women who demonstrate unwavering dedication to their familial responsibilities, consistently fulfilling their duties without obtaining due recognition or reciprocated affection. The individual exerts significant effort to uphold the well-being of her family, frequently sacrificing her personal gratification in the process. The individual's perspective on existence undergoes dramatic alteration upon undertaking the task of critically examining the literary work titled "Sweet Blasphemy," which draws inspiration from the life and teachings of the 13th-century poet Rumi and his mentor Shams of Tabriz. The protagonist has a slow development of romantic feelings towards Aziz, the author of the book. This causes her to reevaluate the lifestyle she has embraced, one characterized by a lack of passion, love, and self-esteem. Similar to the renowned poet Rumi, she defies established cultural norms and ventures outside the confines of her secure and comfortable existence. In an effort to terminate a challenging marital relationship, the individual in question elects to abandon her family.

In her analysis, Shafak examines the impact of Sufism on the life of Ella, an American housewife of Jewish descent. The protagonist's heightened awareness of the absence of affection in her personal life is attributed to her occupation as a critic specializing in the analysis of "Sweet Blasphemy." Due to a perceived absence of purpose and guidance in her life, she is driven to make a perilous choice: departing from her family in order to reside with her partner who is suffering from a fatal illness. Ella's transformation is depicted as a journey towards acquiring knowledge and exploring her own identity, which is facilitated by the processes of illumination, revelation, and inspiration (Firdous 558).

Ella embodies the archetypal portrayal of a conventional housewife. She limits her activities to fulfilling the role of a caring spouse and mother by providing for her family. The individual consistently experiences feelings of sadness and remorse in relation to her roles as a spouse and parent. The individual in question demonstrates a strong inclination towards achieving perfection, although it appears that her spouse and offspring lack awareness of or fail to acknowledge her endeavours. In the prologue, Shafak draws a comparison between Ella's existence with "still water," characterizing it as "predictable" and "monotonous" (*The Forty Rules of Love* 2). She exemplifies the vast number of women who, as a result of their limited capacity to envision a life outside their familial responsibilities and the confines of their domestic spheres, are marginalized, unappreciated, and overlooked on a global scale. According to Shafak's assertion: "I know many women like Ella. Not only in the West but there are also a lot more women like that in Turkey... Many people are imprisoned in an unhappy marriage and they don't make any effort to find a way out or to transform themselves and just live their lives the way they are" ("Under the Spell of Divine and Human Love: Taking a Long Journey into Yourself").

As per Shafak the individual exhibited a deficiency in the necessary coping mechanisms to effectively navigate the challenges associated with living independently, primarily due to her reliance on her familial support system. Ella can be interpreted as a symbol of women who neglect their personal growth and fail to pursue individual fulfilment. According to Malik, "Ella's multiple roles as a spouse, parent, canine caregiver, and household manager pose obstacles to her ability to

accomplish her stated goals. She is unconcerned with her husband's infidelity in spite of it" ("The Experience and the Overcoming of Female Anxiety" 12).

Firdous asserts that Ella was aware of her husband's extramarital activities, but owing to a lack of alternative choices, she has come to grips with her current predicament ("Forty Rules of Love as a Bildungsroman" 560). She asks her daughter directly, "In which era do you reside?" (*The Forty Rules of Love* 239), as the absence of warmth in her marital relationship makes her doubt the reality of this claim. It is significant to recognize that women frequently do not marry the men they have romantic feelings for. The person chooses a man who exhibits traits that would make him a trustworthy and responsible spouse as well as a loving and understanding parent. Love is a transitory emotional state marked by brief pleasure followed by departure. According to Ella, "After two decades of being married, two decades of sharing a bed, a shower, meals, and raising three children, the culmination of it all was an absence of communication" (239), the marriage between the husband and wife is merely symbolic and devoid of any meaningful affection. Kimya and Kerra, two minor characters, serve as excellent examples of women with remarkable aptitude whose ability to express themselves was repressed by the prevailing ideologies of a male-dominated social system. Kimya's outstanding qualities, are regrettably ignored since she is not given access to the education and opportunity that would allow her to nurture and develop her talents. This unfortunate circumstance contributes to the perception that women are predominantly expected to fulfill domestic duties and attend to their spouses and children within the confines of their homes.

She is determined to seek a career as a literary agent once her children are grown up and independent. She discovers the literary masterpiece titled "Sweet Blasphemy," which radically alters her life, as a result of her professional activity. After witnessing Shams, Rumi, who was previously recognized as a religious orator, underwent a transforming experience that made him realize his underlying gift as a visionary poet. This epiphany happens when Shams teaches Rumi the profound knowledge contained in *The Forty Rules of Love*. Ella is exposed to a range of emotional depths in the novel's portrayal of love, which has a significant impact on her personal development. She loses her inhibitions, concerns, and earlier priorities as

a result of changing from a sceptic to someone who welcomes romance. She is inspired by her fresh viewpoint to live a life filled with enjoyment, contentment, and real human connection. The individual discovers that, in contrast to some statements, love is not merely a fleeting and ephemeral experience. The person could never have imagined that they would have such a strong connection to Sufism from the 13th century and its explanation of the notion of love. Ella found inspiration in the forty principles of love, and she began to think about how her life may be reshaped and rewritten. These rules were putting a fresh spirit of love in her veins. In the story's final chapters, the main character takes on the form of love. Ella experienced a sensation of deviating from her routine and peaceful living as a result of her email interaction with Aziz. The transformation of an individual from being immersed in a monotonous palette of muted greys and browns to acquiring a concealed chromaticity, characterized by a vibrant and captivating shade of red, is readily apparent. Additionally, she developed a profound affinity for it (95). As Firdous notes: "While Ella has been looking for a man who could receive and imbibe her emotional setup, Aziz too is lucky to find a woman whom he could shake, destroy, build, regenerate and elevate" ("Forty Rules of Love as a Bildungsroman" 565). Butler's concept of relational performativity—where identity and agency are not fixed but are instead produced and reshaped via intimate encounters—is illustrated by this quotation, which emphasizes the mutual metamorphosis that Ella and Aziz went through. Their partnership becomes a place of gendered redefinition and rebirth as Aziz plays a catalytic role and Ella seeks emotional validation.

Shafak addresses the issue of gender justice in her literary work. Shafak's perspective, as described by Shah, involves a rejection of both Western feminism and Islamic orthodoxy. Instead, she endeavours to achieve gender justice within an Islamic framework by advocating for a critical examination and reinterpretation of the Quran ("Resuscitating Esoteric Islam" 285). The superficial interpretation of the Quran is deemed acceptable by individuals who prefer to remain at a surface level, as articulated by Shafak. This phenomenon is applicable to a significant number of individuals. The verses are being excessively simplified. After analysing a Surah such as 'Nisa' it is understandable that individuals may perceive a prevailing societal inclination towards valuing males over females.

Shafak talks about her ideas on gender in the chapter named Kimya by using the exchange between Shams and Kimya. Kimya questions Shams about if Islam actually supports the famed wife-beating and male dominance. Shams responds by stating that the interpretation of the Quran depends on the reader's perspective. He likens the Quran to a modest bride who will only remove her veil "if she sees that the person watching has a kind heart," (*The Forty Rules of Love* 196). For ages, it's possible that the Quran's words have been incorrectly understood and applied to women's subordination and lower place in society. Shafak expresses this viewpoint to demonstrate how husband's ought to treat their wives. The second version contrasts with the first by highlighting the need for compassion and understanding while the first promotes oppression and violence. Shafak disproves the idea that Islam is a faith that is hard on women. "In fact, *The Forty Rules of Love* shows Muslim women who have a strong relationship with their religion and feel empowered by it" ("Resuscitating Esoteric Islam" 288), writes Shah. "This suggests that the sacred space that Islam can create might be a place to go to instead of running away from" (288). Shams is infuriated by the fake honour norms that society imposes on people, sometimes even in the name of God, as Kimya warns him that society would judge her for not completing their marriage. The fact that society placed such absurd laws on its members made his wrath boil, he claims. These honour rules had more to do with the order that people wished to maintain than with the harmony that God established. People ought to take care of their own affairs (*The Forty Rules of Love* 307).

In conclusion, it can be inferred that the aforementioned points collectively support the notion that *Honour* and *The Forty Rules of Love* attempt to reflect the unfair treatment of women in Turkish culture. Women are frequently silenced and subjugated by patriarchy and presumptive gender norms, which prevents them from living life on their own terms and forces them to sacrifice their pleasure for the good of their families or society. Both Pembe and Ella are affected by these standards of behaviour. They stand in for the multitudes of women who silently live and pass away miserable, unloved, and underappreciated across the world. Ella, in contrast to Pembe, has far more bravery than Pembe to free herself from the constraints that kept her from enjoying a complete life. She starts a new life as an independent woman,

unapologetic in her pursuit of happiness. The challenges faced by Turkish women can be likened to those encountered by women in other societies characterized by patriarchal structures. Shafak, who has always advocated for the underrepresented and unheard, highlights the necessity to redefine gender roles in light of personal fulfilment and equality standards even in the current period of civilized civilizations.

In a similar narrative found in *Honour*, the experience of emotions is stressed as being vital to understanding migration. The extended Kurdish family is from rural Turkey, in an unnamed location “near the River Euphrates,” with Urfa (*Honour* 9), which is the nearest city, located in southeast Turkey, close to the Syrian border. The narrative swings between three time periods to examine their lives. Although there are many characters, the plot largely revolves around Pembe, the protagonist. Pembe, who was born in the unidentified town, went to Istanbul after being married to Adem, a city dweller.

Iskander is the only son Pembe and Adem had before relocating to London and Esma and Yunus were born in London. Due to Adem's gambling addiction and eventual move in with another lady, their marriage disintegrates. Iskander kills his mother and ends up in prison, chronologically speaking, motivated by the gendered cultural norms of his place of birth as well as the influence of a charismatic religious man in London. At the book's conclusion, it is revealed that Pembe was not killed. Without Iskander's knowledge, he killed her identical twin Jamila while she was in London. Following the murder, Pembe hides before returning to Turkey. Only after he is released from prison does Iskander and the reader learn the truth.

The sister of Iskander, Esma, describes this death in the first person in the opening chapters of the novel. As the novel develops, the reader learns more about what led to this murder, notably the gender roles that dominated the extended family's lives in the second half of the 20th century. As stated by Coomaraswamy and Kois, this demonstrates an understanding of the violence against women inherent in ‘crimes of honour’ that ‘accepts the fact that structures that perpetuate violence against women are socially constructed and that such violence is a product of a historical process and is not essential or time bound in its manifestations (“Violence against Women and ‘Crimes of Honour” 177). *Honour* is a theme that permeates the entire

novel, in keeping with the title. Writing a book on immigration and honour crimes was prompted by Shafak's wish to situate the narrative in London, the cosmopolitan centre of Europe, where there is presently a better degree of coexistence, peace, and integration than anywhere else. It is nonetheless crucial to be aware of how it both frames the story's plot and shows how feelings and emotions, which then motivate action, are influenced by particular social and political contexts that are migratory. "Since the day she was born as the seventh daughter of a woman who longed for a son, Pembe had come to see this world as a hotbed of favouritism and inequalities, some of which she accepted as unchangeable, the ways of humans. But never in her life had she been subjected to open hostility for being who she was' (*Honour* 108). The performative submission to a patriarchal system that values masculinity is evident in Pembe's existence. Her status as a daughter rather than a boy is instantly discounted, demonstrating how cultural scripts control what is considered significant or understandable. This supports Butler's argument that gender is a repeated performance framed by heteronormative power structures rather than a stable identity. She subsequently encounters "open hostility," which turns out to be a regulatory mechanism intended to penalize deviance from the culturally accepted image of womanhood—quiet, submissive, and fertile in favour of male continuation.

Despite the reader's pre-existing familiarity with Pembe's character, the chapter exhibits a distinct narrative style reminiscent of a condensed novel. This is because the narrative presents Pembe yet again. Pembe warns of 'open hostility' and admits the universality of class systems and inequities. The narration that follows, in which Pembe leaves work to go to the supermarket to acquire components for a rice pudding but is instead enticed to the bakery by the sight of multiple eclairs, a typical move, is so strongly loaded with anticipation for the following event. This marks the start of the scene's emotional impact.

The assistant regards Pembe as an unwelcome stranger when she enters the bakery and views her with suspicion. The text claims that as Pembe waits in line, "The assistant raised his head from behind the glass case and gave the waiting customers the once-over, focusing on Pembe". The shopper behind her did see the resentment in the young man's eyes, but she was blind to it (110). She loses her

subjectivity when she is singled out as the target of anger due to her physical presence in this public space. Because of this, the assistant's answer, as well as his own physical manifestations and later speaking acts, stick out to her. He assumes the role of host and identifies Pembe as a visitor who is disturbing the home. When Pembe is ready to be served, the assistant makes a scene by ignoring her: "he ignored her and went about organizing the pastries" (110). The assistant threatens to contact the police after referring to Pembe as a "walking catastrophe" (112) because Pembe claims she is unable to pay for the product she is accused of destroying. Another male client intervenes to assist her at this point.

As it can be surmised Pembe's disruption of the host's house is metaphorically represented by the assistant's revulsion at Pembe's interaction with the bakery goods. As a result of how the negative sensation "has got in," "stickiness" implies that the person "may experience hate towards the object as well as fear of the object" (88). Due to the "weightiness" of sentiments, which modify or "work on" the surface of bodies to affect the items they come into touch with, Pembe's body, which is intended to be a sign of foreignness, gets associated with the assistant's distaste (85). Because the assistant is assuming the host role, her body has a foreign and evil stigma connected to it. However, the environment of the business further complicates this because Pembe's dependence on the assistant highlights the ambiguity of these positions.

Because both depend on closeness, disgust goes hand in hand with the way strangeness is created through the meeting. Ahmed contends that the stranger only takes on a figure through closeness in her examination of experiences of strangeness: "The stranger's body cannot be reified as the distant body" (13). In this sense, rather than because she contains an underlying, consistent component of foreignness, Pembe becomes a figure to stand for strangeness or foreignness because of her proximity to this individual inside the public realm. The baker's assistant is able to assume the role of host and be unwelcoming to Pembe because he has some cultural capital (being a male, white, and local). Interestingly, the second client that helps Pembe is also a white man who is fluent in English. The contact so causes weirdness, which is

subsequently imprinted on Pembe's body owing to the special connotations of this area.

The management of such a location bestows upon individuals a privileged mode of inhabiting the space. El-Zein's perspective on nationalism entails assuming the managerial role and exercising authority over a given space, which is a consequence of the inherent privileges associated with such a position. Thus, the roles of host and manager is both performatives. El-Zein's central claim is that to be controlled, pre-existing implications of a location must already be viewed as belonging to someone. This supports Ahmed's claim that strangeness is already predetermined before attaching to bodies during an encounter. The bakery assistant's dual position as host and spatial manager must thus be seen as dependent on pre-existing notions of public space as being neutral but rather as endowed with white privilege. This might be interpreted as the assistant's unconscious self-disgust at having to rely on Pembe to demonstrate his dominance over the location being projected onto her status as a visitor.

We need to take into account the performativity of speech acts in light of the marking of bodies to further develop the idea of embodied exchanges of hospitality. In her book chapter "The Performativity of Disgust," Sara Ahmed explains how the sensation of disgust is inextricably linked to touch: "In disgust, contingency is itself intensified; the contact between surfaces engenders an intensity of affect" (89) The 'stickiness' of the performance of disgust is due to this impact on the contact between surfaces. To understand how the performativity of speech acts marks bodies, Ahmed extends his thinking on the contact between surfaces, saying that "disgust can generate effects by "binding" signs to bodies in a way that "limits" new meanings" (92). Disgust is a strong feeling with strong implications, thus its link to a body overpowers other interpretations. The bakery employee's hatred with Pembe is a response to the idea of 'foreignness,' which subsequently obscures other connotations like the fact that she is a client. By using a specific instance of his own distaste, the assistant might mark Pembe's body in his capacity as spatial manager. The bakery employee accuses Pembe of contaminating the cinnamon buns with fluff off her coat during their chat. Despite not understanding the word 'fluff,' Pembe can tell the

assistant's accusation is emotional because it leaves “a sour taste in her mouth” (*Honour* 112). She reveals her non-native English-speaking status through this verbal exchange. Her contamination of the food is linked to her cultural unfamiliarity and fears of contamination rather than just a simple hygiene issue.

Speech acts play a role in the marking of bodies. For example, the phrase “that's disgusting!” marks the object. One of these instances is illustrated in the sentence that follows: “Pembe approached the pastry trays from the side and pointed again at the eclairs without realizing that the hem of her coat was brushing against the cinnamon rolls. “Hey, don't touch those,” the assistant yelled. He picked up one of the rolls and inspected it. “Nah, I can't sell these any more” (111). The social disciplining of gender, class, and ethnicity is reflected in this scene, which reveals how Pembe's stigmatized identity as a Kurdish immigrant lady is policed in public places. It shows how routine behaviours uphold prevailing standards, making her presence seem abnormal and out of place when viewed via Butler's gender performativity lens.

Once the assistant exhibits disgust, associations of disgust with Pembe get “stuck” because “[t]o name something as disgusting is to transfer the stickiness of the word “disgust” to an object, which subsequently becomes generated as the very thing that is spoken” (“The Performativity of Disgust” 94). Because “[t]he speech act is always spoken to others, whose shared witnessing of the disgusting thing is required for the affect to have an effect,” (94), the assistant's humiliation of Pembe needs an audience. It is essential for the helper to touch the produce during the “shared witnessing” act to demonstrate that his touch is not repulsive.

In these interactions, the interaction between class and gender is crucial. According to Ahmed, distaste serves as a point of contact since it “is how things come into contact with other things” (87) through interaction. Ahmed contends further that disgust is essential to power dynamics because it upholds the physiological boundaries that separate and organize space and bodies into hierarchical categories (88). Socioeconomic and gender-based distinctions are part of these hierarchy. Pembe is positioned between two men in this dramatic scene: the assistant, who looks to be a neo-Nazi, and the client who defends her and “look[s] like a university professor” (*Honour* 113). Pembe is playing the role of the bewildered foreigner who causes

turmoil in the home. Pembe is a lady who is being attacked and rescued by two guys, one from the working class and one from the upper class. It is insufficient to discuss the guest and host roles in hospitality discourse in light of how these roles are executed in connection to identity disparities, including gender and class.

The men's distinct inequalities in privilege imply that the bakery assistant would not have the ability to act as host in other settings. According to Maurice Hamington, "Acts of hospitality actualize identity". "Hospitality is a performative act of identity" ("Toward a Theory of Feminist Hospitality" 24). The swastika tattoo on the assistant's arm raises suspicions that he is a neo-Nazi or a member of a far-right political group. The second man, who is referred to as "the silent onlooker" (*Honour* 112), likewise claims to be the host. The other man introduces himself by "cough[ing] dramatically" (112) when the store employee threatens to contact the police. I've been watching your éclair dilemma, Pembe, and I feel compelled to say a few things, he continues. (112). The man's improper use of humour implies that he has some sort of control over the area. The two men's different social classes may be inferred from their speaking patterns and appearance. The difference between the man's attire and the baker's assistant's is that the latter dons a "sepia corduroy jacket with leather elbow patches over a beige turtle-neck sweater" (113). Their interaction is replete with connotations about who gets to play host in any given public space as a result of these indications of class difference. It is clear that Pembe's status as a visitor or stranger makes her the target of the hostility between these two men. The competition between two men for control over an area imposes patriarchal roles, dictating the woman's experience in that space.

By exposing the gendered connotations of specific spaces and how this affects guest/host roles, *Honour* challenges the underlying premise of much hospitality discourse—that it is inherently ungendered. Pembe's position as the family's female caregiver, in particular, portrays migrants as 'hosts' to their families, undermining her purported role as a guest as depicted in the bakery. Gender issues are frequently not brought up in conversations about hospitality. Because "political and ethical discourses tend to privilege discussions of the migrant as a metaphor for a group whose gendered characteristics are less significant than other markers," (Rosello, *Post*

Colonial Hospitality 118), according to Rosello, there is a “troubling elimination of the female figure from the primordial guest-host pair” (119). In order to define more generalized aspects of hospitality, she suggests focusing on private and domestic practices, or “what happens once the stranger has entered the home” (120). Women are frequently thought of when domesticity and caregiving are mentioned. Indeed, jobs like cleaning, cooking, and reception work are essential to the service sector, which is built around hospitality.

The novel is full of instances of women performing emotional and domestic work to make others feel at home. Jamila, Pembe's sister, prioritizes her career as a midwife and providing care for others in her lonely life in rural Turkey. The story enters her mind as she prepares her ‘potions and ointments’ in her cellar, which is referred to as her ‘sanctuary:

When Jamila was in the cellar, she stepped outside of her body, becoming a conduit for an arcane energy that coursed through the universe, healing, mending, multiplying. There she gave birth to her own womb, and the womb expanded to cover the whole of the natural world around her, a cavern of warmth and compassion, in which she happily lost all sense of self. (*Honour* 172-3)

This quote supports Judith Butler's view of gender performativity as a fluid, transformational process by symbolizing Jamila's transcendence of gendered and physical restrictions. By figuratively "giving birth to her own womb," she is recovering her agency and establishing a holy, caring environment, challenging patriarchal frameworks that usually use biological determinism to define gender. The concept of gendered care is conceptualized as having a bodily nature, as indicated by the use of emotional language, which implies a close connection between women's bodies and the natural world. The individual experiences a diminishment of their own identity due to the pervasive energy that permeates the cosmos within the context of reproductive language, which possesses both intimate and universal qualities. Other female characters also engage in this type of labour. The character of Esma's aunt, Meral, is portrayed as a woman who has dedicated her life to serving others, including

her husband, children, relatives, and neighbours, with a strong emphasis on domestic hospitality (235).

Esma, the daughter of Pembe, had shown ambition throughout her youth but later develops a lifestyle that is closely like that of her mother. Except for Iskander's correspondence, the first-person narrative in the book comprises the sole chapters written from this perspective. Within these chapters, the narrator reflects upon her own life about that of her brother Yunus, contemplating whether her relatively ordinary and domestic existence is a result of divine intervention or a mere coincidence. The chapters as mentioned above written in first-person narration provide substantiation for the novel's portrayal of women's emotional comprehension. The significance of Esma's chapters lies in their ability to effectively demonstrate the interplay between domestic hospitality and emotional understanding. Conversely, the remaining chapters persist in utilizing a detached narrator who delves into the inner thoughts and emotions of the various persons.

Pembe challenges the prevailing hospitality paradigms that have influenced her understanding of racism within the bakery by engaging in relationships characterized by a distinct form of daily hospitality. Maurice Hamington employs the framework of feminist ethics of care to construct a novel understanding of hospitality, which incorporates key notions such as “identity, inclusiveness, reciprocity, forgiveness, and embodiment” (“Toward a Theory of Feminist Hospitality” 23). Hamington further observes:

Feminist hospitality explores the antimony between disruption and connection. The guest and host disrupt each other's lives sufficiently to allow for meaningful exchanges that foster interpersonal connections of understanding. To this end, I propose that feminist hospitality reflects a performative extension of care ethics that seeks to knit together and strengthen social bonds through psychic and material sharing. (24)

This aligns with Shafak's feminist literary objectives, as the chapter focuses on the experiences of women who have been subjected to masculine mistreatment. The author alludes to her childhood encounter with domestic violence in the epigraph, a

situation that went unnoticed or unacknowledged by the local community. The author of this work expresses their dedication to those who possess the ability to perceive both auditory and visual stimuli. The challenge posed by Derrida's concept of unconditional hospitality is paralleled by Hamington's definition, as it minimizes the tangible forms of oppression experienced by black and other women, specifically. Hamington argues that the feminist host should be mindful of avoiding the reproduction of actions that reinforce identity via the exercise of power over others. This critique is based on the notion that the language of hospitality, as traditionally understood, is deeply founded in patriarchal discourse that resembles the language of weaponry. Therefore, the proposition is made to shift the metaphoric representation of power from a weapon-like concept to one resembling shared energy. To conduct an analysis of Pembe's domesticity beyond the confines of biological gender roles that traditionally associate women with innate hospitality, and to acknowledge the potential for her everyday domestic life to challenge power dynamics, it is crucial to examine the performative nature of the hospitality demonstrated by Pembe.

The depiction of Pembe's interactions with individuals of British descent in the London-based sequences is predominantly centred around the process of food preparation and eating. Pembe can assume the position of a host via the utilization of food, since it has been shown that the concept of hospitality is closely intertwined with the notion of identity formation through property. According to Hamington, it is commonly perceived that the host possesses a certain resource that may be offered or shared with the visitor (25). Significantly, Pembe's persona effectively modifies the host's role by employing food as a central element for facilitating conversation and fostering a sense of communal sharing. Elias, who assumes the position of her protector at the bakery, has significance in their interpersonal dynamics due to his dual occupation as a chef and his diverse ethnic background encompassing Greek, Lebanese, Iranian, and Canadian heritage. The connection of Pembe carries feminist undertones as it confronts her preconceived views of gender roles, while also facilitating communication and collaboration via the act of sharing a meal.

Pembe and Elias effectively navigate their differences by employing various strategies in their early meetings, such as engaging in thoughtful discussions and

activities centred around the topic of food. The encounter between individuals with differing perspectives has challenged their preexisting ideas, however this does not engender animosity. This concept has resemblance to Hamington's feminist hospitality theory, which posits that the dynamic between hosts and visitors does not invariably result in animosity. The underlying epistemological framework that shapes perspectives on foreignness, as seen in the significant incident at the bakery, undergoes a reconfiguration via the practice of hospitality that challenges patriarchal norms. The consideration of intersectionality is of utmost importance in this context, as the utilization of patriarchal language persistently contributes to the gendering of frameworks that assess distinctions rooted on religion, heritage, or ethnicity.

The key aspect of the association between Pembe and Elias revolves upon the acquisition and dissemination of food and food-related knowledge. The act of sharing such property presents a departure from traditional notions of hospitality, which often include clear distinctions between the host and the visitor. However, it also serves to reinforce the feminist concept of hospitality as a moderated kind of ownership. The floating narrator adeptly transitions between the emotional states of each character, thus conveying a palpable feeling of hospitality. Upon discovering Elias' occupation as a chef, Pembe's emotions become evident: "Pembe imagined him dicing onions or poking at some courgettes in a frying pan. The idea was so odd that she let out a giggle, ... The men she knew would barely enter the kitchen to get a glass of water for themselves, which, now that she thought about it, was also how she had been raising her two sons, especially Iskender" (*Honour* 117). According to Judith Butler's theory of performativity, this passage illustrates how patriarchal gender roles are internalized and reinforced in household settings. Pembe's laughter at the notion of a man cooking reveals the extent to which deeply embedded gender stereotypes are normalized and perpetuated, particularly in parenting, therefore sustaining female domesticity and male supremacy for generations to come.

Pembe's association with domestic labour arises from her maternal duty to create a nurturing environment within her household for her children. The individual demonstrates the capacity to adjust to disparities and modify their conduct to avoid negative consequences for the other person. This is shown in their response to the

situation, where the individual becomes silent and concerned about potentially causing emotional distress. How the narrator incorporates Elias's views serves to illustrate the mutual peculiarity they perceive in one other.

The use of food analogies throughout the narrative has significance as it underscores the role that food assumes in Pembe's representation of conventional domesticity. The bakery assistant's association of food with sickness is a striking juxtaposition to Pembe's portrayal of food as something that is familiar and comforting. The significance of food lies in its ability to evoke feelings of disgust, as Ahmed suggests, due to the subjective nature of taste and touch. Additionally, the act of consuming food introduces a fear of contamination, so transforming food into a source of repulsion and revulsion (Ahmed, "The Performativity of Disgust" 83). The intimate connection between food and the human body is seen in its function in facilitating individuals' ability to act as hosts, fostering a sense of warmth and hospitality. As Pembe enters the bakery, she is in the process of acquiring the necessary components for her son Yunus' rice pudding, which includes orange flower. Preparing a traditional Turkish dessert for her child serves as a means for Pembe to pay homage to her family's cultural heritage and foster a sense of belonging in London for her family. According to Rosello, the concept of being at home is closely associated with the role of being a host and providing hospitality. Rosello argues that the act of offering food as a means of expressing a sense of homeliness is intricately connected to the performance of being a host.

The association between food and emotion in Pembe's hospitality as a diasporic act of establishing a sense of home is fundamentally influenced by gender. The depiction presented by the author illustrates the manner in which migration complicates the role of the 'provider of hospitality' by blurring the distinction between the host nation and the pre-existing population. Traditionally, women are commonly assigned the responsibility of creating a hospitable environment inside the household. The narrative delves into the complexities and contradictions inherent in the concept of hospitality, as shown by Pembe's dual role as both host and guest. This implies that conventional gender roles imply a distinction in experiences, rendering it either impractical to generalize them collectively or mandating the prioritization of

male experiences. This observation implies that prevailing academic discourse on hospitality is intrinsically biased towards a male perspective, however fails to explicitly recognize this bias.

In her latest literary work, *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World*, acclaimed English author Elif Shafak presents a narrative centred around a Turkish female protagonist who engages in introspection regarding her existence mere instants following a brutal demise. The victim, identified as Leila, a sex worker in her forties from Istanbul, was found deceased and disposed of in a waste container located in the dimly lit and damp periphery of the city. Notwithstanding this, during the duration of 10 minutes and 38 seconds subsequent to the cessation of her cardiac activity, her cognitive faculties persist in a state of activity, engaging in introspection and contemplation. The tale, commencing in 1990, offers more than just an exhilarating journey into the intricate life of a sex worker named "Tequila Leila." It also serves as a portrayal of her beloved companions - five marginalized individuals who are regarded as social outcasts in an undeniably hostile culture.

Shafak's imperative lies in giving voice to the marginalized individuals within society, namely those who are considered outcasts, dark horses, and individuals deemed monstrous by their own kin. Leila, in her life has experienced various challenges involving her family. Her father was typical, domineering, and conservative. "Leila soon discovers that almost everything in life is either forbidden to her or predetermined by age-old familial codes" (*10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World* 180). Moreover, she has also encountered sexual abuse in her early childhood. They all were going to trip with their family at a resort in summer and there she has encountered that trauma. The most painful thing about that was that the despoiler was her own uncle. Moreover, after that when Leila tried to tell her family, they did not trust her instead compelled her to marry her uncle's son. That inconsiderate behaviour of her family shook her to core and as a result she rebelled against them and left her home. She has thus already been living a life of ruin. She has confronted an unspeakable brutality at an age so young. That occurrence, nearly unsurpassable to view was the turning moment for young Leila living in vain. "Leila was six year old; her uncle was forty-three" (68).

She embarked on a journey to Istanbul to embrace a new existence free from hardships and adversities. But tragically, her life grew worse after being a victim of sex trafficking. Unwillingly, she had to accept the life of the brothel. Elif Shafak in her novel *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in this Strange World* has highlighted many instances where the protagonist of the novel Leila's destiny was fixed and firmed simply by being born a female in an exceedingly male dominant society. The multiplied and procreated stigma associated to women who have been trafficked for sexual violence is very common in our society and culture. The actual narrative behind the trafficking is overlooked and the bodies are being politicized and treated as trash and disdain. Same has happened with Leila, when she came to Istanbul, unknowingly she was brought to a place and from there she has been made a victim of sex trafficking. She was entirely clueless of anything since she was an innocent girl from a little Turkish village. Her life was confined to the school and home before that. So, she was very naïve about the harsh and bitter realities of life. Her innocence was taken for granted in Istanbul therefore driving her to such an awful location called as brothel. Initially, she managed to escape from the first brothel, but she did not know that where she has reached after escaping is another hell for her. She even gave up attempting to flee after that because it was virtually difficult to do so.

Shafak gives an excruciating and tragic look at the agony of women's minds, bodies and souls chained to, under a society system, marked by standards and fake values. The protagonist of the novel has been treated as an abject subject inside as well as outside of the brothel, rather everywhere. She has been abandoned by her family and relatives. Unluckily always been treated as a sign of dirt, disgust and degradation by the society which is no less than dirt itself. Being a woman in this culture makes one suffer and tolerate abjection at every phase and stage of her life. It is not just about social exclusion or cast out but when a person is being treated in an inconsiderate way and inhumane way, it is all included in abjection. She was not living in that brutal and unkind brothel by choice, that brothel was sort of hell for her. "She tripped, lost her balance, and the liquid he had tossed at her only a second ago hit her in the back. Acid sulphate" (124). That incident took place inside the brothel where her own client tried to murder her, but she managed to survive that attack.

“This place is full of misery” (143) These are the words by Tequila Leila. This line itself is enough to depict her helplessness and despair living in that place.

Nobody knows what the other person is going through or what sort of circumstances he/she has had in their life. Without knowing the minute details of others' life, people judge each other and chaos prevails in society. Leila was treated the same in an improper and unfitting way even when she was not involved in such a profession. She has suffered throughout her life being a woman. Not just in her life but she was ruthlessly murdered just for the fact that she was a whore, a woman who is not like other women. She was killed for no other good reason, and her body was taken to the morgue so that it could be given to her family. However, her family neglected her presence and abandoned her without support or care. “Nope, her parents are in Van. They have been informed, but they refused to claim her. Typical” (192). Although her family was well aware of her past sufferings, they were majorly responsible for destroying her entire life. Their inconsiderate attitude towards the cruelty done by her uncle was no less than any other torture. All that compelled her to leave her house. If at least one of the family members would have supported her or understood her, she would definitely not have left her place.

In *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World* after the heroine has been killed and her last waiting contemplations and recollections enliven the story a young lady whose destiny was fixed, basically by being born a female in an incredibly male-centric culture that consigned ladies to being raisers and handmaidens, except if they set out to get away, at their own danger. Like Leila, they had confronted hardships, persecution, and segregation, and followed ways that drove them to their fates and to one another. They recognized their position in a deceitful world and took advantage of it. At the time when Leila was murdered, many other hookers were murdered in those days in the midnight in the same barbarous and ferocious way. So, keeping the scenario in consideration, The Deputy Police Chief informed the press: “All you good-goody women do not worry. You’re safe. The only ones slaughtered on the streets are whores” (217). This is actually what one can consider being disrespectful to the dead. Just because she is not like other women in society, that is why she has been killed. Even after her death, she faced injustice and inequity. He has explicitly

discriminated rather negated her existence. She was not worthy of having existed according to him. The word “butchered” emphasizes the terrible nature of that individual as well as the horrible death of Leila. “No Islamic funeral procedures would be conducted for this woman. Her corpse would not be cleaned by the next of kin, her hands would not be put softly over her heart in a symbol of everlasting peace” (189).

These lines effectively illustrate the societal decline in the treatment of the deceased individual, highlighting the absence of fairness and dignity in the burial proceedings. The funeral rights of the deceased individual have been unjustly deprived by the oppressive societal norms. Even after her demise, she has not been granted any rights. She has been buried in ‘Cemetery of Companionless’ where undesirables are buried but not with all other people in normal graveyards for every human. This is a novel resolved to focus on the most distanced, those individuals disposed of in Istanbul’s Cemetery of the Companionless. Even during and after her funeral, she has not received the respect that every person is due. The cemetery for the lonely is a potent representation of despondency.

The notion of abjection has been clearly witnessed through the aforementioned description. Keeping in concern the example of Leila, one can understand how heart-wrenching it is to blame others without knowing the actual story. Throughout her whole life, she has not been understood by anyone except her five bosom friends; instead, she has always been criticized, harassed, and disgraced by everyone. There is a disastrous depiction of the manner in which social and strict perspectives contrive to squash a young lady’s soul. This shows how youthful ladies like the protagonist of the novel are caught between strict beliefs of immaculateness and male dreams of degradation. Fleeing from home to keep away from further maltreatment, Leila unavoidably falls into the very threats her dad envisioned he was sparing her from. The outcome is a searing investigation of a culture that professes to ensure the respect of ladies however throws them off with furious energy.

Judith Butler's theory of *The Performance of Intelligibility* has been clarified in Chapter Five, and it may be effectively used to comprehend the gendered landscapes in Elif Shafak's books. The chapter illustrated, through Butler's

perspective, how gender identities are created and maintained by socially acceptable performative activities that establish what constitutes a "recognizable" or "intelligible" identity rather than being predetermined or physiologically fixed. Particularly in light of Turkish patriarchy, religion, and collectivism, Shafak's stories highlight the psychological, emotional, and bodily costs of adhering to—or departing from—these social norms. By frequently negotiating or defying strict norms, her heroes expose the profoundly ingrained systems that control silent deviance and gender intelligibility. Thus, this concluding chapter restates the thesis's central claim, which is that Shafak's fictional universe offers a deep critique of how normativity, power, and agency construct identities while also dramatically extending Butler's theory of gender performativity. The chapter highlights how literature, especially feminist literature, may question prevailing beliefs and envision new ways of being outside the binary, fixed, and understandable gender norms by completing the analysis.

Conclusion

This thesis explores Butlerian performance of gender roles by doing textual analysis of Elif Shafak's selected novels. Starting with a discussion of Judith Butler and other post-structural feminist theorists' dialogues in the Western context, the analysis progressed to examine Judith Butler's performativity theory and Shafak's textual and symbolic representation of concepts like power, masculine economy, and agency in her novels. Elif Shafak's novels primarily concentrate on individuals and physical forms that challenge societal standards, making them marginalized, susceptible, and opposed to change in most of her works. Butler's notion of performativity reveals that a conventional body is constructed artificially. To understand the self-destructive behaviours of the female characters in the selected novels, it was essential to reassess the concepts of vulnerability and resistance, as well as examine the hidden impulses driving their decisions and the theatrical nature of their demise.

The interpretation of Elif Shafak's fictional world revolves around Butler's idea of performativity, which highlights both the subject's vulnerability to outside influences and the enactment of gendered behaviors. Themes of performativity, teamwork, and a reinterpretation of vulnerability beyond simple victimhood are recurrent and reflexive motifs in Shafak's stories, according to a close textual examination. Her female characters are deeply entwined with layers of narrative discourse, where their critical interaction with their socio-cultural environment—and their deliberate or involuntary efforts to change these realities—makes them both powerful and vulnerable to forces outside of their control or agency. However, this vulnerability is accompanied by resistance, since the main characters display a robust psychological resistance to vulnerability both before and following their decision to end their lives.

Butler discusses how mental resistance to vulnerability, desires to avoid being subjected to imposed discourse and authority. Butler also emphasizes her idea of the body. Butler contends that our bodily presence among others makes us vulnerable to the suffering and injury they can bring, which is significant. Moreover, sources of influence can be identified in those who are vulnerable or subject to authority. The

analysis of the novels shows that the body functions in collaboration with others, possesses a public aspect, and is simultaneously personal and not personal, even while it is considered a private space and can be intentionally harmed. From the outset, it is influenced by others and moulded in the furnace of social life, as stated by Butler (*Giving an Account of Oneself* 26).

Shafak's narrative suggests that geography, language, traditions, and history play a part in influencing and reshaping one's identity. It seems complex and smooth. Variable labels are provided due to the diverse array of underlying reasons. The characters in the Shafak's narrative, including Banu, Cevriye, Feride, and Ömer, continually illustrate the impacts of custom, authority, and commerce. Shafak articulates her perspective, which she has consistently reiterated in interviews. Her writings might be viewed as a reflection of her personal opinions regarding individuals, societies, and nations. Her efforts to accommodate various cultures, countries, and lifestyles may result in inconsistencies, leading her to support nationalism, specifically Armenian nationalism in *The Bastard of Istanbul*, while also expressing sympathy for the Armenian people due to their tragic experiences in 1915.

Shafak's bias compromises her neutrality, yet her strong stance against gender-based racism, nationalism, and other contemporary issues is clear in both her fiction and non-fiction works. Our individual inclinations, along with the pervasive influences of mainstream culture, political groups, and advertising strategies, shape our identity. In Shafak's story, the concept of 'social identity' is both inherent and obtained, and it is significantly shaped by factors such as geography, language, and historical context.

Butler argues that norms function as social power structures that establish the boundaries of bodies, lives, and deaths that society acknowledges and classifies. Butler discusses how social norms, such as race and gender norms, vary between 'liveable' and 'unliveable' lives, leading to increased violence and disdain for such individuals, which contradict modern ideas of a meaningful existence. It is well recognized that gender is a social construct. This challenges the process of gender formation. According to Judith Butler, gender is a performative act—a recurring stylization of the body and behaviours influenced by societal norms—rather than a

stable identity. By highlighting the fact that gender is formed through repeated social performances, her performative perspective on gender questions the idea of a stable or intrinsic gender identity. "The repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance" is how Butler characterizes gender performativity in *Gender Trouble*. She develops this concept in *Undoing Gender* and *Bodies That Matter*, arguing that gender is both enacted and limited by material and discursive factors. This thesis contends that Butler's idea of gender performativity exposes the manufactured and inherently unstable nature of gender identity, showing that what is frequently taken for granted is actually the product of societal conventions and repetition.

Butler's reaction to criticism is that gender performativity does not always invalidate all identity claims or gender assignments, leaving some space for gender to be considered a stable identity. Butler disputes the widely accepted notion that gender and sex are separate ideas. The thesis starts by explaining the recognized differences between gender and sex, followed by introducing Butler's examination of these discrepancies. Butler argues that if gender is acknowledged as social construct, then sex must also be considered a social construct. Butler argues that sex is a social construct, pointing to sex reassignment surgery as an example of individuals altering their biological sex to conform to societal expectations (*Gender Trouble*). Therefore, it might be inferred that Butler sees gender and sex as interchangeable. Butler's thesis posits that gender and sex can be used interchangeably, likely to elucidate the distinctions between the two concepts. Butler's argument on the performative nature of gender is shown with an example of how society generates gender. If an action consistently leads to a series of occurrences, she argues that it is performative.

Butler emphasizes the significance of repeating gender-specific behaviours. This approach to defining gender introduces Butler's theoretical perspective, which argues that gender identity is inseparable from gendered actions and that they exist simultaneously. Gender identity is influenced by gendered activities, indicating that gender should not be viewed as a static identity. Butler has recognized and responded to criticism on these flaws, but she remains firm in her conviction that gender is

performative and that her examples are flawed and therefore, Butler also argues that it is not definitively proven that gender performativity inherently challenges all assertions of identity and gender assignments. Therefore, it is logical to consider how gender may be perceived as a stable identity based on the circumstances.

To distinguish the biological aspects of the body from the social and cultural behaviours associated with gender, gender and sex are distinguished from one another. Butler argues that the differentiation between sex and gender is intended to demonstrate that gender is not determined by biological sex. Transitioning from one sex to another does not inherently result in transitioning from one gender to another; there is no definitive correlation between sex and gender. Put simply, there is no need to analyse male bodies to identify as a 'man', and there is no requirement to conform to societal views of the female body to be considered a 'woman' (*Gender Trouble* 142). This contrast argues that gender is a social construct and not as fixed as biological sex (9).

Therefore, within the conceptualized understanding of Butler, it can be surmised that gender and sex are societal constructs and are interchangeable whereby sex is now seen as a cultural norm rather than a biological characteristic. Currently, the prevailing belief in our society is that there are only two sexes - male and female - and individuals are often expected to identify as one of these two categories. Infants born with ambiguous genitalia receive surgery to align their gender identity as male or female and normalize their physical appearance. Some transgender individuals choose for genital surgery to align their reproductive system with their gender identity. Butler believes that sexuality is a result of social construction, where individuals adjust their sexual preferences to align with current social standards.

The selected novels have female protagonists who endure trauma and abuse, have intricate relationships with themselves, and display vulnerability, agency, and power in the context of societal interactions and power dynamics. The novels analysed from Butlerian perspective delve into the malleability of identity and question gender and identity tropes. All these novels demonstrate the significant influence of Judith Butler and postmodern ideas of performativity imposed by society

through various strategies. Butler's beliefs appear to be deeply ingrained in each of these novels.

Therefore, this thesis shows how Butlerian words reveal the female characters' performance of gender. Gender creates itself, similar to how gender performativity theory explores the concept of gender and feminism through repeated displays. The meaning and impact of gender are shaped by its recurring verbal expression. The protagonist's actions are influenced by their perception of their situation from both a societal and personal perspective, leading them to act as an agent in a drama. Butler noted in an interview that the expression of gender is influenced by societal conventions that are beyond personal choice. Butler continues: "Gender performativity is not just drawing on the norms that constitute, limit, and condition me; it's also delivering a performance within a context of reception, and I cannot fully anticipate what will happen (*Gender Trouble* 345).

The selected novels illustrate how one's perspectives and false beliefs may greatly harm them, while also showing a certain form of resistance that involves refusing to merely survive and instead become a catalyst for transformation. Therefore, the assertion that gender is not a personal or deliberate decision is conclusively stated here. While the act of destroying one's body is personal, each individual body is interconnected and significant to society. Society and other individuals are found to be the primary instigators of suicidal conduct, rather than the vulnerable individual who does the self-destructive act.

This study tries to highlight how societal norms assign specific responsibilities and social statuses to women and men despite their equal creation. Currently, as women grow more aware of and object to the burdens in their life, the boundaries are being eliminated. People started to recognize the equality of women compared to men as they joined the workforce and obtained rights such as access to education. Furthermore, women challenged traditional gender roles by becoming financially independent and sometimes the primary breadwinner, leading to a higher level of respect within the household and community. Consequently, men lost their power to dominate women and became accustomed to having equal status with them in all aspects of life. Men's credibility, strength, and persistence declined as women gained

prominence and became stronger, powerful, and decisive in many areas of life, with the aim to elucidate a shift by analysing Turkey and Elif Shafak's works, where female characters are consistently shown as strong while male characters are depicted otherwise.

Turkey is a nation characterized by dual identities and a blending of cultures resulting from its strategic position at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. The country maintains a unique blend of contemporary and traditional customs, together with secular and religious rituals. Although most individuals reside in urban areas, gender norms are significantly shaped by religious beliefs and traditional practices. Turkish society is divided between modernism and patriarchy, despite its liberal inclinations. Religion and patriarchy significantly impact gender roles in Turkish society. Deviation from established norms of conduct is generally disapproved of and could result in severe consequences. Changing the way men perceive women is a requirement of feminist discussion. Feminism encourages women to analyse and break down the self/other duality, which often positions males as the oppressor, the elevated position of the 'self'. whereas women are perceived as the 'other'. Women assert their identities in the male-dominated cultural realm after attaining self-actualization regarding their intellectual, moral, social, and economic rights. Women can assist feminism by challenging the binary opposition between self and other and resisting the exclusive mentality of patriarchal culture. The current research demonstrates the oppression of certain female characters in *The Forty Rules of Love*, such as Ella and Desert Rose, by men. The characters assert their identities as equal to males by openly supporting feminism and speaking out against the exploitation of women. This book narrates two parallel stories situated in different periods and cultural contexts. The main character is Ella Rubenstein, a conventional housewife with two children and a husband who is unfaithful. The core of her existence revolves around her family and the daily responsibilities of her household. Her devotion and work are undervalued. Ella symbolizes women who diligently support their families daily yet are often overlooked and underappreciated. She often prioritizes her family's contentment and joy before her own happiness. Reviewing the book 'Sweet Blasphemy', which centres on the lives of 13th-century poet Rumi and his mentor Shams of Tabriz, causes a significant change in her outlook on life. She starts

questioning the life she has chosen, which lacks passion, love, and self-respect, as she slowly falls in love with the creator of the work Aziz. She challenges societal conventions and abandons the comfort and protection of her life, similar to Rumi. She departs from her family and terminates the marriage that had become an encumbrance to her. She decides to reside with Azziz even though he cannot offer her lasting bliss.

Women characters in Shafak's work operate as intermediaries between different religious systems. Shams interacts with Arab individuals on his spiritual expedition. Travelers included gypsy musicians, Buddhist priests, Christian pilgrims, Jewish traders, Persian painters, and Frankish troubadours. Shafak delves into the obscure aspects of our reality where we create small, fictional worlds that mirror our own with the assistance of text, a pen, and paper. Metafiction is an enchanting phenomenon that arises from ordinary life. The novel *The Gaze* demonstrates that in metafiction, all possibilities exist. Shafak painstakingly creates the characters Sable-Girl and La Belle Annabelle before ultimately destroying them. One may question if B-C vanishes from the protagonist's life or is simply erased from the narrative. The last three chapters depict the characters' unravelling. Shafak immerses her audience in a very new world. She was fascinated by the young man's renowned good looks. Her desire was to view (250). She abruptly released the box, whatever contemplation she had been engaged in. La Belle Annabelle (251) never received any recognition despite having children with vivid hair.

Shafak portrays contemporary male and female figures in their everyday lives by recognizing their shared characteristics, challenges, and components. She focuses more on addressing women's difficulties due to the environment she observes. She believes that social norms are important as traditions and customs hold significance in both Turkish and Armenian society. She discusses the gender constraints and limits that are inherited from parents in both an interview and her storytelling in the book. In addition, one of her essays titled "Authoritarian Fathers, Sweet Grandfathers" reveals that men in Turkish families tend to distance themselves from their family until they reach an age when they may interact gently with their grandkids. Authoritarian fathers in the past were the predecessors of today's benevolent grandfathers. Fathers who viewed displaying emotion towards their children and

embracing their inner child as a permanent indication of vulnerability. Fathers who want to instill a certain level of strictness in their children. They prohibit both themselves and their children from crying for the same reason. Even young children are prohibited from crying, being comforted, or expressing their emotions such as sorrow, worry, anxieties, or desires. They have adopted a worldview from their fathers that defines being a 'man' as always suppressing emotions, no matter how deeply they are felt. Shafak clarifies the typical mistake made by most Turkish people and questions when this tradition of repressing emotions would change. Shafak believes that gender identity is a cultural construct rather than an innate trait. She has the duty of clarifying the difference between coded and natural facts. She believes that humans are inherently capable of experiencing and reciprocating love in diverse ways, but societal norms often hinder this innate capacity. Shafak supports my assertion that the present day has created a vast array of entertainment in which women are the central figures. Women are appreciated in this stimulating setting as it was created with a focus on men's tastes. Because we are brought up in a world where regulations are predominantly set by men. Women have adapted to the system's rules and aesthetic, conforming to them in order to assimilate, which is the most negative aspect of this system. Women unconsciously embrace these concepts and check their reflection to assess their conformity to societal norms. Instead of being essential, it proves to be commonplace.

Shafak depicts a diverse range of women from different social backgrounds, encompassing both conventional and defiant individuals. Her works depict Turkey and the contemporary world. Gender roles have changed, allowing women to move beyond traditional domestic roles and now share or even take over positions of authority previously held by men. By advancing in position, they not only gained control over their roles but also their authority and dignity. Outdated societal practices have led to the emergence of emasculated women and feminized males. People in ancient times started to live in accordance with their ideals.

Elif Shafak's novel *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in this Strange World* addresses the themes of the path to prostitution, violations of women's rights, and child sexual abuse. This study examines the impact of familial sexual harassment on women's

well-being. The narrative tracks Leila's maturation and her encounters with sexual harassment by her uncle. Both personal and private patriarchy significantly contribute to her downfall. Her father, as the patriarchal figure in the family, does not support her, leading her to turn to prostitution. Radical feminists believe that sexual harassment, violations of women's rights, and prostitution are mostly a result of patriarchy due to its establishment of a power structure (Gerassi). Men are considered superior to women due to their possession of authority. Leila is seen inferior due to the power disparity within her family.

Women in conventional family structures are taught to stay away from men outside the home, but they lack the skills and information necessary to protect themselves even in the home. Close physical contact and engagement with uncles, aunts, and other relatives are frequently assumed to strengthen familial ties, according to familial standards. But often, this presumption ignores the dangers that these same relations may represent. Since kids are frequently reluctant to share their experiences of moral or physical transgressions, there is still a significant communication gap between parents and kids. In order to protect children's safety and wellbeing, it is crucial that parents react to abuse or misconduct by providing emotional, physical, and psychological assistance. This emphasizes the need for families to have honest, trustworthy conversations.

Leila's father should have supported her upon discovering her pregnancy. Leila is compelled to leave her residence due to his error. Parents should be empathetic and encouraging. Leila calls her father from Istanbul, but he refuses to forgive her, so she continues working as a prostitute. Parents should exhibit sympathy, encouragement, and communication with their children, while still maintaining a high level of concern for their safety, even in relation to close relatives. This research will facilitate future studies on family dynamics, parental education, parent-child relationships, and the impact of blended family structures. Turkey is a patriarchal nation known for its sexist and homophobic society. Despite the surface appearing open-minded, the underlying patriarchy remains unchanged. In countries like Turkey, age plays a crucial role in choosing women.

Women will not receive societal respect till they reach a more advanced age. Patriarchal societies have a matriarchal structure within the family, where grandmothers are revered and young women are not, creating an intriguing contrast. There is a significant amount of discrimination, both blatant and hidden. Female authors are the ones who notice the pauses. If they are given the chance, those who have never been heard will express their demands. Elif Shafak is a female writer who has utilized her work to advocate for women's rights. She imparted crucial lessons to readers that can aid Turkey and other nations with similar customs in comprehending the pressing necessity for transformation (Özmen and Dönmez). Honour killings are sanctioned homicides justified by tradition, although neither shame nor customs have the power to end a person's life. Pembe's relationship with Elias is considered forbidden and a betrayal while her husband Adem has already left her due to his involvement with multiple women. Her story is deeply poignant and brings up numerous concerns that traditions are unable to completely resolve. Shafak's choice to send Pembe from Turkey to London may have been a method to encourage her to adopt new perspectives and behaviours to escape from certain detrimental traditions of Turkish society.

Turkish communities are free to embrace and integrate particular daily rituals as cultures are designed to evolve throughout time. Embracing the customs of different cultures does not entail disregarding one's own heritage and traditions. Elif Shafak's novels are consistently connected to her diverse interests, such as Istanbul, global politics, mysticism, feminism, women's rights, freedom of speech, and the interaction between Eastern and Western cultures. Her international fan base is broad due to her writing in both Turkish and English. Her novel *Honour* is an exploration of honour killings that prompts a contemplative conversation on family dynamics, love, autonomy, redemption, and masculinity. The story's global subject connects with readers from many backgrounds and lifestyles by appealing to their emotions and surpassing cultural boundaries. It may resonate with women who encounter discrimination and limitations in society, rebellious sons, quiet individuals facing similar challenges, women who have endured physical and psychological violence, and even people in unstable family environments. Shafak does not write novels based on her own life experiences. She does not prioritize herself. She prefers to assume

different identities, embark on adventures, and delve into alternate realms and dimensions. Her smooth shifts between chapters showcase her flexibility as a writer.

In *Honour*, she adeptly transitions the story among many time periods and characters while maintaining the coherence and flow of the narrative. Initially, the reader may feel perplexed by the initial chapters, which are set in several time periods, but as they continue reading, the plot gradually becomes more understandable. Moreover, the story transitions from individual to collective, from personal to societal, and from individual viewpoints to the overarching culture that influences them. The protagonists in the book are oppressed by patriarchal culture consistently. Her writing style, method, and voice exhibit significant variation across different works and languages. In the book “She Adores the City” set in London, the author uses passionate and often exaggerated English, such as the phrase “Ow, can't you shut your bleedin' gob!” (*Honour* 196). The language employed to discuss the complex problem of honour killing is plain and at times engaging. Finally, she portrayed her characters uniquely, ensuring that none of them were simplistic or one-dimensional. Each character, such as Esma, her mother, her brother, and others, adds depth and complexity to the plot due to their varied viewpoints on the world and their own lives.

Shafak endeavours to tackle the inequitable treatment of women in unjust Turkish culture and other patriarchal societies in her works. Women are often silenced and subjugated by patriarchy and gender standards, hindering their ability to live autonomously and prioritize their own enjoyment over societal expectations (Salami and Taheri). Both Ella and Pembe are adversely affected by these behavioural rules. They represent the many women worldwide who suffer quietly through unhappy, isolated, and undervalued existences. Ella demonstrates greater courage than Pembe in overcoming the limitations that hinder her from living a more satisfying life. She begins anew as an independent woman who has no remorse about pursuing her own joy. Turkish women face challenges comparable to women in other patriarchal societies. Shafak emphasizes the importance of altering gender roles for individual fulfilment and equality, particularly in today's advanced societies, as she has always supported the underprivileged and marginalized.

This thesis elucidates Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity and investigates the extent to which gender performativity undermines the concept of gender as a static identity. Gender and sex are clearly separate concepts in queer theory, as commonly acknowledged. Authors concur that sex refers to physical traits, but gender encompasses social behaviour, gender roles, and personal gender identity. Judith Butler proposes that gender and sex could be interchangeable, rejecting the idea that they are distinct notions. She argues that as both gender and sex are constructs of society, they should be regarded with equal importance. She contends that individuals undergoing sex reassignment surgery are attempting to conform to the binary concept of only two sexes.

Butler views sex and gender as interchangeable due to sex being a societal norm. Butler is attempting to analyse the concepts of gender and sex. Gender is a socially constructed concept, as widely acknowledged. Gender norms differ throughout cultures and historical times, indicating varying meanings. The production of distinct gender stereotypes by society is a subject of debate. Butler asserts that gender is performative. This concept is influenced by Austin's interpretation of the term 'performative' and Derrida's assertion that repetition is the most valuable characteristic of the performative. According to Butler, a performative act is one that generates a sequence of outcomes. Gender identity is dependent on gendered actions as gender is performative and actions consistently influence identity. Butler contends that individuals cannot possess a gender identity until they engage in activities that are associated with a specific gender. She claimed that gender is not a static identity. This illustrates how the concept of gender performativity largely disregards gender as a static identity. There was a discussion over Butler's claims that gender is a performative concept rather than a fixed identity. Prosser argues that transgender individuals use the word 'gender identity' to distinguish between the gender they identify with, the gender assigned to them, and the gender others perceive them to be. Butler's idea of gender performativity prompts significant inquiries. She believes that gender performativity and all identity claims, like fixed sex assignment, can coexist. She argues that it is not valid to conclude that gender performativity is incompatible with any gender categorization. These comments may suggest some flexibility in the event of a consistent gender identification. Butler states that if she had additional time

to write about intersexuality and transsexuality, she would currently be working on *Gender Trouble*. Butler states that drag does not always include subversion. Butler did not alter her perspective on gender performativity despite criticism of her writing on transgender individuals and drag performers. How can gender performativity impact the establishment of a consistent gender identity? Initially, gender may not appear to align with established identities. Gender identification must follow gendered actions. Gendered actions and gender identity coexist as gender identity is formed via the repetition of behaviours.

Considering Butler's rebuttal to criticism regarding gender identity, there is a possibility for gender to be viewed as a stable identity. Shafak contends that queer theory does not challenge identities or assertions of identities that are determined by gender. An identifying claim regarding a stable gender should not be dismissed. This indicates that gender can still serve as a relevant identity for certain individuals and it can be invariably concluded that Shafak has assimilated the ability to see extremes with a unifying approach, merging diverse subjects into a cohesive whole. She emphasizes the importance of every perspective, objectively and without bias. Her portrayals of authority and power systems are comprehensive, encompassing all voices of public or private life, social or political identities, and local or global existence. As a writer, she has realized the significance of avoiding restricting oneself to a specific perspective or mindset. She thoroughly explores a particular topic by taking on several perspectives, providing the reader with a comprehensive view of the subject.

Shafak like Butler upholds a feminist poststructuralism by validating that there is an affinity between subjectivity, language, social institutions, power and agency. Since it is difficult in conservative societies like Turkey to talk about sexual crimes therefore Shafak uses her pen to raise her concerns about such issues. She is equally worried about transgenders, gays, lesbians, LGBTQ etc. Her outspokenness becomes unique because she is well aware of Islam's stand on such issues. It is pertinent to mention that religion plays a pivotal role in most of her novels. Social rituals and scriptures are conceived by history, society and religion in Shafak's fictional world. Shafak believes that "Istanbul inspires, energises and suffocates me simultaneously".

Although Shafak's female protagonists outnumber her male protagonists but that does not mean that she is not bothered about her male characters. She like a true poststructuralist uses multiple person narratives and gives ample scope to her male characters to express their points of view like Iskender Toprak. She does full justice to the detailed descriptions of her male victims of patriarchy.

Shafak's works prove that the traditional system of values and the repeated practices and interactions of the genders in the society give rise to masculine signifying economy. Gender inequalities and gender discrimination are a result of the conservative and traditional gender practices prevalent in the society. The genders that do not conform to the traditional system of genders are considered deviants and abnormal. Since most of Shafak's characters belong to Muslim Turkish society therefore power is yielded by religion and patriarchal authority while some of the novels are set outside Turkey, but it is religion and patriarchal authority that dictates the power. She holds the patriarchal society responsible for female subjectivity. Shafak underlines the value of resistance for overcoming subjectivity and for total female autonomy. Shafak's characters take purposeful actions and purposeful decisions to take control of their lives socially, economically and politically. Shafak's agency mostly comprises of the deprived in the society.

Shafak is the voice of all marginalized people in the society like the dwarf man and his overweight girlfriend (*The Gaze*), Nostalgia Nalan who is a transgender, Zaynab who is a dwarf, Humera who is an overweight singer (*10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World*). Through her body of works Shafak not only questions gender discrimination but she also highlights the issues of body image and desirability. Regarding her views on agency and power Shafak is more or less on the same page as Butler. Shafak asserts that stereotypes are the power holders in the society who create unique behaviours, attitudes and a rigid belief system that risks the marginalized in the society.

Shafak inquires not only issues regarding minorities, male and female victims of patriarchy and people with physical disabilities but also themes like rape, incest, honour killings and virginity tests. Masculinity also plays a significant part in shaping the identity of women characters in Shafak's heteronormative matrix. She further

holds masculinity responsible for reducing women to merely as reproductive beings and recreational beings for men. Shafak's Turkish conservative society wants the performance of femininity in accordance with the Turkish cultural norms and any breach in this performance is seen as a reason for social stigmatization and social exclusion. Shafak holds the dynamic relationship between the individuals and their surroundings responsible for the construction of gender roles and at the same time reinforcing the expected behaviours suitable for each gender. It is not only familial and societal pressures but also religious pressure to conform to the expected gender behaviours that are felt by Shafak's characters. Shafak shows how the victims of incest and rape are emotionally distressed and traumatized because they are silenced by their own families.

Shafak's characters are players for whom gender is an act. These acts or performances are so repetitive and stylized that players begin to think of them as natural and normal. Any abnormality is dealt with strictly by the society and sometimes with violence. Therefore, one may safely say that Shafak's contention that gender is an act is Butlerian in essence. Shafak's plots weave a landscape which is culturally diverse and wherein the construction of identities and the need to conform to societal expectations is enacted. One may conclude that through Butlerian gender performativity Shafak's novels trace the navigation of the performative aspects of gender construction tussling with the power structures and power discourses and at the same time showcasing the fluidity of self-expression.

Butler's main contention is that gender identity is not fixed but it is an act which is constructed through repetition. Shafak's characters may be seen often clashing with established norms of the society regarding gender roles and questioning the conservative binaries and at the same time investigating the fluidity of gender expression. Shafak's characters often resist and subvert the traditional gender roles and through her narratives power structures are often questioned and offer an alternative vision of social change and transformation. Shafak's novels show an excellent study into identity, performativity and agency.

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List of Publications

Journal Name	Indexed	Paper Title
Forum for Linguistic Studies	Scopus	Linguistic Constructions of Gender Performativity in Elif Shafak's Selected Fictions

List of Conferences

Conference Name	Organizer	Paper Title
8 th Asia International Multidisciplinary Conference 2024	Dr. Muhammad Imran Qureshi	Reading Gender Politics in Elif Shafak's Forty Rules of Love
One Day Multidisciplinary Conference on Contemporary Trends in Humanities, Commerce and Basic and Applied Sciences & Charting Sustainable Development	IQAC M. L. Dahanukar College of Commerce	Butler and Performativity