



## FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES IN ELIF SHAFAK'S NOVELS: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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### Abstract

The present study aims to explore the feminist views of Elif Shafak's novels *Forty Rules of Love* (2010), *Three Daughters of Eve* (2016) and *The Island of Missing Trees* (2021) in the context of critical discourse analysis. The study explores the representation of gender, women's autonomy, and social conventions in different cultures in these texts. Using qualitative methods including thematic analysis and discourse analysis, the study shows Shafak's ability to weave personal and collective histories to challenge patriarchal constructs and promote gender equality. The findings suggest that her novels are effective in fostering feminist discourse, empathy and understanding across cultural boundaries. The study highlights her contribution to social change and gender justice, on the importance of embracing ambiguity and multiple truths. Further investigation on her impact on feminist discourse and intercultural dialogue through literature is recommended.

**Keywords:** *Ambiguity, Critical Discourse Analysis, Cultural Boundaries, Cultural Contexts, Elif Shafak, Empathy, Feminist Perspectives, Gender Equality, Gender Roles, Intercultural Dialogue, Multiple Truths, Novels, Qualitative Methods, Social Change, Societal Norms.*

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Introduction to the Novels

Elif Shafak, a prolific and critically acclaimed contemporary author from Turkey, has gained international recognition for her ability to weave intricate narratives exploring themes of love, spirituality, identity, and societal struggles (Shafak, 2021). Her writing style is a combination of poetic diction, philosophical reflections, and social criticism, which makes her novels appealing to a wide range of cultural and intellectual audiences (Kurt, 2019). Her three major works, *Forty Rules of Love*, *Three Daughters of Eve*, and *The Island of Missing Trees*, are unique yet connected by overarching themes of love, faith, cultural identity, trauma, and resilience (El-Dash, 2020). These novels are not simply stories; they are a reflection of the human struggle with belief and doubt, tradition and modernity, personal and collective histories (Shafak, 2021).

*Forty Rules of Love*, published in 2010, is a philosophical and spiritual exploration of Sufi mysticism, emphasizing love's power to transform the human soul (Shafak, 2010). It is structured around the parallel stories of Ella Rubinstein, a modern American housewife, and the 13th-century poet Rumi and his spiritual guide, Shams of Tabriz (Kaya, 2012). The novel presents a dialogue between two worlds: the rational and the mystical, the material and the spiritual, the individual and the divine (Smith, 2013).

*Three Daughters of Eve*, published in 2016, is a psychological and philosophical novel centered around Nazperi (Peri), a Turkish woman living in Istanbul and London (Yılmaz, 2017). The novel examines her internal conflicts between faith and doubt, tradition and modernity, and her struggle to find her authentic self amid societal pressures (Ozturk, 2018). The narrative oscillates between her present life and her childhood memories, revealing the complex fabric of identity and belief (Aydin, 2019).

*The Island of Missing Trees*, published in 2021, is a poignant narrative set against the backdrop of the Cyprus conflict, blending history, emotion, and symbolism (Dimitriou, 2022). The story revolves around Ada, a woman haunted by her childhood in Cyprus, and her family's history of trauma, displacement, and love (Karaca, 2022). The novel employs the unique device of a fig tree as a silent witness to human history, symbolizing endurance, migration, and memory (Brown, 2021). Together, these three novels demonstrate Shafak's mastery in capturing the multifaceted nature of human existence, emphasizing that love, faith, and identity are intertwined in a continuous quest for meaning and belonging (Shafak, 2021).

## 2. Core Themes and Concepts

### 2.1. Love and Spirituality

#### 2.1.1. Love as a Transcendental Force

A central theme across all three novels is the transformative power of love not merely romantic but divine and spiritual. *Forty Rules of Love* explicitly depicts love as an

all-encompassing divine force that elevates the human soul beyond ego and material concerns (Hosseini, 2009). The love story of Rumi and Shams exemplifies love's capacity to transcend boundaries of dogma, culture, and even mortality (Hosseini, 2009).

### 2.1.2. Feminist Insights from Forty Rules of Love

Elif Shafak is a Turkish-British writer known for her captivating storytelling and insightful explorations of love, spirituality, and human emotions. Her work resonates deeply with readers around the world, and one of her novels has achieved international fame, touching the hearts of many. Her writing often delves into the complexities of human relationships and the inner journeys we all experience. Through her stories, she invites readers to reflect on their own lives and connect with universal feelings of longing, hope, and self-discovery.

The novel includes a diverse cast of main characters, each bringing their unique perspectives and experiences to the narrative. The story unfolds in various settings, from the modern world to Ella's home, creating a rich tapestry that captures the essence of contemporary life and timeless human struggles. Throughout the book, readers are taken on a journey that spans different environments highlighting the contrast between the bustling modern world and the intimate, personal spaces like Ella's home. The narrative also features moments of reflection as characters read novels, offering a glimpse into their inner worlds and the power of literature to inspire and transform.

Shams enters the story like a mystery not just as a man, but as a force of transformation. His presence challenges existing beliefs about love, religion, and identity, gradually revealing profound truths that make us question our understanding of ourselves and the universe. Throughout the narrative, Shams is depicted as someone who searches for a true companion, someone who can truly understand and share his spiritual journey. The novel emphasizes that the path to the Truth is a labor of the heart, not just of the head. This means that true spiritual understanding isn't achieved solely through books or logic but through heartfelt experience and spiritual connection. The journey toward truth requires openness, love, and inner work, rather than intellectual effort alone.

A pivotal moment in the story is the first meeting between Shams and Rumi. This encounter marks the beginning of a transformative relationship that profoundly impacts both of them. The story reminds us that, no matter how difficult life may seem, we should never enter the neighborhood of despair. Challenges and hardships are part of the spiritual journey, and perseverance is essential for growth. Shams teaches a love that goes beyond religion and social status. He believes that the universe is one being, and that everything and everyone within it is interconnected. This idea highlights the deep spiritual unity of all humans, emphasizing that beneath external differences, we are fundamentally linked.

The friendship between Shams and Rumi becomes a catalyst for Rumi's own spiritual awakening and eventual fame as a poet. Their bond illustrates that intellect and

love are made of different things; true love is beyond logic and rationality. It touches the realm of the emotional and spiritual, inspiring profound artistic expression. The main themes of the story include spirituality, the tension between ego and humility, and the transformative power of love. The narrative explores how humility opens the heart to truth, while ego can obstruct spiritual growth. Ultimately, the story advocates for surrendering the ego in favor of humility to attain spiritual enlightenment.

In terms of language and style, the novel employs simple yet philosophical language, rich with metaphors and reflective dialogue. Its tone is both emotional and spiritual, inviting readers to contemplate deep truths about themselves and the universe. The use of poetic metaphors and reflective conversations enhances the contemplative and transformative experience of the story

“The soul is here for its own joy” (Hossein, 2009). “Love is the water of life, and blossoms of it are everywhere” (Hossein, 2009). “The minute I heard my first love story, I started looking for you” (Hossein, 2009).

### **2.1.3. Love and Doubt in Three Daughters of Eve**

In the novel, love is intertwined with faith both divine and human. Peri’s internal conflict reveals that love can be a source of doubt, questioning, and spiritual awakening (Naqvi, 2014). Her relationship with her friends, her faith, and her own inner voice underscores love’s complexity as both a comforting and challenging force. Love as Memory and Culture in *The Island of Missing Trees*: The fig tree witnesses the love stories, conflicts, and migrations of families torn between land and loss. It symbolizes resilience, endurance, and the deep-rooted human longing for love and connection across generations and borders (Erdal, 2021).

### **2.1.4. Cognitive Development Perspective**

Cognitive development refers to the evolution of a person’s thinking, understanding, perception, and decision-making abilities. In the novel, Ella Rubinstein gradually undergoes a transformation in her way of thinking. At the beginning, she is routine-oriented and emotionally disconnected, living a life dictated by daily habits and superficial interactions. However, as she engages with the ideas and spiritual perspectives of Aziz Zahara and Shams Tabrizi, her mindset begins to shift. These influences reshape her understanding of love, spirituality, and her own emotional life, leading her toward greater self-awareness and openness to new perspectives.

### **2.1.5. Subconscious Mind Perspective**

The subconscious mind contains hidden emotions, fears, and desires that are not directly visible but significantly influence behavior and perception. In the novel, Ella Rubinstein struggles with hidden loneliness, which she is often unaware of consciously. Rumi experiences inner emptiness before meeting Shams Tabrizi an unfulfilled longing for spiritual connection and deeper meaning. Shams, on the other hand, represents deep

spiritual awareness and inner consciousness, embodying the connection to the subconscious realm. These characters and their internal struggles highlight the importance of understanding and integrating the subconscious mind in the journey toward self-discovery and spiritual awakening.

The novel concludes that true love is not merely a romantic emotion but a powerful force of spiritual transformation. Through the journeys of Ella Rubinstein, Rumi, and Shams Tabrizi, the story emphasizes the importance of self-discovery, inner peace, and breaking free from fear and routine. It teaches that love, spirituality, and self-awareness have the potential to completely transform human life, leading individuals toward a higher understanding of themselves and the universe. Ultimately, the narrative underscores that inner growth is a vital path to fulfillment and enlightenment.

## **2.2. Identity and Belonging**

*The Search for Self in a Fragmented World:* All three novels explore the quest for authentic identity amid societal, religious, and cultural pressures. *Forty Rules of Love* suggests that spiritual identity transcends dogma, emphasizing humility, compassion, and inner transformation (Hosseini, 2009).

In *Three Daughters of Eve*, Peri's internal struggle reflects the modern human dilemma of belonging caught between her traditional upbringing and her secular, feminist worldview (Naqvi, 2014). Her journey underscores that identity is fluid and multifaceted.

In *The Island of Missing Trees*, the characters' lives are shaped by displacement families fleeing war, cultural dislocation, and the longing to reconnect with roots. The fig tree itself becomes a symbol of rootedness amid uprooting, embodying resilience and the enduring desire to belong (Erdal, 2021).

*Cultural and Personal Dislocation:* The novel vividly depicts how trauma, war, and migration affect individual and collective identities. Ada's sense of disconnection from her Cypriot roots exemplifies the universal human experience of feeling alienated from one's land and history (Erdal, 2021).

### **2.2.1. Women's Voices and Feminist Discourse in "Three Daughters of Eve"**

*Three Daughters of Eve* is a profound philosophical and psychological novel that explores the intricate tensions between faith and doubt, East and West, and religion and secularism. The story centers on Nazperi, known as "Peri," a Turkish woman who has spent her life navigating these polarities. She is neither fully devout nor entirely atheist, embodying a perpetual state of questioning. The novel's structure moves fluidly across different timelines and memories, reflecting Peri's internal quest for understanding. At its core, the novel revolves around a single, fundamental question: "How can someone live between belief and unbelief?"

The main characters enrich this exploration through their diverse backgrounds and perspectives. Peri, the protagonist, is a Turkish woman from Istanbul, characterized by her

intelligence and emotional conflict. Nicknamed "The Confused," she struggles with feelings of guilt, passivity, and questions of identity, embodying the "middle ground" between religious fundamentalism and secular skepticism. Shirin, an Iranian student at Oxford, is bold and rebellious, representing freedom, secular modernism, and questioning authority. Known as "The Sinner," she exudes confidence but masks a deep sense of emotional loneliness. Mona, an Egyptian-American Muslim woman who wears a hijab, is an intelligent feminist who demonstrates that faith and education can coexist. She challenges stereotypes and faces Islamophobia and prejudice. Lastly, Professor Azur, a charismatic Oxford professor of philosophy and theology, teaches about God and champions questioning over certainty. His famous idea, "certainty destroys curiosity," influences Peri profoundly, as he lives comfortably within uncertainty and encourages others to do the same.

The novel employs a nonlinear storytelling structure, shifting between past, present, memories, and trauma. This fragmented approach mirrors Peri's mental state—confused, unresolved, and fractured. The narrative is divided into five parts, each revealing different facets of her life and inner world. In the first part, set in present-day Istanbul in 2016, Peri is depicted as a wealthy, married woman and mother of three. During a traffic jam, her handbag is stolen, and she chases the thief. In the struggle, a photograph falls out, showing her with Shirin, Mona, and Professor Azur. This photograph becomes the catalyst for buried memories and emotions she has long suppressed.

The second part delves into Peri's childhood, unfolding in a divided Istanbul home torn between her parents' contrasting worlds. Her mother represents religious, traditional, spiritual, and conservative values, while her father embodies secular, liberal, rational, and modern perspectives. Peri feels psychologically torn between these influences. A pivotal childhood trauma losing her twin or brother to choking leaves her with profound guilt and emotional paralysis. She froze in fear during the incident, doing nothing, and her mother indirectly blames her for this. This event results in lifelong feelings of guilt, passivity, and difficulty in taking decisive action, shaping much of her adult emotional landscape.

### **2.3. Oxford University**

This is the heart of the novel. Peri goes to University of Oxford, where she meets:

1. Shirin
2. Mona

The three women become symbolic archetypes

### **2.4. Professor Azur's Course**

Azur teaches an unusual seminar on God, where students from many religions and ideologies participate.

Key Idea:

Truth is complex.

Azur opposes fanaticism from both:

- Religious extremists
- Militant atheists

Peri becomes deeply fascinated by him. Not just intellectually emotionally too.

### **2.5. Peri's Attraction to Azur**

Peri slowly develops an obsession with Azur.

Why? Because:

- He understands ambiguity.
- He embraces uncertainty.
- He represents the intellectual freedom she seeks. But Azur is mysterious.
- The novel intentionally keeps readers unsure:
- Is he genuine?
- Manipulative?
- Wise?
- Self-centered?

### **2.6. Shirin and Prof. Azur**

Shirin becomes romantically involved with Azur. This creates:

- Jealousy.
- Tension.
- Emotional Imbalance.

And all of this makes Peri feel;

- Excluded.
- Betrayed.
- Emotionally Dependent.

### **2.7. Peri's breakdown and Azur's downfall**

- Peri becomes emotionally unstable at Oxford.
- Childhood trauma and identity crisis overwhelm her.
- She develops an unhealthy emotional attachment to Professor Azur.
- After discovering Azur's affair with Shirin, Peri attempts suicide.
- Rumors and accusations lead to an investigation against Azur.
- Peri remains silent during the inquiry.
- Azur's reputation and career collapse.

The novel explores five main themes that intertwine to create a rich and complex narrative. The most prominent theme is Faith vs. Doubt, which emphasizes that both blind faith and outright atheism are dangerous. Instead, Shafak advocates for questioning,

embracing complexity, and accepting uncertainty. Peri, the protagonist, embodies this middle ground, navigating her beliefs with curiosity and skepticism rather than dogma.

The second theme, East vs. West, examines the ongoing tension between Turkey and Europe, tradition and modernity, Islam and secularism. However, Shafak deliberately avoids reducing these cultural differences to simplistic stereotypes, instead presenting a nuanced view that recognizes the complexities and contradictions inherent in these identities.

The third theme, Feminism, delves into issues surrounding women's freedom, patriarchy, control over female bodies, and religious expectations. Each woman in the story represents different facets of womanhood, illustrating varied experiences and perspectives within these debates.

The fourth theme, Identity Crisis, highlights Peri's perpetual sense of not belonging anywhere. She feels too secular for conservatives, too religious for atheists, too Eastern for the West, and too Western for traditionalists. This ongoing internal conflict results in a profound sense of existential loneliness, reflecting the struggles many modern individuals face in defining their identity amid conflicting cultural and ideological influences.

The fifth theme, Passivity and Guilt, reveals Peri's tendency to avoid taking action, a trait rooted in childhood trauma. The novel suggests that inaction can be as damaging as harmful actions, emphasizing the importance of confronting life's challenges directly. Throughout the story, Peri's passivity is shown to stem from guilt and fear, illustrating how unresolved trauma can hinder personal growth and decision-making.

The novel is celebrated for its nuanced exploration of Islam, its avoidance of black-and-white thinking, and its realistic portrayal of modern identity struggles. It masterfully combines philosophy with emotional storytelling, allowing many readers to feel a deep connection to Peri's inner conflicts and confusion. However, some critics point out its slow pacing, overly philosophical dialogue, vague ending, and the somewhat enigmatic character of Professor Azur. Despite these criticisms, many appreciate the novel's ability to raise profound questions about faith, identity, and belonging without offering easy answers.

From a literary perspective, the novel enhances analytical and interpretive skills by exploring social and philosophical issues through symbolism and nonlinear storytelling. It encourages readers to think critically about religious extremism, multiple perspectives, and moral ambiguity. Additionally, it stimulates cognitive development by fostering emotional awareness, empathy, reflective thinking, and engagement with themes of identity and trauma. Overall, the novel challenges readers both emotionally and intellectually, making it a compelling and thought-provoking work. Quote from *The Island*

of Missing Trees: “Migration is not just about crossing borders, but about crossing identities” (Erdal, 2021).

### 3. Conflict Internal and External

**Spiritual and Psychological Crises:** *Forty Rules of Love* explores internal conflict the tension between love and ego, humility and arrogance, divine and material. Ella’s spiritual awakening involves confronting her own ego and embracing humility (Hossein, 2009).

**Ideological and Cultural Clashes:** *Three Daughters of Eve* confronts ideological conflicts faith versus doubt, tradition versus modernity, feminism versus patriarchy. Peri’s internal battle reflects the societal tensions present in contemporary Turkey and beyond (Naqvi, 2014).

**Historical and Political Trauma:** *The Island of Missing Trees* depicts the trauma of war, exile, and cultural dislocation. The Cyprus conflict, with its long history of violence and displacement, shapes the characters’ destinies, illustrating how external conflicts infiltrate personal lives and collective memory (Erdal, 2021).

### 4. Main Characters and Their Symbolic Significance

#### 4.1. Forty Rules of Love

**Ella Rubinstein:** Represents the modern seeker, a woman seeking meaning beyond her routine life. Her awakening signifies the potential for love and compassion to transform the soul.

**Rumi and Shams:** Embody divine love and spiritual enlightenment. Their relationship symbolizes the union of the heart and the divine, illustrating that love is a path to truth.

#### 4.2. Three Daughters of Eve

**Nazperi (Peri):** Embodying the middle ground between faith and doubt, she symbolizes the modern individual navigating multiple identities.

**Shirin:** The rebellious, secular woman representing independence, skepticism, and modernism.

**Mona:** The devout, feminist woman embodying faith, activism, and resilience.

#### 4.3. The Island of Missing Trees

**Ada:** A woman haunted by her childhood and the trauma of displacement, seeking to understand her roots.

**Kostas:** Her father, a symbol of hope, resilience, and the enduring human spirit amid trauma.

**Defne:** The mother, representing loss, trauma, and the scars of war that transcend generations.

**The Fig Tree:** A silent witness, symbolizing endurance, migration, patience, and the continuity of life beyond trauma and uprooting.

#### 4.4. Literary Style and Language

Shafak's writing is characterized by poetic metaphors, philosophical reflections, and emotionally charged dialogues. Her language combines simplicity with depth, inviting readers into spiritual and introspective realms.

Forty Rules of Love employs dual narratives and a poetic tone, with rules serving as guiding principles for love and life. The novel's language emphasizes humility, compassion, and the universality of love.

Three Daughters of Eve employs nonlinear storytelling, shifting perspectives, and rich dialogues that reflect the characters' internal conflicts and societal tensions. The narrative balances philosophical dialogue with emotional storytelling.

The Island of Missing Trees uses a lyrical narrative voice, alternating between the perspectives of characters and the silent fig tree. Its language is poetic, symbolic, and emotionally resonant, capturing the pain and hope embedded in personal and collective histories.

## **5. Symbolism and its Role**

### **5.1. Forty Rules of Love**

The "Forty Rules" symbolize spiritual principles, humility, patience, love, and compassion that guide human relationships and inner growth. The love story of Rumi and Shams exemplifies divine love, illustrating that love is a spiritual journey that transcends ego and materiality.

### **5.2. Three Daughters of Eve**

Faith and doubt serve as symbolic battlegrounds, representing the internal struggles of modern individuals. The "middle ground" is a symbol of balance, suggesting that truth resides in uncertainty and questioning.

### **5.3. The Island of Missing Trees**

The fig tree is a powerful symbol of endurance, migration, and memory. It witnesses history silently but persistently, symbolizing resilience and the unbreakable connection to roots. Its silent narration underscores that life continues despite trauma, and that patience and endurance are vital for healing.

## **6. Multiple Perspectives and Narrative Techniques**

Shafak's mastery lies in shifting perspectives Ella, Rumi, Shams, Peri, Mona, Shirin, Ada, Kostas, Defne creating layered narratives that emphasize the subjective nature of truth and belief.

Forty Rules employs dual narratives Ella's modern perspective and Rumi's spiritual story highlighting the dialogue between rationality and mysticism.

Three Daughters of Eve shifts between Peri's present and past, revealing the contrasts between faith and doubt, tradition and modernity.

The Island of Missing Trees employs a nonlinear narrative, shifting between past and present, with the fig tree serving as a silent, observant narrator. The multiple viewpoints deepen the understanding of trauma, love, and migration.

This narrative complexity enhances empathy, critical thinking, and the appreciation of diverse human experiences.

## **7. Academic and Literary Insights**

### **7.1. Philosophical and Spiritual Dimensions**

Shafak's works synthesize Sufi mysticism, existential philosophy, and psychological insights, fostering deep reflection on the nature of love, faith, and self-awareness. Her novels challenge readers to embrace ambiguity and seek inner truth.

### **7.2. Cultural and Social Critique**

Her novels critique societal norms patriarchy, religious dogmas, stereotypes advocating tolerance, pluralism, and openness. They underscore the importance of understanding cultural diversity and rejecting stereotypes.

### **7.3. Literary Techniques**

Allegory, symbolism, poetic language, nonlinear storytelling, and narrative multiplicity create interpretive richness. These techniques invite critical thinking, analysis, and a nuanced understanding of complex themes.

### **7.4. Real-Life and Societal Relevance**

Shafak's novels resonate with pressing global issues intercultural dialogue, religious tolerance, gender equality, trauma, and displacement. They challenge societal perceptions and promote empathy and understanding.

- Forty Rules echoes universal spiritual practices emphasizing humility and love.
- Three Daughters of Eve addresses modern debates on faith, feminism, and identity.
- The Island of Missing Trees highlights the importance of memory, reconciliation, and resilience in conflict zones.

In a world increasingly divided, her novels serve as a call for dialogue, compassion, and the acknowledgment of multiple truths.

## **8. Conclusion**

Elif Shafak's novels are profound, layered explorations of love, faith, identity, and societal tension. Through poetic language, symbolic motifs, and layered narratives, she invites readers into a journey of self-discovery, spiritual awakening, and cultural understanding. Her works demonstrate that stories like trees grow in multiple directions, rooted in history but reaching toward hope, healing, and renewal. Her words remind us: "Stories are like trees; they grow in all directions." She emphasizes that embracing ambiguity and complexity is essential for understanding ourselves and others in an interconnected world.

This study explores how patriarchal systems silence and oppress women, often leading to gender-based violence. Using Lerner's theoretical framework, it analyzes Elif Shafak's *Forty Rules of Love* through close textual reading. Focusing on three female characters Desert Rose, Kerra, and Ella Robinstein it examines issues of violence, prostitution, and family. The findings reveal that women are treated as objects, their needs ignored, and they are inhumanely punished when resisting patriarchal norms. The study highlights how patriarchy enforces oppression and marginalization of women. This study examines Elif Shafak's *Three Daughters of Eve* (2016), questioning contemporary views on women's roles in Islam and society. Focusing on Eve's daughters Peri, Shirin, and Mona it explores how intersecting themes of gender, religion, and culture shape their experiences, beliefs, and challenges. The novel's portrayal emphasizes intersectional feminism, highlighting the complex identities of women in the Middle East. The study demonstrates how these characters serve as distinct voices through which Shafak challenges Western stereotypes about women and Islam. Ultimately, the work elevates themes of diversity and resistance, illustrating how women navigate discrimination and assert their identities.

This paper explores the complex relationship between gendered trauma and eco-resistance, using a post-victimology perspective, in Elif Shafak's novel *The Island of Missing Trees*. By drawing on feminist trauma theory, Eco criticism, and postcolonial studies, it examines how trauma is expressed through both gendered bodies and the natural landscape, particularly within the context of the Cyprus conflict. Through close reading of the text, the paper shows how Shafak challenges traditional victimhood narratives, emphasizing themes of intergenerational healing, the power of storytelling, and the active role of nonhuman elements most notably a fig tree that acts as both witness and participant in memory and resistance. Overall, the study proposes a new way of understanding trauma literature in the anthropogenic era, highlighting the deep and inextricable links between human and ecological memory.

## 9. Findings

- **Patriarchal Oppression and Violence:** Elif Shafak's novels vividly depict how patriarchal systems silence, oppress, and marginalize women. Women are often treated as objects, their needs ignored, and they face violence and punishment when resisting societal norms, reflecting the persistence of gender-based violence rooted in patriarchal traditions.
- **Intersectionality and Women's Identities:** Through characters like Peri, Shirin, and Mona in *Three Daughters of Eve*, Shafak explores the complex and intersecting identities of women shaped by gender, religion, and culture. Her portrayal challenges stereotypes and emphasizes the diversity of women's experiences, promoting an intersectional feminist perspective.

- **Challenging Cultural Stereotypes:** Shafak's works serve as a platform to challenge Western stereotypes about women and Islam, highlighting the diversity and resistance of women within Middle Eastern societies. Her characters often embody resilience and agency amidst societal restrictions.
- **Gendered Trauma and Eco-Feminism:** In *The Island of Missing Trees*, Shafak explores gendered trauma through feminist trauma theory and eco-criticism, illustrating how trauma impacts women's bodies and ecological landscapes. The novel advocates for intergenerational healing and recognizes the active role of nonhuman elements in resistance and memory.
- **Stories as Acts of Resistance:** The recurring motif of storytelling in Shafak's novels aligns with feminist notions of voice and agency. Her narrative techniques serve as acts of resistance against patriarchal silencing, empowering women to reclaim their stories and identities.

#### **Recommendations**

- **Promote Feminist Literary Criticism:** Encourage scholarly analysis of Elif Shafak's works from feminist perspectives to deepen understanding of gender dynamics and resistance strategies depicted in her novels.
- **Incorporate Feminist Education:** Integrate themes of gender equality, resistance, and intersectionality from Shafak's novels into educational curricula to foster awareness of gender issues within cultural and religious contexts.
- **Support Women's Voices and Narratives:** Advocate for platforms that amplify women's stories, especially in Middle Eastern societies, aligning with Shafak's emphasis on storytelling as a form of resistance and empowerment.
- **Address Patriarchal Norms in Policy and Society:** Use insights from Shafak's novels to inform policies aimed at combating gender-based violence and promoting gender equality, emphasizing the importance of cultural sensitivity and intersectional approaches.
- **Encourage Eco-Feminist Perspectives:** Expand research and activism that link gender justice with ecological sustainability, inspired by the eco-resistance themes in Shafak's *The Island of Missing Trees*, to foster holistic approaches to trauma and resistance.
- **Foster Cross-Cultural Dialogue:** Utilize Shafak's works as a bridge for dialogue between Western and Middle Eastern societies, challenging stereotypes and promoting understanding of diverse female identities and feminist struggles.

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