

**Reconstructing Women Identities in Diaspora in  
Elif Shafak's *The Island of Missing Trees* and  
Etaf Rum's *A Woman is No Man***

إعادة بناء هوية المرأة في الشتات في رواية إليف شفق "جزيرة الأشجار  
المفقودة" و رواية عطاق رم " المرأة ليست رجلاً"

**Prepared by**

**Lara Abdulhakeem Aloseli**

**Supervised by**

**Dr. Nasaybah Walid Awajan**

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**Department of English Language and Literature**

**Faculty of Arts and Educational Sciences**

**Middle East University**

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## Authorization

I, **Lara Abdulhakeem Aloseli**, authorize Middle East University to provide libraries, organizations, and individuals with copies of my thesis when required.

Name: Lara Abdulhakeem Aloseli

Date: 17 / 01 / 2024

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### Examination Committee Members:

Name	Workplace	Title	Signature
1. Dr. Nasaybah Walid Awajan.	Middle East University	Supervisor	
2. Dr. Nisreen Tawfiq Ibrahim Yousef	Middle East University	Internal Examiner – Committee head	
3. Dr. Wajed Rasmi Al Ahmad	Middle East University	Internal Examiner	
4. Dr. Amjad Salem Alsyouf		External Examiner	

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## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to my dearest Sedu Ziad Al Haimouni.

May Allah have mercy upon his pure soul and place him into havens

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**Abstract**

The study contributes to the understanding of women's identities in diaspora, shedding light on diverse perspectives that are associated with different regions in Elif Shafak and Etaf Rum's novels *The Island of Missing Trees* and *A Woman is No Man*. Both novels are analyzed through the lens of postcolonialism and feminism. The significance of the study lies in the fact that it is original in terms of analysis, as the researcher tracked the factors that influenced the reconstruction of women's identities in diaspora from the first generation to the third generation in both novels. It is worth mentioning that the two novels have not been tackled, in this approach, by any researcher since they have recently been published.

**Keywords:** Keywords: Postcolonialism, Colonialism, Diaspora, Displacement, Identity, exile, Identity Crisis.



## إعادة بناء هوية المرأة في الشتات في رواية إليف شفق "جزيرة الأشجار المفقودة" ورواية عطاق رم "الامرأة ليست رجلاً"

إعداد

لارا عبدالحكيم العسيلي

إشراف

د. نسيبة وليد عوجان

### المُلخَص

تساهم الدراسة في فهم هويات النساء في الشتات، وتسلط الضوء على وجهات النظر المتنوعة المرتبطة بمناطق مختلفة في رواية كل من الكاتبتين إليف شفق وعطاق رم "جزيرة الأشجار المفقودة" و"المرأة ليست رجلاً". حيث قامت الباحثة بتحليل الروائيتين المذكورتين من خلال منظور ما بعد الاستعمار و منظور النسوية. وتكمن أهمية الدراسة في أنها فريدة من نوعها من حيث التحليل حيث قامت الباحثة بتتبع العوامل التي أثرت في إعادة بناء هويات النساء في الشتات من الجيل الأول ووصولاً إلى الجيل الثالث في الروائيتين المذكورتين. وإنه لمن الجدير بالذكر بأن كلا الروائيتين حديثتي النشر ولم يتناولهما أي باحثٍ منذ صدورهما بهذه الطريقة.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** ما بعد الاستعمار، الاستعمار، الشتات، التهجير، الهوية، المنفى، أزمة الهوية.

**CHAPTER ONE**  
**Background of the Study**

# CHAPTER ONE

## Background of the Study

### 1.1 Introduction

Multicultural writers, who represented women in diaspora serve as an interface between the East and the west thereby, many novelists tend to draw attention on the controversial identity issues, and its problematic complications that are faced by women in diaspora, and suggests how to cope with multicultural societies in order to avoid the loss of identity. Such novelists are courageous soldiers, whose duty is to stay on the borders and fight with their pens and papers any controversies and complications that resulted from the gloomy and harsh history that both cultures experienced by highlighting issues, raising awareness and celebrating differences as they collect rather than separates. Nonetheless, the experience of being exiled from homeland can be challenging, yet one shall not give up their true identity nor surrender to being a follower, but one should be open and receptive, thoughtfully, by being individually unique as a drawing compass, were part of them is statically rooted in one's true identity and celebrating its own culture where the other part is constantly moving, drawing an unlimited circle, travelling and connecting different cultures. It is not always necessary to live the actual experience, sometimes it is enough to read about it and experiment it through fictional characters. This thesis examines the reconstruction of identity issues that women are exposed to in diaspora, it deconstructs the issues, highlights the conflict points, raises awareness towards this group of women and answers the raised questions. At last, Chekhov (1904) famous saying says: "it is You are confusing two notions, the solution of a problem" and "the correct posing of the question". Only the second is essential for the artist." And that

is a responsibility that the researcher takes of this study, to track the factors that directly impacts, affects and influence the construction of women's identities in diaspora.

The construction of women's identity in multicultural societies that share a diversity of nationalities, ethnics, religious groups and cultures, such like Turkey and the United States of America, are considered rich contexts of social clashes, where the East and West collide. Therefore such diversity creates a breeding ground of identity and belonging issues.

Being exposed to identity and belonging issues is expected for people moving to diaspora, especially women for the sake of this study, from departure to arrival point. In the light of this fact, since one of the most important pillars in society are women (by examining a different perspective) this study attempts to form an understanding of women in diaspora identities, and of how they were reconstructed through selected works.

Culture, religion, politics, and language are the most essential domains that are effectively related in constructing, developing and perhaps complicating one's identity and their sense of belonging. Describing the situation thoroughly, Akram Al Deek (2016) explains that "the displaced is initially caught between two political, cultural, linguistic, and perhaps religious systems which close upon themselves contradicting each other and prohibiting negotiation". (p.56) One of the displacement complications that Al Deek (2016) highlights in his book *Writing Displacement* the "sense of inferiority" that comes from a "radical discrimination and exclusion" (p.56) which means the strong nostalgic feeling of a familiar society, culture and religion and this feeling is based on the past, and the imaginary image of the present.

The use of these domains came as an attempt to compare, and reveal the underpinnings of the identity issues that women are exposed to between the Eastern and Western societies, thereby tracking reconstructing identity. Such reaction affected the multicultural societies on the one hand, and overlapped with the feminist trends on the other hand. Castells (2010) explains that, people have experienced a stream widespread of collective identity powerful expressions in the light of Capitalism and Globalization. Such events impacted, and influenced the construction of identity within culture, and throughout history of which resulted reactive movements, such as Feminism; a movement eventually established strongholds of defiance in the name of nation, ethnicity, religion, and family.

In her essay “The New Nomads”, Eva Hoffman (1998) explains displacement by discussing the types of exiles, as refugees, emigres, emigrants, and expatriates. Hoffman (1998) elaborates on the circumstances behind such choice; whether the displaced was exiled by choice; protected and provided with safety elements or was exiled by force; unprovided and unprotected. Howe (2002) argues the dissimilarity between colonialism and migration, explaining the slight difference of how colonialism is a form of immigration, in terms of crossing borders in general, could be either temporary or permanent. Howe, carries on by defining colonialism as “a form of domination policy” (p.31) whereas he defines immigration as the act of passing border for settlement.

Colonialism is a reason for immigration as the exiles are seeking permanent residency across borders since their homeland is dominated by greater powers, where the homeland is no longer a permanent residence but rather a departure point. At this point of conflict, the social structure of the dominated land is troubled and its pattern-less, therefore impacts one’s identity whether the immigration was either by choice or by force.

Identity crisis is immediately contemporary, this generational issue has been immensely relevant yet miserably problematic since the birth of the postcolonialism. Deleuze and Guattari (1980) offered philosophical studies that resulted several related concepts mainly, for the sake of this study, is Nomadology which is the “nomad’s” physical and psychological displacement, represented in whatever impacts one’s identity, such as, boundaries, surrounding environment and the point of arrival and departure.

According to Mahoney (2001), defining identity and the development of identity are both as complex. The diversity in the changes, which modern human life faces is going in an unpredictable pattern which demonstrates that the modern development of identity, and sense of belonging, as a matter of fact, is in a state of instability.

Throughout history, in medieval Europe, for example, the experience of exile was a form of punishment. Dante, lived less than a hundred miles from Florence from which he was banished, therefore it was highly reflected in his work *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri: Inferno (1935)*. He described it as a sort of a death experience, socially and psychologically. This is evidence on how the exile experience effectively participates in one’s identity development, for in the light of this fact, identity highly depends on one’s role in society, and since Dante lost his role in society thereby lost a large portion of himself back there.

Women in diaspora, in specific, leave their home lands for various reasons such as educational opportunities, political instabilities, economic upgrading situations and social circumstances, such as, in some marriage cases women marry an exiled, or in other cases where women marry into a cross-border or socially-unaccepted marriages and some women move with their families and partners to upgrade their economic status or seeking additional nationalities.

Living in diaspora exposes women to, perhaps, what they might believe to be peculiarities, within the new cultural context, that would reconstruct their identities, and sense belonging throughout a set of multifaceted challenges and opportunities. This resembles what Alivin (2017) argues; identity is not simply geographically and mentally constructed for individuals as they are able to adjust and adapt throughout spaces.

In her prementioned essay, Eva Hoffman (1998) reflected on a personal experience in diaspora, as she moved from Poland to Vancouver, Canada at the age of thirteen. She defined identity as “fluid” at times and “nomadic” other times. Furthermore, Hoffman (1998) elaborates on her concept of identity, whom she metaphorically describes as “open square”. It represents the experience of being “open to” and sharing one’s own living across cultures.

It is positive, on one hand, that women may face cultural, social, and linguistic barriers, discrimination or marginalization due to their gender, race, ethnicity, religion, or immigration status, and how that may lead to cultural dislocation and struggled attempts to define oneself within the new cultural context. On the other hand, women in diaspora may also benefit from the new perspectives and experiences. For example, education and career opportunities that were not available in their home country become accessible in diaspora, adding to the latter the ability to form new connections and networks that can support their personal and professional growth.

Jenkins (2008) defined identity by saying “identity involves knowing who we are, knowing who others are, them knowing who we are, us knowing who they think we are and so on” (p.15) which, in terms of identifying identity, is way more complicated than Calhoun (1994), who defined identity as self-knowledge. Accordingly, identity is, in a sense, socially constructed, built from geographical, historical, religious and biological

aspects, in addition to the human urge of self-searching and discovery, thereby, in the light of this study, a multicultural society adds more complexity to the definition of identity based on the variable domains it consists of.

By applying the previous definitions on women's identities in diaspora from departure point, it can be noticed that identity is constructed by the previous aspects, linguistic structures, religious beliefs, and practices and cultural familiarity, whereas the identity crisis ignites the spark at the arrival point due to the social clashes, and the peculiar concepts that women are exposed to at that level.

Hutcheon (1989) argues the matter of Eastern women being identified by Western feminists, and their perspective might create false interpretations based on extreme conclusions or lack of understanding for cultural, social, historical, and linguistic domains. It also adds social and psychological pressure on their identity development, especially for those, who are in exile and in direct contact with the West, and bar none leads to discrimination, and supports what Rushdie (1991) calls "ghetto mentality" (p.13) as a reaction. The crystallization of the feminist movement, and modernity has impacted society, where there was no account for cultural privacy. Thereby, there is no account for the western cultural readiness to digest all of these extraneous values that is believed to be a tyrannical modernity.

Postcolonialism refers to a set of theoretical perspectives, and critical approaches that examine the historical, cultural, and political legacies of colonialism and imperialism. Tyson (2006) states that postcolonial criticism "defines formerly colonized peoples as any population that has been subjected to the political domination of another population" (p.417). It emerged in the mid-twentieth century as a response to the colonial legacy of



European imperialism of what is known as third world communities, and it seeks to critique the track in which colonialism has shaped the modern world.

Parker (2008) points out that postcolonialism stresses on the racial, national, political and ethnical aspects that were affected by colonization. Thereby, postcolonialism as a critical approach examines how colonialism influenced, and affected the colonized community's identity and sense of belonging alongside the prementioned aspects in order to form an understanding on the struggles that colonized communities have faced in order to redefine themselves in the wake of colonialism.

The Postcolonial theory is also concerned with the ongoing effects of imperialism and globalization; it examines how contemporary power relations carries on with the inequalities and injustices that were established during the colonial era. Globalization is one postcolonial contemporary characteristic that is influenced and influential at once for many changes, mainly on the social level.

In his book *Globalization and Identity* (2010), Castells draws attention on the effect of Globalization on one's identity and how is that "... based on empirical experience, we have observed that in the last fifteen years, the development of the globalization process has coexisted with a reaffirmation of different cultural identities: religious, national, ethnic, territorial, gendered and other specific identities" (Castells 2010, p. 89-98).

Postcolonial theorists and scholars have also been interested in exploring how cultural production, such as literature, film, media and art, can be used by experts to determine how the rest of the world see the highlighted event in a way that serves the dominant colonial narratives and representations. For example, after the Islamic revolution in Iran 1979, it came to the European and American attention to cover, portray,

characterize, analyze and given instant courses on Islam in the media in a way that represents it as “known” (Said 1981, p.92).

Bhabha (1994), in his *The Location of Culture*, discusses the way that colonized people and colonizers have taken many of one another’s lifestyle in addition to ways of thinking and described it as hybridity. Bhabha (1994) argues that colonization may affect the identity formation of the colonized as well as their culture in terms of cultural hybridity, in specific and of cultural multiplicity. He came up with the substantial concept of Mimicry, it means when colonized often ends up mimicking their colonizers by adopting their language, social and romantic relationships, educational system, dress codes, music and so on. It is observed that mimicry may be internalized colonization, that the colonized in mentally imperialized therefore this could be an indicator in how effectively imperialism targeted identity. In his book, *the muqaddimah ibn Khaldun*, Khaldun starts the 22<sup>nd</sup> chapter with the following quote: “The vanquished always want to imitate the victor in his distinctive characteristics, dress, and all his other conditions and customs”. (p.196) Therefore, the contemporary identity of post-colonized communities seems to not only be mimicking the colonizers prementioned aspects. According to Barghouti (2022) in his AJ+ YouTube video *Moire and the odalisque*, they, as in the defeated, be mimicking the colonizers’ imagination of them.

As a consequence, the first track of the multicultural literature was caught in the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the United States of America 1960’s, as many authors from different cultural and geographical backgrounds decided to write in other languages, mainly English, rather than to write in their mother tongue. Thereby, it has been a common thought that writing in a certain language demonstrates that the author is addressing readership of that language to convey a certain idea. Such idea,

contemporarily, backfired, in her TED talk, Shafak (2010) highlights the significance of multicultural fictional stories. Therefore stressed on how identity politics is affecting how they are circulated, read and reviewed. Shafak spotlighted the “unhappy” representation of the Eastern, especially Muslim, women in some multicultural works, she argues whether identity politics is labeling authors as a representation of their own respective cultures, or those authors are only expected to write in an informative, poignant style leaving the experimental reading response to the west as if there’s only one targeted readership rather than writing for art’s sake.

Edward Said’s concept of Orientalism is a substantial touchstone to the post-colonial studies, this concepts in concerned with the stereotypical images of the East as constructed by the west based on their anxieties and preoccupations. Said’s orientalism spotlighted the binary opposition of gender between male and female. According to Parker (2008), he carries on elaborating on this idea:

“Orientalist discourse finds qualities in the East that overlap with the qualities that misogynist discourse finds in the feminine (women as supposedly irrational, emotional, promiscuous, seductive, dishonest and lazy), and the qualities it sees in the West overlap with the qualities that it sees in the masculine (men as supposedly rational, dependable, hardworking, and strong. In that sense, colonialism often feminizes the colonized, partly in an effort to masculinize itself.”

(Parker 2008, p.248-249)

Spivak (2009) in her essay, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* explains the term subaltern which refers to people who are less powerful and applies it the view of women of the third world are by the women of the metropolitan world as weak and inferior. The reason

behind this concern of subaltern women by Morris, is her intention of drawing their attention on their individual identity development and self-searching.

Elif Shafak is a Turkish-British author-professor of Creative Writing at the University of Exeter, public speaker, commentator, and feminist activist. She mainly writes in English; her works have been translated into over 50 languages and she's been awarded several literary prizes for her writing. Shafak is also a prominent voice on issues related to women's rights and social justice, and she has been recognized by the World Economic Forum as one of the most influential Muslim women in the world. She has given talks at TED and other international conferences, sharing her insights on the importance of storytelling and the power of literature to bridge cultural divides and foster empathy.

In her selected work for this study, the narrative is set on the divided island of Cyprus, where two families from opposite sides of the conflict are brought together by fate. As they navigate their differences and attempt to understand one another, they also confront the complicated history of Cyprus, and the ongoing political struggles that have shaped it.

*The Island of Missing Trees's* narrative explores themes of identity, belonging, memory, and trauma, and is told through the perspectives of multiple characters spanning different generations and time periods.

Etaf Rum is a Palestinian-American exiled author, who was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1991. Rum is a social justice advocate, and has worked with organizations such as the Arab American Association of New York to support immigrant communities and promote social change. Her work has been widely recognized, including being selected

as a finalist for the Dayton Literary Peace Prize and the National Book Critics Circle's John Leonard Prize. Her writing reflects her own personal experiences growing up in a Palestinian-American household in Brooklyn. She has spoken about the challenges of reconciling the conflicting expectations of her cultural heritage and American upbringing, and how these themes are reflected in her work.

*A Woman is No Man* was published in 2019 and has received critical acclaim for its exploration of themes related to gender, tradition, and culture within the Arab-American community and the ways in which these forces shape the lives of three generation women in the Arab-American community. The novel was a New York Times bestseller and has been widely praised for its powerful portrayal of the intersection of culture, gender, and identity.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The current study aims to explore women identities in diaspora. and examine the issues that these women are exposed to in Elif Shafak's *The Island of Missing Trees* and Etaf Rum's *A Woman is No Man*. It also aims to examine how these women reconstruct their new identities as women in diaspora by tracking the timeline of their displacement since departure point to arrival point taking into consideration the issues that played a direct role into their identity's construction and reconstruction. Both novels can serve as an extension to raise awareness for women in diaspora, and ensure them that they are empowered and cable of coexisting, and belonging without losing their own identity, therefore the researches chose these novels for the diversity in regions and traditions they contain as an attempt to praise a diverse of cultures.

### 1.3 The Significance of the Study

The significance of the study lies in the fact that the two novels have not been tackled by any researcher, up to the researcher's knowledge, since they have recently been published. The contribution could also be added to the fact that the two study tackles the identities of women in diaspora, and come from different regions.

### 1.4 Questions of the Study

- 1- How are women identities examined in diaspora in Elif Shafak's *The Island of Missing Trees* and Etaf Rum's *A Woman is No Man*?
- 2- What are the issues that these women in diaspora are exposed to in Elif Shafak's *The Island of Missing Trees* and Etaf Rum's *A Woman is No Man*?
- 3- How are the identities of these women reconstructed as women in diaspora in Elif Shafak's *The Island of Missing Trees* and Etaf Rum's *A Woman is No Man*?

### 1.5 Objectives of the Study:

This study aims to:

1. Explore women identities in diaspora in Elif Shafak's *The Island of Missing Trees* and Etaf Rum's *A Woman is No Man*.
2. Explore the issues that these women in diaspora are exposed to in Elif Shafak's *The Island of Missing Trees* and Etaf Rum's *A Woman is No Man*.
3. Represent how these women reconstruct their new identities as women in diaspora by the two writers in the mentioned works.

### 1.6 Definition of Terms

**Post-colonialism:** It refers to a historical phase undergone by Third World countries after the decline of colonialism. Guerin, Labor, Morgan, Reesman, Willingham (2005)

**Colonialism:** Kozlowski (2010) defines Colonialism as "a system of direct political, economic, and cultural control by a powerful country over a weaker one" (p.1).

**Displacement:** a removal from a geographical place, or an imaginative space, from a precolonial history; a removal because of colonial past; and a displacement in a postcolonial present. It is also an intense emotional transference that is carried across space and, ultimately, time.

**Diaspora:** "the scattering of the Jews to countries outside of Palestine after the Babylonian captivity or —any group migration or flight from a country or region" (Abuhilal 2017, p. 34)

**Identity:** The way in which an individual and/or group define themselves. Identity is important to self-concept, social mores, and national understanding. Abrams & Hogg (1988) define identity as "one's conception or definition of who one is (one's identity) is largely composed of self-descriptions in terms of the defining characteristics of social groups to which one belongs" (p. 9)

**Identity Crisis:** a feeling of unhappiness and confusion caused by not being sure of what type of person one really is or what the true purpose of one's life is. It is a 11 psychological state or condition and role confusion occurring especially in adolescence as a result of conflicting internal and external experiences, pressures, and expectations, often producing acute anxiety Abrams & Hogg (1988)

**Hybridity:** Homi Bhabha describes the cultural hybridity which comes from the way that colonized people and colonizers have taken many of each other's way of living and thinking (Bhabha 1994).

### **1.7. Limitations of the Study**

This study is limited to the time it has been written. The study is also limited to the mentioned authors and their literary works, *A Woman is No Man*, and *The Island of Missing Trees*. The study and what it concludes with cannot be generalized to other authors' literary works.



**CHAPTER TWO**  
**Review of Related Literature**

## CHAPTER TWO

### Review of Related Literature

#### 2.1 Reconstructing Women Identities in Diaspora

To understand the full picture of a reconstructed identity, we must shed light on representation. Representation, thereby, is one core problematic, critical and philosophical key according to Said (1983). For the representation of one party from the perspective of another party is not necessarily accurate, therefore creates stereotypical images and mere generalizations. The post-Colonial Western literature created such inferior representation of Eastern Women imaging them as oppressed, unhappy, silent and suffering in a patriarchal society. This situation pressured multicultural writers to construct women's characters accordingly; informative, poignant and typical ambivalent sort of representation that is problematized by exile.

If by digging into the literature outcome of the colonial era, of novels, journals, historians' volumes, including visual art work, sculptures and paintings, one can observe that the representation of Eastern women is stereotypically inferior. One of the examples that are found in the documentations that belongs to members of the European Campaigns and orientalist's journals. In his journal, Napoleon's Egyptian Expedition 1789-1801, Moiret Joseph's stated that Eastern Women are not considered attractive in the eyes of European Men, they're covered all over with *Khimar* Hijabs and not approachable. Yet, Moiret mentions his personal romantic story, a sort of forbidden-love themed one, of a Caucasian odalisque whom belonged to a Turkish-Egyptian merchant, and how they fell in love, obsessively with one another, that she asked him to save her and take her to France with him as he refused to do so and goes back home as a heart broken, and thereby a national hero whom failed to save this captivated woman from the darkness of a

conservative community. Many critics assumed that this story is imaginary, yet on the other hand one cannot admit how influenced with the Arabian Tales the story was, it was imitating the style of the very popular collection stories of *Arabian Nights* or what is known as *Alf Layla wa Layla*, in its narrative, from the romantic theme to the sorrowful ending. Maybe Moiret made it up to attract as much readership as possible, nonetheless, it is observed that such story and many similar ones, played an effective role in representing Eastern Women for the West inaccurately; the effect left not only Western men in the form of heroes to Eastern women yet also created a gap between Western and Eastern women making Eastern women inferior.

Literature cannot be excluded from this equation for its influential role, as it is worth mentioning that some Eastern Folk Literature such as *Arabian Nights* impacted the representation of Eastern women despite the fact that it is fictional and has nothing to do with the reality of Eastern women. Al Olaqi (2012) describes Arabian tales as “The fairy Godmother of English novel”. The spread of such English stories in the colonial era was not a coincidence, it is due to the introduction of *Arabian Nights* to the west as the collection was translated to many languages, specifically English, starting from the eighteenth century, nineteenth century and up to the postcolonial era in the twentieth century making *Arabian Nights* the first romantic, prose-fiction promoting Orientalism. Those Eastern and Arabian tales with their combination of the sensual grace of Eastern imagery and fantasy were a fertile soil for English writers such as Samuel Coleridge, Mary Lariviere Manely and Lady Mary W. Montagu, to create their own imaginary illustration of colonized nation’s women or as Barghouthi (2022) describes “How the victorious lustroly desires their spoils”. This stereotypical image was influenced by the previously mentioned literature and arts that were sketched by artists who never attempted

to visit the west, which later on evolved into cinematic works in the early twentieth century.

This particular representation of Eastern Women resulted from the food of literature; imagination and how it effectively reflected socially, politically and psychologically on the Western Perspective on Eastern Women creating an observed ambivalent representation; one of the major issues that some Eastern women face in diaspora is the way they are stereotyped as *Harems* and odalisques who are covered and captivated yet wild and longing to be saved.

As previously discussed, Castells (2010) explained how identities were influenced by the post-colonial era's characteristics such as globalization, the technological revolution and Capitalism that introduced people to a collective identity powerful expression: nationally, politically, religiously and socially. Therefore, such events shaped cultural and historical source formation of identity resulting reactive movements, mainly feminism, that later on built trenches of resistance on behalf of nation, ethnicity, religion, and family for the movement targeted society's most important pillar (women).

Politically speaking, Western Feminism's representation of Eastern Women in the late 1990's effectively shifted the tone of the political discourse internationally, in a biased way that severely deformed the image of Islam; therefore, made it a rich material for criticism and analysis that was targeted by extreme feminists who were interested in unravelling a hidden side in the lives of oppressed women who were claimed to be tied up by the Islamic religious practices. Many feminist activists such as Fadwa El Guindi, Nawar Al-Hassan, and Fatima Mernissi, raised their voices to highlight that Islam, as a religion, has never been the crux of the matter as Arab women have their own feminist characteristics as much as any woman in the world does.

As Mernissi (1975) explained that the stereotypical of the “silent, passive, obedient woman” is not related to the religious instructions of Islam, yet the main issue of this vicious, conflictive circle was Western Feminism’s continuous attempts to remain within the religious text side to side with keeping up with the alien western culture, that in a way backfired on them. This conflict of interest created a sort of contradicted imposed image on Eastern women has effectively reconstructed women’s identity. As Golley (2003) explains that the need of a positive change is not only a Western’s woman need as much as it is any other woman all over the world. Yamani (1996) added that since the late 1990’s there’s been an increase in the number of Eastern Muslim scholar women especially in the field of Islamic Law.

This point introduced Western feminist to Islamic feminism on various forms and contents, and such movement inspired and reshaped Western Women’s Identity, not only locally but also internationally as some Women in diaspora broke this mold of representation on proved the total opposite of it, clarifying the religion is not what is tying them up and it is neither an obstacle nor an issue that prevents their identity development.

Under the umbrella of Foucault’s “Power of Relations” and applying it to this situation of how Western Feminism affected the Identity of Eastern women, it is observed that Western Feminism supplanted Western women by playing both roles of the controlled and the controller leading to the creating of the stereotypical representation of Western women. This point is highly observed through the western novels where the analysis will compare and distinguish the characteristics and the power relations between western and western women.

Philosophically speaking, the term “Power Relations” and how Islamic Feminism has deconstructed the stereotypical, western representation of Eastern women as well as

the all kinds of control and limitations that prevents Western's women identity development. Therefore, in the light of the previous fact, this movement reconstructed Eastern Women's identity positively, as it originally arisen from the ashes of deconstructing the upper authority and its power domination over the lower; as authority and power demonstrates all kinds of domination and limitation of freewill. Foucault (1982) describes power as it "is not a singular relationship between two entities in which one possesses control over the other, but an interconnected web of power relationships in which every body exercises some level of power."

In his *Reflections on Exile* (2001), Said describes exile as "a discontinuous state of being" and "unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home." As identity politics is one major aspect that categorized identities by groups according to their gender, sexuality, religion, ethnicity, nationality...etc. Thus, political identity is zero-sum: what superiors one group is thought inevitably to attack the other group, makes each group believe that wat benefits the "other" is definitely offending "self". Such politics is a form of despair and gender discrimination in the name of holding the interests of one's own group above the other one, thereby, rejects attempts to educate, raise awareness or change the society perspective towards women as a whole, thus creates a state of submission to the status of quo bias and its essentially conservative nature.

Gilligan (1982) emphasizes that women share "a different voice, different moral sensibilities" this notion of female difference is attractive to feminists and non-feminists alike for several reasons, mainly in the light of identity politics, it advocates a withdrawal into the protection of the "self-based" on the celebration of group identity over others rather than acceptance, thereby makes it a politics of defeat and demoralization, creating

a pessimistic and selfish perspective. As a consequence, such point of view would naturally lead to an anti-feminist and misogyny as a reaction, and such situation creates a layer of an extreme complexity, that rose since the start of the feminist fourth wave, sounds as if claiming rights is a state of war rather than awareness and education and this effectively shapes the mentality of groups perspective of women and slowly turns into an ideology.

By Applying the latter for women in diaspora and their identity development, seizing as much as possible for one's self and group, identity politics exposes its complete disregard for the whole from which it has separated, socially, thus identity politics rejects the search for a just and comprehensive solution to social problems it has created. Nonetheless, exile gives room for women to co-exist with the new community and explore new opportunities as well as the space that's offered for them to self-explore and finding. Regardless of the latter mentioned issues. Displacement as an efficient cause and condition to identity reconstruction is correlated to the multicultural, likely conducted theme such as hireath ( a state of nostalgia to a place that either ever existed or never existed before), belonging, home, hybridity and alienation, are all pictured through Elif Shafak's *The Island of Missing Trees* and Etaf Rum's *A Woman is No Man*.

## **2.2. Representation of Identity by Elif Shafak**

The British-Turkish Novelist Elif Shafak is best known for using the themes of identity and belonging in her works as she conducts physical and phycological displacement in most of her works such as *The Forty Rules of Love* (2009), *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2005), *The Daughters of Eve* (2016) and her Latest *The Island of Missing Trees* (2021) which is to be conducted in this research thesis. Elif Shafak has always been recognized for writing about important themes and aspects such as the situations that

women are exposed to in the middle of the Western-Eastern conflicts alongside with many other human right human issues and conditions, mainly political. The *Island of Missing Trees* is not just a love story of a Christian Greek and a Muslim Turkish who moves to England from Cyprus, it is a story about displacement and migration from homeland and how it affected the second generation through the themes of identity, belonging, post-memory, generational and social traumas as well as nature (as a representation of nostalgia and rooting to homeland).

What differs this Novel of others is the Narration. It is narrated through a fig tree as both a character and a narrator which brings out issues on environment and symbols, metaphorically, displacement. Displacement is a major theme in this work as it is highly pictured in *The Island of Missing Trees* as the plot is based on two settings, the arrival point as in London and departure point as in Cyprus, due to a Greek Christian – Turkish Muslim religious conflict in the 1970's that advances into a civil which is the major reason behind the endure of Defne and Kostas.

The Romeo and Juliette of the two cultures who fell in love and departure from the area of conflict off to England. Their arrival to the new home distorts their understanding of self, memory of past and belonging to home which is called by Laxmiprasad (2020) a diasporic tension that is spatial (to be torn between nation and culture) and temporal (split between past and present) And the Narrative that was mentioned before by the fig tree and alternately told between present and past alined with the characters' personal and emotional post memory conflicts. Throughout Defne, it is clearly reflected how problematic the experience of displacement is for her, as she explains how moving across lands does not necessarily mean constructing a new identity in order to gain a promising future for self nor group. She elaborates how painful it is to leave a past behind in order



to move forward. “When you leave your home to unknown shores, you don’t simply carry on as before; a part of you dies inside so that another part can start all over again” (Shafak 2021, P.55)

The Character of Defne has been exposed to many events that pulled her character development backwards, as at the beginning of the story, before displaced, she’s represented as a free-spirited person who fell in love widely despite of religious and cultural boundaries she was continuously exposed to traumas that she never expected to face, as when Kostas left her behind and went off to London, which was her first trauma that was followed by concealing her pregnancy, which was resulted from a forbidden relationship with a Greek Christian, witnessed the civil war, sent her son for adoption, only to learn after that he died. She carried all those traumas from home to, and later on moved to London with Kostas. Although Defne had her daughter Ada in diaspora and was a loving mother and wife, yet she suffers from post-memory and represents decline psychology only to become a depressed alcoholic that is followed by her death as since arrival point to London, all what Defne does is remembering homeland with in gloom and sadness. Within this specific context in the flow of Defne’s diasporic identity, the pain of remembering the past according to Bhabha (1994) that remembering is not quite an act of “introspection” nor retrospection”. It is painful for remembering is not quite nostalgic as much it is hiraeth; trying to remember what was once a homeland that is now corrupt and is never the same as if it never existed, as if Defne is making an effort to collect a disremembering past in order to make sense of the traumatic past. Ramesy-Kurz (2018) explains that memories in the context of forced displacement, like in Defne’s situation, are not nostalgic as much as they are back memories of trauma and violence.

Defne, unlike her husband Kostas, is emotionally and psychologically connected to homeland and since she was forced to leave her homeland all her memories were corrupted with trauma and suffering, and this shock affectively impacted her ability to move on over her past. Defne spent her displacement experience trying to, unconsciously, make sense of her past instead of living up for her future. Rania (2017) elaborates that diasporic communities face a series of an emotional and physical disconnections from their homeland, due to the collective trauma, nostalgia and memory. Through Defne, it is observed that diasporic women, even if they seem to be living a happy life, successful marriage, they are haunted by the idea of 'homeland' for according to Cohen (1997) the idea of 'homeland' constantly forms the part of their unconscious, making sudden instructions from time to another, creating a form of rooted depression.

As for the second generation of women diaspora, the case of Ada, daughter of Defne, suffers from an identity loss for she has always been defined as "the British kid who never been to Cyprus, and who lacks good knowledge of neither her parents' past nor her homeland. After being the teenager who witnessed the death of her mother, and since her family only consisted of a father and a mother, Ada's identity is conflicted with such event for her memories of her loving and caring mother are also engaged with her, indirectly witnessing her mother's suffering from the past, leading for Ada to lose herself of sense and even though she was born and raised in diaspora she also, like her parents examines the cultural and national tension; diasporic tension. And that what encouraged her curiosity of self-finding and identity reconstruction throughout the novel.

### 2.3. Representation of Identity by Etaf Rum

*A Woman is No Man* is Etaf Rum's debut that covers multicultural identity through three generations of women interacting together across Palestine and America. And since gender takes a major part in constructing one's identity, Etaf Rum explores how people naturally behave according to their gender (women and men) and how both differ from one another depending on their sex. Rum highlights the differences between gender and sex as ideas and how they're correlated at the same time. For genders play their own role in society according to certain standards "social constructed role, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women. "According to WHO (2011).

Gender Stereotyping is one issue that collocates conducting identities in terms of gender, as they can hold both genders back in defining their identities for Martin and Dianella (2011) describes gender stereotypes as people's beliefs of men and women's characteristics. And such belief can limit one's life's opportunities through culturally restrictions and thereby impacts the development of one's identity for gender becomes as a role of one based on what they do rather than what someone is argues Butler (1999)

*A Woman is No Man* portrays a common social rule into dividing roles between masculine and feminine through three generations of women as it starts with Isra's mother back in Palestine, homeland, and represents her as silent, obedient, oppressed under the domination of male power, which is reflected in her conversations of raising of her daughter Isra, who was treated as a burden to her family, always criticized harshly for reading and doing activities to her liking, called with bad names and expressions, being oppressed by her father who forces her into marriage.

Isra marries into an arranged marriage to a Palestinian guy, Adam, who lives in Brooklyn, America with his family. Isra is exposed to a multicultural society with a bit of religious contradictions and social morals at arrival point to her new home, yet women's behavior is not much different, with the same expectations and role; household, preparing meals, raising children holding the same silence and obedience to her in laws and husband, just like she was told to do so back home. Isra has four girls with her husband Adam, who starts hating her with each daughter that comes, desiring a boy, whom she's being blamed for not having. Such image is stereotypical for patriarchal communities as it is observed that instead of coexisting with the American society, Adam's family refused the engagement among other communities that aren't similar to theirs. Many other stereotypical images were portrayed throughout the narrative through dress code, food, behavior and role which played a major role in forcing the identity development of each member of their community, refusing anything new. It is observed that such act of decline is an act of ignorance as well as stereotyping for it comes from a series of inherited generalization and that is exactly what the novelist was all about in her novel. As the third generation female Deya, Adam and Isra's eldest daughter tries to break free from their communities' molds and asking to be educated, speaks her mind, makes decisions.

**CHAPTER THREE**  
**Methodology**

## CHAPTER THREE

### Methodology

#### 3.1. Method

The researcher approaches the two novels, *Elif Shafak's The Island of Missing Trees* and *Etaf Rum's A Woman is No Man*, using Feminism and Postcolonialism. Moreover, the researcher relies on Edward's Said Orientalism's, and his discussion of the stereotypical representations of the Orient/ East.

Postcolonialism can be defined as a literary theory that deals mainly with literature that was produced in "third world" countries that witnessed the historical phase that declined colonialism, by authors who are dealing with the concept of colonization and the colonized people. Guerin (2011) Furthermore, this theory reflects on the west's misrepresentation, sufferings experiences and realities of the colonized as an attempt to support the colonizer's superiority by creating and inferior image of the colonized. Moreover, Postcolonialism is considered with the efforts and attempts of the colonized communities, that are made in order to regain what was invaded by the colonizer, including their national identities and their history (Mapara 2009).

Postcolonialism is also considered with the colonized countries' national culture at the point of the colonizers' departure. Moreover, postcolonialism examines the idea of power in terms of usage and measurement among nations for the purpose of control and dominate. In the light of this fact, power can be demonstrated as politics itself Mathpati (2020).

Edward Said, a pioneer of postcolonial and area studies, has served the Academic field with noted contributions with *Orientalism* which was observed for its added,

significant, value that was beneficial for scholars and intellectuals, internationally. Hence, the development of the Postcolonial Theory is credited to Edward Said's Orientalism as his introduction to such controversial concept has widened the horizon of the theory itself alongside area studies. In his book, Edward Said elaborates on the relationship of the East and the West in terms of definition, domination, impact and influence based on many aspects. Furthermore, Said reflects on the different stereotypical images of the East or as he calls "the orient" and explains how such images were constructed by the West whom he calls "the occident" to serve certain, dominant purposes. In addition to the latter, Said believes that very usage of terms "East" and "West" was not addressed, naturally, for there's no Master without a servant as well as the servant would not be calling themselves so without addressing the dominant part as a master, thereby, both were addressed as East and West for domination purposes in terms of civilization, rationality and degree of superiority. Said (1979) states that the relationship between the Orient, the East, and the Occident, the west, is based on the domination of the West, which played the major role in constructing both cultures ideologies, linguistic structures and basic distinctions, such misrepresentation of the East gives it false, inferior, exotic and backward characteristics. Whereas they perceive and portray themselves as powerful, educated, civilized and superior. Said (1979) believes that the Westerners forced themselves on taking the responsibility to speak, and act on the behalf of the Orient. Furthermore, Orientalism emerged on the contrasts between both nations. Said in his book sheds the light on the discrimination and prejudice against the West as, the previously mentioned differences were shaped and framed to create this gap between (first and third world nations) to justify the (civilized) domination of the West, therefore, rightfully gain the superiority over the East

Feminism is a literary theory is mainly considered with the identification and representation of women as an individually, important and valuable pillar of society. Feminism examines the issues and representation of women among all fields as well as in different literary works by exposing people to the female issues, how they were dealt with and introduced women to their rights by encouraging them, globally to stand out and speak up for themselves. Moreover, Feminism is a political approach, as well, as it is considered with women's rights in different life aspects Guerin (2011). As this movement seeks to achieve equality between both genders Waugh (2006). Feminism enables women and help them to stand out for their independence socially, politically and economically as well Walters (2005).

### **3.2 Summary of Elif Shafak's *The Island of Missing Trees***

*The Island of Missing Trees* (2021) is a novel by Elif Shafak that takes place in Cyprus in the 1970's, the homeland of the main characters then shifts to England, the new homeland due to a civil war in which took over Cyprus between Muslim Turks and Christian Greeks. The novel is a story of identity reconstruction, food and nature as it is narrated by the last fig tree from Cyprus that was carried all the way from home to London. The two young couple, Defne, a Muslim Turk, and Kostas, A Christian Greek, unlike he whole country, fall in love beyond, religious and culture boundaries. Kostas' mother sends him to England in order to break the forbidden, love, relationship, which ends by leaving pregnant Defne home as she faces the conflict, sends her son for adoption and figuring out later that her son dies. Trauma after another makes Defne live in a state of shock, fear and decline, trying to make sense of the violent, traumatizing events which she has been exposed to.



Kostas devotes on getting back with Defne and takes her to London, England. The couple marries in the new homeland, living a loving, happy and successful marriage. They have a daughter in exile, Ada, who is suffering from identity loss issues alongside her curiosity of her parents' past so she can have a clearer definition of herself instead of being called "the English kid who's never been to Cyprus". The plot twists when Ada is introduced to a relative, her aunt. Who answers some of her curious questions and sends her off to the journey of self-finding.

### **3.3 Summary of Etaf Rum's *A Woman is No Man***

*A Woman is No Man* is a novel by Palestinian-American author Etaf Rum, published in 2019. The novel tells the story of three generations of Palestinian women living in Brooklyn, New York. The story mainly focuses on the lives of Isra, a young Palestinian woman who is married off to a man named Adam, and Deya, Isra's daughter, who struggles to understand her family's past.

Isra is forced into an arranged marriage with Adam, a man she barely knows. She moves to the United States with him and his family, hoping for a better life. However, she soon realizes that her husband is abusive and controlling, and her mother-in-law, Fareeda, enforces strict traditional values on the family. Isra's only solace is her love for books and her desire to learn.

Deya, Isra's daughter, is now a teenager and is expected to follow in her mother's footsteps by getting married and starting a family. However, Deya is curious about her mother's past and begins to uncover family secrets. She learns that her mother was not the only one who suffered abuse at the hands of her husband and his family, and that her grandmother was also a victim of domestic violence.

As Deya struggles to reconcile her family's past with her own future, she must decide whether to follow tradition or break free from it. Ultimately, she finds the courage to confront her family and demand answers about their past, paving the way for a brighter future for herself and the generations to come.

Deya keeps confronting her grandparents, Fareeda and Khalid of the truth behind the death of her parents as she had no clue, she was being told that they died in a car accident and that her mother was haunted by Jinn. Deya doesn't buy it and starts digging in the past of her family with the help of her Aunt Sarah. Finally, Fareeda, her grandmother gives up and hands Deya her mother's letters from where she finds out how desperate her mother's life was.

Deya finds out that her father murdered her mother, then killed himself for the whole family believed that Isra was haunted by Jinn which was an excuse for Adam, her husband, to bloody beat her. Isra decides to run away with her daughters, takes them to the subway, telling them they're going on a journey to hide the painful truth from them because they were too young to understand.

That is the point where Deya decides to make decisions of her own, applies for college and take responsibility of her own life, away from the domination of her grandparents and closed society.

The novel explores themes of cultural identity, family, love, and the challenges faced by immigrant women in a patriarchal society. It offers a powerful and emotional glimpse into the lives of Palestinian women living in the United States and the struggles they face in reconciling their traditional values with the opportunities available to them in a new country.

**CHAPTER FOUR**  
**Analysis**

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Analysis

This chapter discusses the representation of women, the issues that they face and the reconstruction of their identities in diaspora in Elif shafak's and Etaf Rum's novels *The Island of Missing Trees* and in Etaf Rum's *A Woman is No Man*.

#### **4.1 Women's Representation in Diaspora in Elif Shafak's *The Island of Missing Trees* and in Etaf Rum's *A Woman is No Man*.**

It is worth mentioning that both novels represent the experiences of women who were uprooted from their homes and forced to adapt to a new environment. Both novels share an element in which serves this study profoundly, they revolve around the characters of teen girls who represent the second diasporic generations in the light of their mothers' struggles. The timeline of both plots tracks the reconstruction of their Identities, from filiative to affiliative, in diaspora throughout multiple social, political and historical events.

Representation as an independent concept has been conducted, through time, in the post-colonial field in Said's *Orientalism* and was criticized, contemporary, in Hallaq's *Restating Orientalism* alongside others whom agrees with him (in the light of modernism and its subdomains such as deism, nature and capitalism.) When Said 1979 elaborated in his *Orientalism* on the concept of representation, he tracked 'representation' historically, at first, starting from the Greek Empire Ascending to Napoleon's crusades. Therefore, Said explains the concept further by employing evidence from Western literature in order to demonstrate the idea that representation is a Western "system" that is constructed to misrepresent the "Orient" by comparing the East subjectively to the West. Said (1979) justifies the latter "In other words, representations have purposes, they are effective much

of the time, they accomplish one or many tasks” (Said 1979, p.273). Thereby, in the light of this fact, ‘representation’ in its essence is a process where, according to Said, the West defines the East in order to serve a purpose, therefore, the purpose as the base structure is served by the super structure: the representation of a person or group of people, an event...etc.

However, Hallaq (2018) in his book *Restating Orientalism* discussed the East and the West in terms of structures in the light of Modernism, Sharea’ and Sufism in a critical approach of Said’s orientalism. Hallaq (2018) claims that Said’s perspective lacks depth; “lacks a vertical dimension that delves into the depths of a particular structure of thought that is more than a generalized or transhistorical phenomenon.” (Hallaq 2018, p.18). This commentary of Hallaq’s was meant to target the point where Said tracked representation throughout history starting with the classical era till the colonial era, since the world is introduced to further concepts and events, such as modernism, which is in continuous and rapid evolve. It is worth mentioning that the argument in this point is not substantial but rather reconstructive of the matter of representation in general. Hallaq’s mentioning, in his book, of Walter Benjamin and Louis Althusser brings a significant perspective to the table in terms of Western-Eastern representation.

Theoretically speaking, by applying the prementioned Althusser’s principle on women’s identity, where in the diagram it takes place at the ‘base structure’, thereby the experience of diaspora is the superstructure. Naturally, it would result according to the domains that affected the superstructure (politics, journalism and media, literary, mental health, emotions, society and culture).

In *The Island of Missing Trees*, for example, Defne, was and disowned by her own family when she decided to marry Kostas. Perhaps her decision was self-centered to some

readers, based on their cultural and religious backgrounds, as much as it may have not been to others, but later on in the narrative, her life revolved around her own family in diaspora and that was due to the feeling of abandonment that she promised not to pass to her own daughter. Moreover, the author's purpose of writing and constructing such characters, surely, must have a purpose. Women empowerment and challenging gender role standards in patriarchal societies is one, love is love and is free of boundaries is another, but shedding light in political, social and environmental issues throughout the narration of a personified tree that resembles roots and home, is an ultimate, skillful and cleverly constructed representation of a character.

On the other hand, Isra's experience in the *A Woman is No Man* was pretty similar, in terms of family abandonment, as they have lost connection since forcing her into marrying Adam, where in diaspora she also experienced motherhood, all gathers into loneliness. The novel's exploration of the mother-daughter dynamic is particularly poignant. It underscores the complexities of love, sacrifice, and hope that intertwine the lives of its female protagonists. In Fareeda, we see the embodiment of tradition, and through Isra and Deya, we witness the evolution of thought and the yearning for change. They, Defne, Isra and even Fareeda, all share the universal maternal desire: to provide a better future for their children.

Shafak's *The Island of Missing Trees*'s narration consists of six parts, and each part is divided within few narrations; the fig tree and a third-person narration which are divided into one prologue and six chapters. In addition to that, the title of each part is related to elements of nature: *Island*, *How to Bury a Tree*, *Roots*, *Trunk*, *Branches*, *Ecosystem*, and *How to Unbury a Tree*. The titles represent the content of each part and show how nature contributes a significant element to the story.

Such narration technique makes it more open to readership to draw their own conclusions and interpretations as not hearing the characters' voices directly creates a variety of intakes, therefore, a variety of outtakes; each reader to their own perspective based on their own experience. It is worth mentioning that a multicultural author like Elif Shafak holds a layer in this work that argues the impact of politics on fiction or the other way around. In her TED talk, *The Politics of Fiction* (2013), Shafak reflects on a personal story of hers in migration as a kid in a multicultural classroom and talks how all the kids were treated as she calls "representative foreigner." She adds "We were like a miniature United Nations, which was fun, except whenever something negative, with regards to a nation or a religion, took place." This interprets that the author wants to draw attention on how even the smallest, most simple events or conversations can turn political in a glimpse of an eye. In the novel, the author builds a narrative inspired by that personal story as the history teacher stresses on the idea of learning one's past.

"Jason, sitting in the front row, interjected. 'So if we interview a Nazi criminal, shall we be nice to them?'

Mrs Walcott sighed. 'Well, that's a bit of an extreme example. No, I don't expect you to be nice to that sort of person.'

Jason grinned, as if he had scored a point'" (Shafak 2021, p.21)

The Previous quotation demonstrates that multicultural authors who experienced displacement and reflect on their own identities in their works perhaps consciously and perhaps not. Representation of characters is what matters more in terms of writing in a second language. This matter is further discussed in in the current chapter.

From the very few pages of *The Island of Missing Tress*, it was mentioned that the Kazantzakis family is a weird one. The mother, Defne, was described as a woman of peculiarity who struggled with alcoholism, trauma of displacement and abortion as well as homesickness to Cyprus. Defne did not only face the challenges of living in a patriarchal society, but also grappled with the complexities of displacement and exile.

The fig tree captures the complexity of the Kazantzakis family. It gives a metaphor and compares a family with a tree, and how intergenerational trauma runs in the family

“If families resemble trees, as they say, arborescent structures with entangled roots and individual branches jutting out at awkward angles, family traumas are like thick, translucent resin dripping from a cut in the bark. They trickle down generations” (Shafak 2021, p. 128).

According to Kostas, Husband of Defne in the novel, using a tree as an analogy, people are of three groups based on what they see in a tree, the first group where Kostas belongs for, he first notices the “trunk”. Defne belongs to the second group whom seek freedom for she first notices the branches. Meryem, Defne’s sister belongs to the third group for she is concerned with the roots, and roots represent traditions and norms. Kostas believes that his daughter, Ada, is at a very unique position as he says: “You spot a tree and you want to connect the trunk and the branches and the roots. You want to hold them in your vision ...” (Shafak 2021, p. 314).

Kostas highlights the idea that Ada as a second generation, connects the past and the present, in other words, connects the traditions of the homeland and the values of the new land in the next quotation from the novel:



“That is what migrations and relocations do to us: when you leave your home for unknown shores, you don’t simply carry on as before; a part of you dies inside so that another part can start all over again.”

(Shafak 2021, p.55)

Through Kostas and Defne the author attempts to explain how moving to a new land is not simply gaining a promising future by constructing a new identity, but it also the painful experience of leaving behind parts of themselves in the past in order to move forward to the future.

Defne is the rebellious young adult, the free person whom become a prisoner of their own memories and trauma of war and displacement. She is also the loyal lover, a selfless wife who becomes a supportive, empowering, loving mother of her only child. In the novel, Ada remembers when “She once said, half-jokingly, that she was too rebellious to be a good mum, too motherly to be a good rebel” (Shafak 2021, p.23), and Ada thinks to herself that her mother was a “good mum – and a good rebel” which foreshadows how Ada’s character would grow to become later in the novel.

Defne’s character is represented through her decisions, her marriage, family, displacement, memory and trauma. Becker and Ferrara (2019) argue that forced migration can have distinct consequences for migrants themselves because of the forceful nature of the displacement experience as well the loss of possessions and homes against their own will. The tension between past and present is resulted from the Kazantzakis family’s displacement, and it is an interesting aspect to be examined in the construction and reconstruction of Defne and Ad’s identities through first and second generations. Both characters cope with the tension between past and present differently, in terms of immigration and emigration “with an emphasis on the prefix (-im)” to emphasize the

place they arrived at, as opposed to the place they emigrated from, and by which their identities were predominantly influenced and shaped”, explains (Al Deek 2016, p.121).

Ada is more than a round character, as through her, Elif Shafak explores how alienation and identity crisis are experienced by young women of second-generation in diaspora. Ada embodies her mother’s homesickness, for her name in Turkish means Island, referring to the island of Cyprus. And her knowing that her mother got pregnant with her in Cyprus yet had her and raised her in London, such circumstance grew not only her curiosity towards homeland but also created her hiraeth; a sort of homesickness for a home that exists, has never existed or one’s never been to.

Ada’s main identity crisis revolves around her confusion that she puts so much effort to seek answers to, so she questions “was it possible to inherit something as intangible and immeasurable as sorrow?” (Shafak 2021, p. 26). Since she is a teenager who is in an identity construction phase, that also has been through hard times, Ada’s state of unconfidence resulted from her sense of not belonging anywhere, as her identity is not satisfyingly constructed, full of holes and mysteries.

In addition, Ada, as a second-generation immigrant, inherited what her first-generation emigrant parents carried out across borders, not only material belongings but also a generational trauma that is embodied in sorrows and grieves.

Using the literary device of personification, where the fig tree is given a voice and serves as a narrator, adds a layer of symbolism and depth to novel. The fig tree's perspective allows for a unique and nuanced exploration of the themes of growth, perseverance, and resilience of diasporic women, as well as their ability to adapt and

survive in challenging circumstances. This literary device provided the fig tree an independent, fluid identity that moved from filiative to affiliative.

The fig tree is not only a personified narrator. In fact, the fig tree is the main female lead of the novel. It was not only given human nature desires and affection alongside voice and opinion, therefore it was beautifully given female-like characteristics, thereby, this could be also a way of the author to refer to homelands as females too. The fig tree, also, represents Ada's longing and yearning for her roots because it symbolizes of the Cyprus's rich history. In addition, it highlights the significance of how providing sustenance and shelter. Thereby brings the displaced a sense of belonging.

Moving to Rum's *A Woman is No Man*, it consists of three parts and each part is divided within multiple narrations of the three generations of American-Palestinian, displaced women, each narration is dedicated to a certain timeline which connects the plot. Fareeda's, the first-generation, traditional mother-in-law, the controlling grandmother and the typical wife. Then comes Isra's narration, second-generation daughter-in-law, who was forced into an arranged marriage off to Brooklyn after spending her whole life in Birzeit, Palestine. Then comes Deya's narration, third-generation displaced daughter of Isra, who, suffers from the very same patriarchal suppressions by her grandparents in the light of her parents' mysterious death, as her grandmother is trying to force her to meet potential suiters who propose to her at the age of 18.

The novel in the first few chapters represents the social and geographical characteristics of a 1990 Birzeit through the lifestyle of a 17 years old Israa from her house chores, to her religious responsibilities till her family duties. And it is worth mentioning that besides obedience, a girl's greatest family duty achievement would surely be: getting married to her father's expectations and pleasing.

The narrative of *A Woman is No Man* embodies the sensitivities that profoundly impacts the development of women's identities in diaspora in the light of family expectations and marriage. It discusses the psychological effects of patriarchy on women from the heaviness of silence, motherhood and sacrifice, and the refusal of the new environment which trap women between two contradicted worlds through Israa's character as first and the complications of the whole voyage through the second-generation characters represented in her daughter, Deya and sister in-law Sarah.

The discussion of identity in this novel is narrower than Shafak's in *The Island of Missing Trees* as the characters deal with their environment of a closed community that is ruled with traditions and restrictions. Caught between two worlds, is an overtaking theme on the plot, as Palestinian-American women in the narrative find themselves trapped between two worlds: the first, a haunting homesickness of their homeland and its entrenched traditions, or what (Kaplan 1996, p.33) describes as "The malady of homesickness", the influence of the past and the longing for a return for homely beginnings explains Al Deek (2016). And the second, the ever-evolving land of America that promises new colors and tastes of freedom yet often delivers alienation.

In addition, the theme of 'the heaviness of silence' is both self-imposed and externally enforced in the narrative. It becomes their protective mechanism, a means to avoid conflict, and at times, a way of survival. But silence in, *A Woman is No Man*, is also a cage. It is best described the way Ayaan Hirsi Ali (2007) coined it "I would like to keep living. However, some things must be said, and there are times when silence becomes an accomplice to injustice" (p.3). It stifles dreams, prevents the expression of pain, and perpetuates cycles of suffering. This tension between the necessity and the tyranny of silence forms a tragic undercurrent throughout the novel.

Taking a look at the following text from the novel (p.29) where Deya is meeting one of her suiters,

“She fixed her eyes on him. “Do you mind?” “Mind what?” “That I want to go to college.” “No. Why would I mind?” Deya studied him carefully, unsure whether to believe him. He could be pretending not to mind in order to trick her into thinking he was different than the previous suitors, more progressive. He could be telling her exactly what he thought she wanted to hear” (Rum 2019, p: 29).

The way Deya speaks less than she suspects and thinks reflects the trust issues of men she has, being raised in an environment like hers. The usage of “do you mind” as if there’s an option negotiating an actual right of hers says all of her struggles, as well as her silence and keeping her thoughts to herself, as Deya is trying to here to compare and balance her needs with social and family expectations.

In the heart of the novel lies the power of storytelling. For Isra, books become a refuge, a portal to imagined freedoms, and a solace from her daily struggles. For her daughter, Deya, she is curious about Isra’s past, to understanding her mother’s life, choices, and dreams. Literature, in the diasporic landscape of the novel, represents hope, embodied in self-expression, understanding, and connection. Literature emphasizes the universal human need for stories that reflect and validate one’s experiences.

## **4.2 The Issues that Women Face in Diaspora in Elif Shafak's *The Island of Missing Trees* and in Etaf Rum's *A Woman is No Man*.**

The experience of women in the diaspora is full of cultural, social, and personal challenges, which are multifaceted, and often influenced by the intersection of their cultural backgrounds and the dynamics of the homeland. This section is dedicated to provide an overview of the issues that women face in diaspora, drawing on both novels and relevant research to support the discussion.

Women in the diaspora often grapple with questions of identity and belonging. Diasporic people tend to balance between preserving and maintaining their roots and natal heritage and coping and adapting into the new culture; this creates internal conflicts according to Khosravi (2018). For example, in Shafak's *The Island of Missing Trees*, Ada embodies the struggles of identity, culturally and religiously. Moreover, in Rum's *A Woman is No Man* Deya, embodies the struggles of identity socially and personally.

In *The Island of Missing Trees*, Shafak skillfully tackles a range of issues. The issue of diaspora is explored in the narrative in the light of the impact of political conflicts on individuals and communities. Shafak sheds light on the lasting effects of the conflict, highlighting the struggles faced by women: Defne, Ada, Fig tree, Meryam.

Defne suffered from memory due to the pain she had encountered when she was left by Kostas at first, while concealing her pregnancy in the harsh circumstances of war. Homi Bhabha demonstrates the pain that is involved in the act of remembering by describing it as a not a quite act of introspection or retrospection. It is rather a painful remembering, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present Bhabha (1994). Defne's life in London pictures her as continually remembering of her past, homeland and family in gloom and sadness. The matter of

memories in the light of forced migration is not only related to a nostalgia, and by nostalgia we mean positive memories, but it is also memories of trauma and violence according to Kurz (2018).

Defne is still emotionally attached to her motherland as well as traumatized as shown in the following quote of hers “Because the past is a dark distorted mirror. You look at it; you only see your own pain” (p.112). Defne’s inability to overcome her trauma unconsciously positions her in the tension between the past and the present. (Ayuningtyas 2022, p.66) believes that Meryem represents the “embodiment of the ethnic culture and identity” as she challenges Kostas and Ada’s views and questions their opinions and habits as she holds tightly onto traditions and norms of Muslim Turks, so it is safe to say Meryem does not suffer from any sort of identity issues.

It has come to the researcher’s attention to examine the character of Meryem, Defne’s sister who came to London in the later in the narrative after Defne’s death. Meryem did not experience displacement herself, yet she is impacted by the displacement of her close sister, she shared her trauma in war and witnessed all the events of separation. ‘Home’ appears more of a concept rather than a physical place that conveys a stable residence that provides security, comfort and familiarity Galip (2014). So, characters of the novel seem to trouble with this concept (home), and Meryem’s concept of home is stable; home where traditions and cultural norms are practiced.

During the transition state, the displaced remains uncertain whether he/she has been detached from a clearly defined state in the past and has not been incorporated yet into a clearly defined future according to Bhandari (2020). Ada’s encounter with her aunt later in the narrative shows how eager Ada is to find answers of her parents’ mysterious past.

The following quotation of the novel, clarifies two points: first, that Ada did not experience all the brutality of the past directly, yet she still is affected by it. And second, Ada wouldn't overcome her confusion, unless she fully understands her place in the world and creates her "sense of self".

"...In contrast, the third generation were the eager to dig away and unearth silences. How strange that in a family scarred by wars, forced displacement and act of brutality, it was the youngest who seemed to have the oldest memory" (Shafak 2021, p.315).

Through personifying the Fig Tree, Shafak delves into the theme of environmental degradation and the consequences that follows. She discusses the issues of nature destruction and the loss of ecosystems in order to emphasizing the urgent need for environmental awareness. Shafak admitted that she narrated the story from the Fig's tree perspective on purpose, so that she could represent a serious, political conflict without falling into the trap of rampant nationalism Inskip (2021).

The Fig Tree adds a layer of ecocriticism, and according to Marland (2013) ecocriticism refers to the critical approaches which examine "the representation in literature (and other cultural forms) of the relationship between the human and the non-human, ..." (Shafak 2021, p.846). Thereby, the author bases the events of the novel on a political conflict as an awareness of the ecological crisis caused by human beings.

*The Island of Missing Trees* might not be categorized as climate fiction, which refers to what Schneider-Mayerson (2018) address as the fiction that specifically discusses climate issues. However, there are parts in the narrative that show how wars and conflicts between human beings impact the environment. Through the perspective of the fig tree, that was also referred to as a woman and symbolized homeland at some points, readership



is meant to see the devastating effects of a war the tree herself says: “A tree is a memory keeper. Tangled beneath our roots, hidden inside our trunks, are the sinews of history, the ruins of war nobody came to win, the bones of the missing” (Shafak 2021, p. 213). In general, the fig tree also concludes that “most arboreal suffering is caused by humankind” (Shafak 2021, p. 44).

To sum up, Shafak in her novel delves into a range of complex and relevant issues, including political conflicts, power dynamics, environmental degradation, memory, and cultural heritage. Elif Shafak's masterful storytelling prompts readers to reflect on these issues, fostering a deeper understanding of the world we live in and our role in shaping a more just and sustainable future.

Rum delves into the profound issues of cultural expectations that restrict women's freedom and the ongoing struggle for individuality in the context of conservative Arab-American community. The issue of family expectations is not exclusive in diaspora communities, yet it is more extreme, in her LAB interview with Eleanor J. Bader, Rum (2019) explains: “For Palestinians, there is the further trauma of dislocation that impacts men who then take their frustrations out on the women in their lives”. Basically, Rum is encouraging readership to see the bigger picture as the pressure as shared by both parties (men and women), she adds “... I wanted the book to recognize that men have their own traumas to deal with and also have to contend with family expectations”. As mentioned before, there are many narrations of the novel, it is worth mentioning that this technique serves the layer of issues in the narrative. Therefore, the character would be multi-dimensional to readership so their struggles are addressed clearly, according to Rum (2019).

Traditional gender roles and patriarchal norms from natal countries can persist in the diaspora communities, influencing women's lifestyles, choices, and decisions. As mentioned in the latter point, women may face expectations that fit these roles, socially, limiting them for personal, educational, and professional development leading to form gender stereotypes. Moreover, Gender stereotypes can confuse both, men and women in defining their identities. The following text shows how it is well-illustrated in the narrative's social standards: "She met Isra's eyes. "Don't forget to wash the garlic smell off your hands before greeting our guest". (Rum 2019, p.9) Isra washed her hands, trying not to dirty the rose-colored kaftan that Mama had chosen for the occasion. The following quote is Rum's attempt to provide the social concept on feminine and masculine in details: "Do I look okay?" Isra asked. "You look fine." Mama said, turning to leave" (Rum 2019, p.9) This is specifically concerned with the representation of women in the narrative's society; the "garlic smell" means that females are obedient to their mothers and they take part in the house hold, as well as wearing what is decided for her. In addition, she is supposed to look good but she is being told that she looks fine and according to western communities, if a girl is so taken by her beauty, she might take so much pride and refuse the suitor, and that is exactly what they are trying to avoid. Lastly, Silvia (2020) explains that the choosing of the color "Rose" is socially is preferred for women.

In addition to the latter, Isra's mother tells her: "Be sure to pin your hijab properly so your hair doesn't show. We don't want our guests to get the wrong impression" (Rum 2019, p.11). This was set in Palestine before Isra was introduced to her suitors, whereas when Isra arrived to Brooklyn she observed the religious contradictory in the Palestinian-American community, as in natal country Isra is used to the idea that "the most important part of being a Muslim girl was wearing the hijab. That modesty was a woman's greatest

virtue.” (Rum 2019, p.47) Adam convinces her to take it off because it is not obligated in America, not according to an official social standard, but because he sees women are not concerned of it all. He also tells her: “... You think you’re doing the right thing by wearing this hijab, but that’s not what Americans will see when they look at you. They won’t see your modesty or your goodness. All they’ll see is an outcast, someone who doesn’t belong.” (Rum 2019, p.48) Women not only concerned with their representation in their natal countries, but they are also concerned with their representation in the new country, whether in the Palestinians community or to the American community.

Domestic violence is a major theme in the narrative: physical and emotional, and it is worth mentioning, that the author represented such issue using anglicized-Arabic words in favor of showing how deep stereotypical images is forced onto women through domestic violence. For example, there has been a mentioning of a word that connotes for ‘prostitute’ that is mentioned 8 times throughout the narration to scowl young girls as in the following text “She remembered once telling Mama that she couldn’t find any fruit on the mulberry trees when in fact she had spent the afternoon reading in the graveyard. Yacob had beaten her twice that night, punishment for her defiance. He’d called her a sharmouta, a whore. He’d said he’d show her what happened to disobedient girls, then he’d shoved her against the wall and whipped her with his belt” (Rum 2019, p.13) This is an extreme word of an extreme connotation that is not tolerable to the situation it used in, and this method is used with the justification of “protection”, yet creates identity issues for young and adult females.

Moreover, Rum explores the transformative power of education as a means of empowerment and self-discovery for the female characters through the character of Deya, who, unlike her mother, ask for her right to go to college and scares away suitors. In the

following conversation between Deya and her grandparents it is observed how their perspective of education was narrower and different from the second-generation 18 years old Deya “Maybe if I could just go to college for a few semesters—” Fareeda slammed the remote down with a thump. “College again? How many times have we talked about this nonsense?” Khaled gave Deya a sharp glare. She hoped he wouldn’t slap her. “This is all because of those books,” Fareeda continued. “Those books putting foolish ideas in your head!” She stood up, waved her hands at Deya” (Rum 2019, p.52, 53) Women in the narrative are treated as a producer of children, cooks of food for men. They are not allowed to go out. Moreover, they are not allowed to get education further than high school, in their community schools of course and not in public ones. So basically, women do not have equal chance than those of man, Saddiqa (2022).

Lastly, the complexities of motherhood and the interplay between societal norms and personal desires is explored in details as Isra gave birth to four daughters and was always pressure to give birth to a boy to carry out his father’s name and support the family financially. The following text how Isra is learning maternity love “She had always imagined love as the kind she read about in books, like the love Rumi and Hafiz described in their poems. Never once had motherly love crossed her mind as her naseeb.” (Rum 2019, p.88) and then she was immediately interpreted by Fareeda’s words “Keep these words close, like a piercing in your ear: If you don’t give a man a son, he’ll find him a woman who can.” (Rum 2019, p.88). And, impatiently, Fareeda was pressuring Isra and Adam to have a son while Deya was still a newborn baby as “It was Fareeda’s idea to not breastfeed Deya. Breastfeeding prevented pregnancy, and Adam needed a son.” (Rum 2019, p.91) The previous quotation demonstrates an absolute fact: Women are violated from their natural rights since they’re born. Deya was a baby who needed to be breastfed

and looked after, this is a religious rule as according to Quran: “If they (i.e. the fathers) wish that the period of suckling for their children be completed, mothers may suckle their children for two whole years.” (Verse 2:233). Not getting enough love since cradle builds up into settling for the less, maternity love is an exchange process and Fareeda’s act is inhuman not only for baby Deya, but also, she is not being considerate for Isra’s mental health, according to WHO “women who have just given birth experience a mental disorder, primarily depression.” In addition to that “In severe cases mothers’ suffering might be so severe that they may even commit suicide.” Fareeda never considered how bad for Isra’s mental health it was, thereby her identity’s development. The following text shows that Deya’s identity is not stable because she witnessed her mother’s sorrows and griefs, and somehow, she felt as if it was passed to her, like Adain Shafak’s novel: “Deya wondered if it was her mother’s sadness that made her sad, if perhaps when Isra died, all her sorrows had escaped and settled in Deya instead.” (Rum 2019, p. 40) .

**Forced Marriages:** Arranged marriages are a common practice in the community, and women may feel pressured to marry against their will. This can lead to unhappy unions and a lack of agency in choosing their life partners

Mubarokati (2021) Isra Hadid and Deya Ra'ad grapple with the challenges posed by the repressive patriarchal culture within their family. The oppression they face extends beyond domestic confines, permeating into public spaces. Ultimately, this tradition imposes a distance on their roles as women in various aspects of life. The repercussions of such oppression and societal pressure manifest in a transformation of Isra's mental and spiritual well-being, a change that is similarly experienced by Deya. While Deya may not perceive the shift as profoundly as her mother does, she undergoes an identity crisis and contends with profound fear. Both women are left with feelings of disgust and humiliation

due to their gender. Nevertheless, these transformations in the characters prompt them to summon courage, leading them to confront and challenge their tradition with bravery.

### **4.3 The Reconstruction of Women's Identity in Diaspora in Elif Shafak's *The Island of Missing Trees* and in Etaf Rum's *A Woman is No Man*.**

The location and dislocation of the female protagonists Defne, Ada, Isra and Deya represent an exploration of identity construction and reconstruction. Hence, this section is declared to discuss the importance of understanding how the female, displaced characters will successfully identify themselves in their societies after all the prementioned circumstances in section 4.2.

Through works of literature women's identity has been presented in diverse multicultural and patriarchal societies and the exploration of women's identities development has been the center of this study in multicultural societies, reflecting the complexities, challenges, and triumphs that women face in multicultural contexts. And through careful and thorough examination of the female protagonists' journeys, this section aims to discuss their identities reconstruction starting departure point, ascending (filiative to affiliative).

*The Island of Missing Trees'* narrative introduces readership to a severe conflict of the island of Cyprus, weaving a narrative that intertwines the personal and political, as characters grapple with love, loss, and the enduring impact of conflict. On the other hand, *A Woman is No Man's* narrative provides a poignant exploration of the Arab-American immigrant experience, exposing the intricate familial ties that shape the lives of its characters. And it is worth mentioning that both authors skillfully navigate the delicate balance between tradition and modernity, tradition and individuality, creating narratives that resonate with the universal struggle for autonomy and self-actualization.

Part six of, *The Island of Missing Trees*, 'How to Unbury a Tree' is concerned with the reconstruction of Ada's identity where the title foreshadows a new phase. Shafak skillfully explored the reconstruction of women's identities through her characters of Defne and Ada. It can be observed that one of the main aims of the writing the novel is reconstructing diasporic women's identities. Defne tells Ada " Someday this pain will be useful to you " (Rum 2019, p.307). Speaking of the past that is beheld from Ada, Defne continuous, ' We have to remember in order to heal. Although Defne died depressed, alcoholic and haunted by the past, she knew well that she has to accept the past in order to be able to live up the future.

Defne embodies the portrayal of women breaking free from traditional gender roles, Shafak highlights her courage in challenging societal norms as mentioned in section 4.2. Whether in defying expectations or asserting independence, she definitely inspired her daughter through her self-exploring journey into defining herself. Ada's identity is built by various factors, including her experiences, relationships, and cultural context and is highly influenced by her mother as a role model, as they were freely speaking to one another regardless of topic, unlike in patriarchal societies such as in Etaf Rum's *A Woman is No Man*, where Isra barely, almost never had heart to heart conversations and was scowled most of the time if not often.

It is worth mentioning that the theme of motherhood and sacrifice has its impact on women's identities in both novels *The Island of Missing Trees* and *A Woman is No Man*. Moreover, it may not be mentioned directly in the narrative, but refusing to raise young women in patriarchal societies is a reason of displacement; by securing a safe, healthy and a conflict-free environment.

The following series of quoted texts from the novel that will be labelled from A-C, in order to track the reconstruction, of identity through the novel:

Text A: “The places where we were born are the shape of our lives, even when we are away from them. Especially then. Now and again in my sleep I find myself in Nicosia, standing under a familiar sun, my shadow falling against the rocks, reaching towards the prickly broom bushes that burst with blossoms, each as perfect and bright as the golden coins in a children’s fable.” (Shafak 2021, p.42)

The previous quote is narrated by the Fig Tree who suffers from memory as much Defne, and described the nostalgic feeling of a normal day in homeland. Hence, the Fig Tree signifies on the identity construction and its relations with natal culture and homeland and it is worth mentioning that the identity at this point is still (filiative). Al Deek (2016) argues that people who are displaced at a “mature age” had their identity already constructed philosophically, logically...etc. Therefore, their strong bond with homeland puts them in state of living “imaginary of a factual past” (Al Deek 2018, p.108) regardless of the degree of positivity of the image of the past, the displaced clings into those memories to make sense of the present.

Text B:” *“I once heard Defne say to Kostas, ‘People from troubled islands can never be normal. We can pretend, we can even make amazing progress –but we can never really learn to feel safe. The ground that feels rock hard to others is choppy waters for our kind.’”* (Shafak 2021, p.77)

The previous quote is narrated by the Fig Tree, but expresses Defne’s feelings towards displacement, even though Defne fled with Kostas to find peace in exile, she never did. “Kostas listened to her carefully, as he always did” this line assures the fact



that Kostas was not pressured by the masculinity of the patriarchal society and tried his best to make Defne feel comfortable with their choice of displacement, but “.... he had tried to ensure those rough waters would never swallow her, and yet in the end they had.” (Shafak 2021, p 77)

It is observed that Defne and Kostas refused the religious and racist conflicts that lead for them to leave Cyprus, so they raised their daughter to be a ‘British Kid’, and it has come to the attention of the researcher that the act of detaching their daughter from her roots was a reaction, that later on, did not really failed as much as it can be considered as a transition status of the displaced (affiliative), The following text C, provides further details: *“Kostas tilted his head, the furrows in his brow deepening. ‘She’s a British kid. She has never even been to Cyprus. Defne was right all along. Why burden our children with our past – or the mess we’ve made of it? This is a new generation. A clean slate. I don’t want her to be preoccupied with history that caused us nothing but pain and distrust.’”* (Shafak 2021, p 77)

The debatable idea of Defne is relative; the second generation of diaspora must not inherit the trauma, hatred, racism, or any sort of national and international conflict, hence, those conflicts were the reasons why they fled and crossed borders in the first place. In the light of this study, succeeded in raising a national-conflict-free kid, in a family who refused patriarch norms and traditions, religious discriminations as much as they love one another. Yet, Ada was not supposed to be detached from the Cypriot culture, history and origin, and simply be “British”. Therefor the English society will not be a home as if she is a native person. The latter created a confusion to the teenager that made her too Cypriot to be English and too English to be Cypriot.

Nonetheless, Meryem who represents traditions and norms added to Ada's identity the missing part whom tugged her to her roots, and made her become comfortably affiliated, or what Bhabha calls "hybridity" In the postcolonial discourse.

In addition to the latter, one of the key factors that reconstructed Ada's identity is learning about Cyprus, a country torn apart by political conflict. As a child, Ada was exposed to the violence and tensions of the conflict, which have a profound impact on her sense of self. Hence through research and Meryem, Ada learns about the history and culture of Cyprus, and she begins to develop a sense of belonging to the island and its people.

Laxmiprasad (2020) believes that clothes, language retention, religion, music, dance, customs of individual community, rites, traditions etc. are the characteristics that can be retained, discarded or adopted differently at different times and places, yet the feeling of what he calls "oneness" and roots belonging would always persist no matter how many years and centuries pass by. It can be observed that Meryem's conversations with her niece adds up some pieces in Ada's Identity. For example, their food talk "... Food is the heart of culture, replied Meryem. 'You don't know your ancestors' cuisine, you don't know who you are'" (Shafak 2021, P.137). With Meryem bringing up the topic of food, alongside the live experience of cooking it for Ada, this experience embodies a root tug, of which Ada never knew about until that moment in order to collect the puzzles that she has always been looking for, therefor constructs her sense of self through knowing her natal traditional and cultural acts and believes

*A Woman is No Man* explores the challenges and issues that women face in a Palestinian-American diaspora community, particularly those living in Brooklyn, New York. Isra as a first generation faced many challenges that affected her daughters, mainly

Deya, as a second-generation diaspora. This section is dedicated to unravel, navigate and track the reconstruction in their identities.

The main theme and issue in the novel were gender roles and family expectations in the Palestinian diaspora community. And it is important to differentiate between private and public patriarchy, as patriarchy is the base structure that is being served by gender roles and family expectations (superstructure). Walby (1990) differentiates between private and public on multiple levels: the first one is related to the degree of intimacy between the structures (Relationships), However the second is related to the institutional form of each structure. For example, in the novel, Isra's father Yacob practices private patriarchy on both Isra and her mother, as they work all day to please him in an error-free expected manner, whereas, Yacob has expressed his concerns of Isra's behaviors in order to void public patriarchal criticism as the society expects her to act in the same error-free manner, yet on a wider scope. Moreover, both differ in the main form of patriarchal strategy: private patriarchy is practiced in home (within family) from drawing rules, to scowling and sometimes physical violence, and public patriarchy is generally concerned with sexual separation in schools, gatherings, events, celebrations...etc. for example, Deya was not allowed to go to U.S Public schools at a certain age, so she was moved to a private, only-girls school, and whenever she had to meet a suitor, it is only allowed in family's presence and for a specific time.

The following texts will show examples on private and public patriarchy:

“...a woman was put on this earth to please her husband. Even if he was wrong, she had said, a woman must be patient. A woman must endure. And Isra had understood why Fareeda said it. Just like Mama, she believed silence was the only way. That it was safer to submit than speak up. But watching the tears gather in her eyes, Isra wondered what Fareeda thought about her words now” (Rum 2019, p.294)

The latter exemplifies how women are raised by other women such as mothers and mothers in law to cope with private patriarchy with silence and obedience as, accordingly, women are born to be in service of men and their pleasure, that is the ultimate purpose and goal.

As for public patriarchy, aside from sexual separation, according to the diaspora and original community, women are not supposed to express their emotions and shame to other people, no matter how bad they were treated in their household (beaten, scowled, treated). This type of patriarchy is definitely related to domestic violence to keep women in line if they were not obedient. The following text provides a further insight on the latter point:

“What is this? Fareeda asked one December morning when Isra came up to help with breakfast, squinting at the blue and purple mark on Isra’s cheek. You think anyone wants to see this? Isra opened her mouth, but nothing came out. What was there to say? A husband hitting his wife was normal. How many times had Yacob hit Mama? She wondered if Khaled had ever hit Fareeda. She had never seen it, but that meant nothing.

There are things in this life no one should see,” Fareeda said. “When I was your age, I never let anyone see my shame” (Rum 2019, p.183).

Yacob, Adam and Khaleed are a typical representation of males in a patriarchal society where Isra’s mother, Isra and Fareeda reflect their perceptive of them: sexual objects and a domestic servant.

Unlike Deya, she never handled the heaviness of inherited silence, influenced and impacted by her mother’s experience, stands out to herself and take her decisions in education, career, marriage...etc.

The following text show the evolution of Deya’s mentality and identity as well:

“On what? On the family you’re from. I know many Arab families who firmly believe in educating their women, and I’ve met some who graduated from college and have good jobs. But I think in my case, if I’d married a man my parents chose for me, who thinks the way my parents think, then he probably wouldn’t have let me go to college or work. He would’ve wanted me to stay at home and raise children instead. You know, this isn’t making me feel better, Deya said, thinking of the pitiful possibilities of her life. If I’m going to be forced to stay at home and have children, then why shouldn’t I run away?”

(Rum 2019, p.201).

Deya wants to go high school instead of marrying in early age, learning from her mother’s experience knowing well that women in the diaspora community may have limited access to education and career opportunities, as their families prioritize marriage and family over personal growth and development. Many women in the novel struggle with feelings of

cultural isolation and disconnection from the broader American society. Al Deek (2018) explains “*Diaspora causes its members isolation and insecurity since they will always be alienated ...*” (Al Deek 2018 p.50) Deya often found herself caught between two worlds, trying to balance their Palestinian cultural heritage with the expectations of American culture. She was even scowled for speaking with boys in her class as a little girl by Isra who told her “Just because you were born here, that doesn’t make you an American. As long as you live in this family, you will never be an American.” (P.164) But that because she was afraid that Adam would beat Deya, in fact, Isra was trying to protect her daughters with her own life.

It was mentioned earlier in section 4.1.2 the narrative’s community praised traditional, cultural practices and customs. But very late in the narrative’s resolution, there was the mentioning of ‘honor killings’ in the light of the arranged marriage of Isra and Adam, which added a layer of complexity the whole plot. In the last chapter it is unraveled that Isra’s refusal of the male validation, patriarchal norms and traditions lead her to plan out a flee with her daughters to guarantee a better future for them and herself, only to be discovered and killed by Adam, who commits suicide right after his honor crime.

The following quotations of the text tracks the evolution of Deya standing out for herself, as in the beginning of the narrative, Deya was so careful in speaking with Fareeda about her own business:

*“Deya had seen enough of her mother’s life to know it wasn’t the life she wanted. “I’m afraid, Teta,” Deya whispered. “I don’t want to marry a man I don’t know.”* (Rum

2019, p.34)

As well as being alarmed with the consequences of breaking her silence as she already witnessed her mothers' who learned from the previous generations of women who were threatened to express their opinions and speak out their minds as for example, Deya was always afraid of being beaten by Fareeda "*Deya could tell Fareeda wanted to slap her.*" (Rum 2019. p.34).

Deya discovers that her mother Isra was killed by her father Adam whereas her grandparents hide that fact, willingly unaccepting the truth behind the consequences of patriarchal pressures on their son and daughter in law, just like many other members in that society so they can still have the power of Deya and her sisters to control their lives. But Deya's discovery of the truth about their death, provided her with the power to take decisions for herself, as well as a sound to speak up her mind without needing a male validation to it neither Fareeda's as shown in the end of the narrative: "*I got accepted into a college in Manhattan,*" Deya had told her, keeping her voice steady. "*I'm going*" and it is obvious that Deya holds a new sort of powerful discourse such as: "*Then don't stand in my way*", "*You need to trust me.*" And "*... My destiny is in my hands. Men make these sorts of choices all the time. Now I'm going to as well*". (Rum 2019, p.244)

Rum reflects her own experience in Deya who fought for breaking from her backwards family molds that lead for the death of her parents, freeing herself from the trap of another arranged marriage that is socially set up to fail and bravely took grip of power over her lifelong decisions with confidence, and intelligence.

**CHAPTER FIVE**  
**Conclusion and Recommendations**



## CHAPTER FIVE

### Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter is concerned with the concluding statements for the questions of the study. Furthermore, it contains the recommendations that may reveal other issues of women represented in Elif Shafak's *The Island of Missing Trees* and *Etaf Rum's A woman is No Man* in relations to Postcolonialism and Feminism.

#### 5.1 Conclusions

##### **1- How are women identities represented in diaspora in Elif Shafak's *The Island of Missing Trees* and *Etaf Rum's A Woman is No Man*?**

Shafak's *The Island of Missing Trees* represents teen and adult women who were directly affected by diaspora, yet each to their own experience and scope. It is worth mentioning that Shafak represents her female characters in a positive way, celebrating homeland culture and praising the new home's culture. Therefore, such representation of women in diaspora, that was skillfully portrayed by a multicultural author like Shafak, is needed in the field of World Literature in order to reconstruct the image of Western woman. Moreover, Shafak's representation resembles other multicultural writers, who specifically writes in the English Language, in praising their respective cultures and celebrating their traditions to redefine the West's racist, wronged and biased view of what they call "third-world countries", "Oppressed Women", "Backward Cultures"...etc. by providing literature with that represents a confident, outstanding female leading characters to signify the importance of producing literary works that focus on inspiring women, empowering young and adult women by not only highlighting their issues but also suggesting solutions and providing education for both genders. In the light of this fact, Shafak portrays the character of Defne through different timelines in different

settings and age stages to show how her confidence was the key to all her decisions and how the support of her partner Kostas enriched that confidence whom she succeeded to pass to her daughter Ada. Furthermore, Shafak also sets up a model for young girl reading the novel through Ada, she is curious and she is unstoppable in collecting the information that intrigues curiosity of knowing herself and building up her confident and solid character. Shafak's attempt of personifying the Fig Tree into a female says a lot on women empowerment, and the ability of coexistence in different soils (countries) as it was moved at first, then buried and unburied in different occasions, and that never prevented her from providing and giving endlessly, like women. On the other hand, the narrative of Etaf Rum's *A Woman is No Man* differs in terms of theme as she sets up an inspiring example of second-generation young girls who lives in diaspora through Deya who refused to be put in the mold of her mother, grandmother and great grandmother. She breaks the rules and fights for her rights. Deya is a confident young girl who believes in the power of education and trusts her clever decisions. It is worth mentioning that the major theme that plays a role in representing Deya's character in specific is that mistakes are made to learn, therefore take better future decisions. Yet, It is important to highlight that Rum also highlighted the representation of Palestinian-American women in comparison to Palestinian women in Birzeit to stress on the fact that the representation of women depends on the community that women are living in, where she, like Shafak, supports the idea of refusing being detached from the new host's culture as well as keeping you own's.

## **2- What are the issues that these women in diaspora are exposed to in Elif Shafak's *The Island of Missing Trees* and Etaf Rum's *A Woman is No Man*?**

The major issue that women face in diaspora, especially those who are displaced to the West, is representation for its direct impact on identity growth as women have to redefine the stereotypical images that are provided on behalf of them, in some cases, women

struggle in keeping up with their religious dress code to not give Islamophobic impressions, such as Isra in *A Woman is No Man* when she first arrived at the U.S she was asked by her husband to take off her hijab, whereas if they were in Palestine he would fake being religious and being jealous to make her wear it again, such duality is problematic for first generation women for the vague place it leaves them at. It is worth mentioning that Rum skillfully portrayed the issue of private and public patriarchy and how domestic violence is not only physical as much as emotional and mental, in diaspora, the diasporic communities are more connected than in homeland, which makes it phobic for families to handle any sort of scandal or bad news to be spread about any member, especially women. Furthermore, in *The Island of Missing trees* Shafak sheds light on an important issue of identity loss for second generation members, such Ada who was too English to be Cypriot and too Cypriot to be English leaving her in an identity crisis. Whereas Shafak draws attention on the issues of the main reason that lead people to move through borders, as Defne was displaced for love, because she was disowned by her family for marrying someone from a different religion. The feeling of her not being welcomed to her house that she grew up in, in the land that she lived her whole life at, and misses terribly lead her homesickness turn into a drinking problem, therefore nostalgia becomes depression. Nostalgia, homesickness, hiraeth all refer to the feeling of missing a homeland that one was displaced from, Defne's issue of marrying Kostas was maybe reduced by choosing diaspora, yet forked into a feeling of refusal to be uprooted.

### **3- How are the identities of these women reconstructed as women in diaspora in Elif Shafak's *The Island of Missing Trees* and Etaf Rum's *A Woman is No Man*?**

This thesis aimed to emphasize the role of diaspora in reconstructing women's identities in the light of the generational conflict between older and younger women. Younger generations often seek more independence and question traditional customs,

leading to tension with their more conservative elders. Rum and Shafak, succeeded into influencing young women into finding themselves, and defining their identities. Both authors reflected their own personal experiences in the narrative by deconstructing gender roles in order to reconstruct women's identities.

The reconstruction of women's identities is relative, what Isra thought of a husband's support was something that Defne already had yet both characters were miserable, but let us agree on the fact that diaspora created a new sort of courage in both Defne and Isra that inspired confidence to their daughters Deya and Ada who were named over what their mothers needed the most in their lives: light and island. It was observed through the narratives that diaspora enriched the concept of family for female characters in a warm way, After Ista and Adam's death in *A Woman is No Man*, their family was not ditched, it grew more connected of loving sisters. Whereas in *The Island of Missing Trees*, Defne's death certainly placed sadness in Ada and Kostas' hearts, yet it reconnected them with one another in in their Cypriot cultural heritage.

The mentioning of burying and unburying the fig tree in Elif Shafa's *the Island of Missing Trees* concludes the process of identity reconstructions; the tree as people was uprooted and moved through borders to a new home (soil), whom she slowly starts growing roots in, which takes years and generations, yet the base is never changed, it's Cypriot and some of its old roots are still in Cypriot soils. London is a cold country unlike Cyprus, where climate plays a role in someone's lifestyle and daily activities, maybe food and dress code too, as for the tree it had to be buried deeply into the soil in the coldest days.

The latter refers to how the characters faced the darkest and hardest of times coexisting in the new land. The unburying of the tree refers to the reconstructing of

identity as it grows back, feeds from the new soil and provides figs. So does Ada, whom shared two worlds and reflected a third, proud and well identified one.

## 5.2 Recommendations

1. More studies should tackle Elif Shafak's representation of the Eastern women's characters.
2. A comparative study on the linguistic discourse of diaspora and displacement in *The Island of Missing Trees* by Elif Shafak and *A Woman is No Man* by Etaf Rum.
3. A study on the impact of the representation of stereotypical Arab women and Etaf Rum's *A Woman is No Man*.
4. More studies should tackle the role of immigration and feminism and its significance on the character's identities in *The Island of Missing Trees* by Elif Shafak.
5. More studies should be done on Etaf Rum's *A Woman is No Man* investigating the language used in it to show the binary opposition between the East and West
6. A study of food and gender on *The Island of Missing Trees* by Elif Shafak and *A Woman is No Man* by Etaf Rum.
7. A feminist reading of discourse study should be done on Etaf Rum's *A Woman is No Man* investigating the Disciplinary language used with women.

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