



## Enigmatic liberation of Displaced Womanhood in Elif Shafak’s *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006) and Gharbi Mustafa’s *What Comes with the Dust* (2016)

Sawza Qader Fattah<sup>1</sup> - Hawzhen Rashadaddin Ahmed<sup>2</sup>

[hawzhen.ahmed@ena.soran.edu.iq](mailto:hawzhen.ahmed@ena.soran.edu.iq) - [sqf266@ena.soran.edu.iq](mailto:sqf266@ena.soran.edu.iq)

<sup>1+2</sup>English Department, Faculty of Arts, Soran University, Soran, Kurdistan Region, Iraq.

### Abstract

This study presents a comparative analysis of Elif Shafak’s *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006) and Gharbi M. Mustafa’s *What Comes with the Dust* (2016) to explore how these texts – written by two authors from different genders and ethnic backgrounds – depict displacement as a paradoxical tool for female liberation, giving voices to their ongoing struggles. The research examines that women in these two literary works suffer the pain of unbelonging due to dominant exclusionary discourses and that they seek settlement through self-displacement. By means of a critical framework informed by Third Wave Feminism and the postcolonial discussions, this paper examines womanhood in Turkish, Kurdish, and Armenian patriarchal communities in the texts under analysis. Furthermore, the study establishes historical linkages between female experiences – Armanoush and Nazo – being exposed to atrocities during the Armenian Genocide in 1915 and ISIS attacks on Yazidis in 2014. By means of applying comparative tools of analysis, the study investigates how social and historical legacies shape the representation(s) of women, focusing on their shared experiences of rape, slavery, and abuse across different geographical and cultural landscapes. This research argues that these authors utilize the traumatic experience of displacement not only to expose gendered violence but also to chart a path toward reconstructed identity and hard-won autonomy for their female characters.

**Keywords:** Armenian Genocide, Displacement, ISIS, Third Wave Feminism, Women.

رژگار بونی ته مومژاوی ژنایه تی ئاواره بوو له رۆمانه کانی 'بیچوه حه رامه که ی ئهسته مبول' (۲۰۰۶) ی ئه لیف " "شه فه ق و 'ئه وه ی له گه ل تۆزه که دا دیت' (۲۰۱۶) ی غه ربی مسته فا

سه وزه قادر فه تاح<sup>۱</sup> - هاوژین ره شاده دین ئه حمه د<sup>۲</sup>

<sup>۱</sup> به شی ئینگیزی، فاکه لتی ئاداب، زانکۆی سۆران، سۆران، هه ریمی کوردستان، عێراق

پوخته

ئه م توێژینه وه یه، شیکاریه کی به راوردکارانه بو زۆله که ی ئهسته نبول (۲۰۰۶) ی ئه لیف شه فه ق و ئه وه ی له گه ل خۆل دیت (۲۰۱۶) ی غه ربی مسته فا ده کات، بو لیکۆلینه وه له وه ی که چۆن ئه م کاره وێژه یانه - که له لایه ن دو نوسه ری پاشخان ره گه زی و ئیتی جیاوازه وه نوسراوان - هه لده ستن به ویناکردنی ئاواره بون که وه کو کرده یه کی ئالۆزکار کارده که ن به ره و ئازادی ژنان که ده بپته مایه ی نیشاندانی ته نگزه به رده وامه کان. ئه م توێژینه وه یه هه لده ستیت به تاوتوێکردنی ئه وه ی که ژنان له م دو کاره وێژه یه ئازاری ناشوێنی ده چێژن به هۆی ئاماده گی گوتاری هه لاوێردکاری و گه رانیان به دوای سه قامگیری له ریگه ی خۆئاواره کردن. له ریگه ی به کاره یێنانی چوارچێوه ی ره خنه ی ته وژی سییه می فیمینیزم و کۆلۆنیالیزم، ئه م باسه شه نوکه وه ی ژنبون ده کات له نیو کۆمه لگه ی تورکی و کوردی و ئه رمه نی له م دو کاره ئه ده بییه . هه روه ها باسه که پردیکی میژوپی بنیاده نیت له نیوان ئه زمونی مێینه کان - ئارمه نوش و نازۆ - که روبه روی توندوتیژی ده بنه وه له سه روه ختی جینۆسایدی ئه رمه نییه کان له ۱۹۱۵ و هیشه کانی داعش بو سه ر یه زیدییه کان له ۲۰۱۴. له ریگه ی شیکاری به راوردکاری، توێژینه وه که له و لایه نه کۆمه لایه تی و میژوییه کانه ش ده کۆلێته وه که هه لده ستن به ویناکردنی ژنان به تیشکخستنه سه ر ئه زمونی هاوبه شی لاقه کردن و کۆیلایه تی و ناره حه تکردن له شوێنگه و فره هنگی جیاواز . هه روه ها باس له وه ش ده کات که چۆن دو نوسه ره که هه لده ستن به به کاره یێنانی ئه زمونی تراوما ی ئاواره بون نه ک ته نها به له بهرچاوگرتنی توندوتیژی جێنده ری به غکو له ریگه ی مه زراندنی ناسنامه و به ده سه ته یێناتی سه ره به خۆی بو کاره کته ره ئافره ته کان.

وشه کلیله کان: جینۆسایدی ئه رمه نییه کان، ئاواره بون، داعش، شه پۆلی سییه می فیمینیزم، ژنان

## 1.1 Introduction

Literary documentation of the oppression of women is not solely grounded in historical phenomena, but is pure reconceptualization and fictional historicization of contemporary realities, manifested in economic disparities, social inequalities, and ongoing ideological devaluation of their contributions in many contexts. Elif Shafak's *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006) and Gharbi M. Mustafa's *What Comes with the Dust* (2016) are literary manifestations of systematic oppression of women who are portrayed as being subjected to displacement, rape, sexual enslavement, and profound physical and psychological abuse during two historical incidents, namely the Armenian genocide and ISIS insurgency. Both

literary works act as a platform to advocate for women's rights, equal treatment, and also give voice to the silenced women. By means of applying Third Wave Feminist approach, this study analyzes Shafak's and Mustafa's novels on women's struggles in male-dominated societies, uniquely frames the traumatic concept of displacement as a potential instrument of liberation. The analysis will be conducted through the theoretical lenses of Homi K. Bhabha's concept of "hybridity" and "in-betweenness spaces." Bhabha's "in-betweenness spaces" is a cultural space that lies between different cultures, traditions, or identities, also "in-betweenness spaces" is a place where different cultural meanings and identities are constructed (Bhandari, 2022). The study examines the literary depictions of Yezidi, Turkish, and Armenian women's experiences of rape, physical abuse, and gendered marginalization. This study aims to investigate the shared struggles of women during the ideologically framed conflicts and in post conflict contexts in the texts under analysis. It seeks to examine how these fictional narratives provide a nuanced perception of ideologically grounded cultural clash and the complex process whereby women can achieve liberation within deeply entrenched patriarchal systems.

In "Becoming the Third Wave," Rebecca Walker coined the term of "Third Wave Feminism" in 1992 that the Third Wave Feminism is a movement emerged in the early 1990s as a response to Second Wave Feminism, emphasizing diversity and intersectionality. Bell Hooks, in her work *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (1984), redefines feminism as a movement that seeks not only gender equality but also aims to end sexist oppression and exploitation. In her *History of U.S. Feminisms* (2008), Rory Dicker explores how Third Wave Feminism took a critical look at previous feminist movements, leading to a more inclusive understanding of what feminism can be. This wave recognizes that women's experiences are not all the same. It champions intersectionality and celebrates individuality, pushing back against the idea that there's one single way to be a feminist or one universal female experience. Dicker traces the movement's roots and development, acknowledging that former waves often centered the concerns of white, middle-class women, whereas Third Wave Feminism expands the conversation, giving voice to the complex and varied realities women face under patriarchy. Additionally, it sheds light on personal freedom and sexual liberation, empowering women to define feminism on their own terms.

This study brings together Third Wave Feminist ideas with concepts of hybridity and displacement to explore the literary works being investigated. In *The Location of Culture*

(1994), Homi K. Bhabha argues that the idea of identities of both colonizer and colonized are hybrid and inherently unstable. Bhabha argues that the “in-betweenness space,” where identities collide, becomes a site of negotiation and new cultural forms and faces of meanings. In *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006), the theme of hybridity is evident in the female character Armanoush, and the theme of displacement can be seen through female character Zehila. In *What Comes with the Dust* (2016), the idea of hybridity can be found in the main female character, Nazo, who joins the attack by ISIS, as well the act of displacement is portrayed by Nazo. Furthermore, for Armenian, Turkish, and Yezidi communities, the displaced identity is not merely shaped by the existence of migration and exile, but also about the cultural, psychological, and linguistic transformations that occur as a result of forced displacement, globalization and colonialism.

This study utilizes the American School of Comparative Literature for comparing Shafak's *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006) and Mustafa's *What Comes with the Dust* (2016). The American School is interdisciplinary approach that focuses on the idea on social context, as well the reflection of political, economic, and cultural conditions. Moreover, it focuses on the diachronic and synchronic similarities, and the exploration of literary texts through literary devices and universal themes such as the issues of identity, trauma, displacement, and women's consciousness and roles in patriarchal society. The American School of Comparative Literature was formed in the mid-20th century and expressed by the speech of Rene Wellek on “The Crisis of Comparative Literature,” in 1958, gives a wide theoretical basis for the interdisciplinary approach. This school steps beyond the political borders of literary texts, meaning that everything could be compared with anything else. It is a model that fuses global and interdisciplinary methods rather than direct influence, and thus, it is a cultural, historical one. It distinguishes between parallelism which deals with similarities between literary works but gives no importance to its influence. Henry Heymann Herman Remak, a key figure in shaping the American School's interdisciplinary approach to literary study, prioritized the analytical process over the final interpretation. Remak's method encourages a deep dive into the context surrounding a literary work. This means examining the ideas presented, the social environment in which it was created, and how it reflects the political, economic, and cultural conditions of the time. This approach also involves exploring the text's evolution over time (diachronic analysis) and its relationship to its contemporary setting (synchronic analysis). Ultimately, the goal is to understand the work more fully by examining its literary techniques and the universal

themes it explores (Remak, 1961). Meanwhile, Harry Levin explores the connection between literature and other disciplines, arguing that American School is broader than French School, because American School adopts a broader thematic and interdisciplinary perspective, also how literary texts are read and interpreted in different cultures (Edel, 1994). In the light of this, his study utilizes the American School of Comparative Literature for comparing the experience of Turkish and Armenian women in Shafak's *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006) and Yezidi women in Mustafa's *What Comes with the Dust* (2016) during the act of displacement.

## 1.2 Literature Review

Elif Shafak's *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006) and Gharbi M. Mustafa's *What Comes with the Dust* (2016) depict the patriarchal social structures on women's lives, particularly within male-dominated societies shaped by conflict and oppression. Consequently, they open critical discussions on representation, displacement, and hybridity as key frameworks for understanding women's experiences in the aftermath of the Armenian genocide and ISIS violence. The texts fictionally illustrate the incidents of the Armenian genocide and the ISIS invasion during which women were subjected to displacement, rape, physical abuse, and systemic gendered marginalization. Several studies have been conducted about these two literary works through different approaches.

Khorsheed Ahmed, Kawyar Yaqob Ahmed, and Hishryar Mohammed Ameen, in their study, "Principles of Resistance in Gharbi Mustafa's *What Comes with the Dust Goes with the Wind* (2016)", explore the resilience and resistance of Yezidi women during the ISIS attacks. The study examines different forms of violence inflicted upon Yezidi women and its impact on their willpower and faith. Various modes of resistance are analyzed through manifestations of Yezidi women's strength, including self-confidence, faith, and individual empowerment. This study provides a comprehensive exploration of the themes of survival and resistance, as it employs close reading of the text as its methodology. The second section summarizes the findings of various studies related to the violence and suffering experienced by Yezidi women. The study portrays the brutal reality that Yezidi women endured, while the novel's structure and character development enable the researchers to delve into a deeper understanding of the work's major themes: survival and resistance. Ultimately, this study highlights the importance of personal willpower and faith in

overcoming the trauma experienced by Yezidi women during and after the ISIS attacks (Ahmed, et al., 2021).

Nyaz Ahmed Faris and Sirwan Khurshid Smail, in “Gender, Ethnicity, and Religion in Gharbi M. Mustafa’s *What Comes with the Dust Goes with the Wind* (2016)”, explore the different forms of oppression and enslavement of Yezidi women during the ISIS attacks. The study examines physical, spiritual, and verbal abuse perpetrated by ISIS terrorists against Yezidi women. It portrays this lived reality through a fictional female character. Nazo Heydo represents thousands of Yezidi women who endured similar experiences. Through the lens of intersectional feminism, the study analyzes and discusses how gender, ethnicity, and religion constitute the main factors that led the protagonist, Nazo, to her traumatic experience as an ISIS hostage. Furthermore, this study presents *What Comes with the Dust* (2016) as a dynamic depiction of the genocide and enslavement of Yezidi women during the ISIS attacks, particularly the systematic taking of women as slaves. As a result, the study concludes that religion plays a significant role in determining Yezidi women’s fate. However, it also reveals the devastating reality that Yezidi women are victimized not only by ISIS but also by the patriarchal structures within their own Yezidi society (Faris & Smail, 2024).

Moh Zaimil Alivin, in his study “Identity Construction of Istanbulies in Elif Shafak’s *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006)”, examines the process of identity construction, and Turkish and Armenian-American conflict identities which has been mentioned in Elif Shafak’s *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006); therefore, this study applies the theory of identity construction by Castells (2010), while resistance identity, project identity, legitimizing identity, and theory of social remembering are covered by Misztal (2003). As a result, the study identifies three central aspects through which the identity construction of Istanbulies is revealed: traditions, belief, and memory (Alivin, 2017).

Farhad Ahmad, in his study entitled “Affiliations, Aversions, and Assertions: Memory, Identity, and Amnesia in Elif Shafak’s *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006)”, investigates the connection between amnesia, memory, and identity in *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006) by Elif Shafak. His study presents a critical analysis of the historical memory of violence and inhumanity of Turks and Armenian-American citizens. Personal memory has a great impact on shaping and linking one’s past to their future; contextualizing memory is also used as a main source of personal collective memory. As a result, this study concluded that not all

incidents can be remembered, nor entirely forgotten. After all, a little remembering or forgetting is natural and inconsequential (Ahmad, 2024).

Mahmood Rakan Ahmed, in his article entitled “Elif Shafak’s *The Bastard of Istanbul: A Feminist Approach*”, explores modern women in Turkey through a feminism lens. Zeliha, the heroine of the novel is represented as a perfect example of modern woman has grown up in a new developed Turkish Society. The novel’s events revolve around women living within a patriarchal society, where men hold authority and women are oppressed. Furthermore, the novel under-covers a series of traumatic events that occurred in Zeliha’s early life; her fear of being judged or killed forced her to remain silent. Later, she attempts to break the rules established by this male-dominated society. Despite those obstacles and difficulties, Zeliha continues fighting against the false customs and ideologies that represent women as fragile creatures who can be easily broken. As a result, Zeliha serves as a perfect example of woman within Turkish patriarchal society who stood against the false representation of women as weak and ignorant beings whose sole purpose is bearing children (Ahmed, 2022).

Ozlem Ogut Yazicioglu, in her study entitled “Who is the Other? Melting in the Pot in Elif Shafak’s *The Saint of Incipient Insanities* and *The Bastard of Istanbul*”, explores how Shafak’s *The Saint of Incipient Insanities* (2004) and *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006) are set in Turkey and United States. Both novels mainly focus on themes of migration and transculturalism, while undermining the basic boundaries of identity, nation, and home. Therefore, *The Saint of Incipient Insanities* (2004) revolves around the relationship between a group of international students in Boston, and mainly focuses on the relationship between Omar, a Turkish student and Gail, a Jewish-American student. They eventually marry, but she later commits suicide by jumping on the bridge. In contrast, *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006) narrates the story of four generations of Turkish and Armenian-American women. Additionally, this article demonstrates universal experience of Turkish women as “the other” in patriarchal societies and examines the struggles women face in male-dominated societies. Furthermore, Turkish women have consistently been forced to hide dark secrets to protect their family’s honor. The article further under-covers images, objects, and relationships that play a role in creating the bond between the past and the present to recreate conceptions of identity and history (Yazicioglu, 2019).

Alissa Simon, in her study entitled “Mythology, Taboo and Cultural Identity in Elif Shafak’s *The Bastard of Istanbul*”, explores the space which has been created by physical

bodies in Elif Shafak's *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006). Shafak explicitly employs cultural identity, which can be seen through dialogues and how it interacts with social pressure and general stereotyping. The article applies Roland Barthes's idea of mythology to analyze the functions of main characters in the novel, incorporating Ruth Benedict's idea on cultural analysis and the idea of intersectionality by Kimberly when examining marginalized groups in the novel. Consequently, mythological elements allow *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006) to transcend its boundaries and create a dialogue of healing and redemption (Simon, 2015).

The current study investigates Elif Shafak's *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006) and Gharbi Mustafa's *What Comes with the Dust* (2016) to examine the concept of displacement through Third Wave Feminism. This study differs from the previous body of research by examining Elif Shafak and Gharbi Mustafa's selected works. The study explores the position of displaced women, examining how they have been marginalized, raped, and subjected to physical and psychological abuse within their patriarchal societies. It also examines literary representations of female characters in the selected texts, investigating how Turkish, Kurdish, and Armenian women have been misrepresented and exploring women's position as "the other" in patriarchal societies. Furthermore, it explores how both Shafak and Mustafa, as fiction writers, incorporate realistic incidents—the Armenian genocide and ISIS attacks—into their literary works, and how their fictional female characters represent real Turkish, Kurdish, and Armenian women. Therefore, this study demonstrates that Shafak and Mustafa serve as authoritative voices in their novels regarding the representation of women, their experiences, and how they find ways to make their voices heard again in societies where women have been silenced. The study aims to examine the bitter experiences of Armenian and Yezidi women during military disputes and oppressions across two historical periods together.

## 2. Displaced Womanhood

This study investigates the status of womanhood in Elif Shafak's *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006) and Gharbi M. Mustafa's *What Comes with the Dust* (2016) while experiencing physical and psychological displacement. The study also looks at how the narrators in both novels explore the gendered aspects of displacement, highlighting what causes it and what it means for women's lives. It questions why women are so often forced to leave their homelands, and what happens when they attempt to resist: they are punished. Jeremy Black, in *Maps and Politics* (1997), makes an important point that maps are not just neutral

representations of the world, but they are political tools that can push certain agendas by choosing what to show and what to leave out. He emphasizes that maps do not simply reflect geography; they are shaped by the social, political, cultural, and economic forces around them (Black, 1997). In *A Stranger at Home* (2011), Christy Jordan-Fenton and Margaret Pokiak Fenton explain the process of rediscovering a familiar place and profound effects it has on individuals. The authors demonstrate how displacement can generate a sense of detachment from one's culture, language, religion, and identity. It highlights the emotional impact, and the difficulties of rediscovering a sense of belonging, also loss of cultural ties that leads to losing identity (Fenton & Fenton, 2011). Furthermore, in "Imaginary Homelands," Salman Rushdie examines the emotional and psychological challenges associated with displacement and exile. He highlights the complexities of cultural interaction and the formation of hybrid identities shaped by both losing and mixing of different cultures (Rushdie, 1991). Displacement is often associated with negative connotations and traumatic experiences, while this study demonstrates its possibility to create opportunities for new beginnings as it is reflected in *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006) and *What Comes with the Dust* (2016). Furthermore, this research will analyze the conditions of female characters in the chosen texts through the concept of "hybridity," and "in-betweenness spaces," when it comes to Turkish, Kurdish, and Armenian women's experience in patriarchal societies. The novels expose gender imbalance in male-dominated societies, class conflict, the exploitations of marginalized groups, and the societal barriers that prevent interracial marriage.

## **2.1 Liberating Womanhood: Gendered Oppression in Elif Shafak's *The Bastard of Istanbul***

In *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006), Shafak shows displacement as something complex, which is both a source of oppression and surprisingly a possible route to women's freedom. The novel tells the stories of two women, Armanoush and Zeliha, who face different kinds of oppression and exile. Both are obliged to leave their homelands, which leaves them feeling disconnected from their roots, ancestors, and the cultures they grew up in. Displacement is not entirely destructive in their lives, it also becomes transformative, opening up new ways for them to think about who they are and where they belong. As such, Shafak illustrates how women often endure similar experiences of hardship and resilience:

I am the grandchild of genocide survivors who lost all their relatives at the hands of Turkish butchers in 1915, but I myself have been brainwashed to deny the genocide because I was raised by some Turk named Mustafa! (Shafak, 2006, p. 53)

The novel depicts the inner rage and pain of the Armenian-American character Armanoush, who is a descendant of victims of the Armenian genocide in 1915. It explains how this historical experience significantly shapes her lost Armenian identity. Armanoush is frustrated by how she has been “brainwashed” into denying the genocide, even though it was during this tragedy that her ancestors were stripped of their privileges and land. In *Grandchildren: The Hidden Legacy of ‘Lost’ Armenians in Turkey*, Ayşe Gül Altınay explores the experiences of Armenian genocide survivors who were assimilated, converted, and were forced to adopt a new identity shaped by trauma. She criticizes this genocide and its impact on Armenian identity and the silence imposed on them (Altınay, 2014). Similar to Armanoush’s condition, she criticizes Armenian genocide for “brainwashed to deny the genocide” encapsulates the conflict between collective memory and the pain that haunted the Armenians, revealing the complexity of diasporic identity, where Armanoush finds herself torn between personal truth and national denial. Moreover, the whole scene depicts an Armenian child was raised by a Turkish man, and the description of “Turkish butchers” is a hyperbole which is used by Armanoush to describe the horror of genocide. Furthermore, Fethiye Çetin, in her memoir, *My Grandmother: A Memoir*, she narrates her grandmother’s experience during Armenian genocide that she was raised by a Muslim Turkish woman. Çetin reflects on her grandmother’s encounter with hybrid identity and her experience of Armenian genocide about which she was forced to remain silent (Çetin, 2004). Similarly, Armanoush is raised by a Turkish man like how Çetin’s grandmother was raised by a Turkish woman, and Armanoush’s hybrid identity is a product of clash of Armenian and Turkish cultures. Therefore, Shafak illustrates Armanoush’s quest for identity and belonging in the following:

I've never been able to become an Armenian in the first place... I need to find my identity. You know what I've been secretly contemplating? Going to visit my family's house in Turkey. Grandma always talks about this gorgeous house in Istanbul. I'll go and see it with my own eyes. This is a journey into my family's past, as well as into my future. (Shafak, 2006, p. 117)

This scene reflects Armanoush's internal monologue and her stream of consciousness to express the way she wants to revisit the place where her ancestors were forced to leave once. Armanoush thus stands face to face with her newly constructed hybrid identity thereby reminding of colonial impacts on the once colonized objects in an ambivalent manner. As Bhabha maintains: "Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. It displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 159) . Armanoush's displacement, therefore, can lead to experiencing disorientation and negative experiences while forming her hybrid identity. It coincides with Armanoush's metaphorical reflection saying: "This is a journey into my family's past, as well into my future." Her incomplete status that she lacks a full sense of belonging to no accurate place demonstrates her being stuck between Armenian identity and Turkish identity. She is thus neither fully Armenian nor Turkish. In *The Young Turks' Crime Against Humanity*, Taner Akçam discusses the socio-historical formation of Armenian hybrid identity that Armenians were culturally Turkified and Turkification policy was fully imposed on their previous Armenian identity (Akçam, 2012). The depiction of the Armenian assimilated identity in the novel falls into the same category and the novel documents the real historical incidents as argued by Altınay and Akçam. Similarly, Armanoush and her ancestors were Turkified, and forced to adopt Turkish culture and identity.

Meanwhile, traumatic experiences are displayed in *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006) through female character Zeliha, who is depicted as an emotionally and physically abused character. Hence, such construction of Armenian hybrid identity is presented in the novel through the Armenian characters Armanoush, who is traumatized by the Armenian genocide. It is a disturbing experience from the past affecting both the present and future. It is reminiscent of Sigmund Freud's analysis of trauma that "the traumatic neurosis has shown us that an experience which brought about too powerful a shock to the protective shield against stimuli gives rise to a disturbance on a large scale in the functioning of the energy of the mind" (Freud, 1899, p. 54). Trauma, for Freud, is thus a psychological wound that is caused by traumatic incident from the past experience of one's life. Therefore, Shafak illustrates Zeliha experiencing the act of rape in the following:

The embarrassment of being exposed in her underwear prevailing over everything else. But then, in an instant, a surge of panic washed the humiliation away. She tried to block him with one hand while with the other she attempted to pull her skirt back

down, but in next to no time he had lifted it again. She fought, he fought, she slapped him, he slapped her harder. (Shafak, 2006, p. 316)

This agonizing scene describes a sister being raped by her own brother. It depicts both emotional and physical abuse, culminating in rape and violence, an experience that haunts Zeliha all her life. The scene begins with Mustafa criticizing Zeliha's miniskirt and escalates to the horrific act of raping her while she is wearing it. Although Zeliha resists against this act, her fragile body cannot withstand the force of a physically dominant man. This pivotal moment captures an act of resistance against brutal violence, reminding us of how vulnerable women really are in a male-dominated societies. In *The Stone Building and Other Places*, Asli Erdogan addresses women's traumatic experience in Turkish society and criticizes how deeply rooted patriarchal structures lead to psychological and physical suffering. She argues that physical abuse is often used as a tool to control women's bodies and silence their agency (Erdogan, 2018). Similarly, Mustafa does not seek for pleasure when he raped his sister, but to control Zeliha's body and behaviors, also imposing male power over women in Turkish patriarchal society.

In *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006), Shafak applies the concept of displacement both as a form of oppression and path to liberation through both female characters Armanoush and Zeliha. The novel follows the way both female characters experience different forms of oppression and exile which leads to traumatic experience. Both characters feel detachment from their ancestors and identity crisis is constructed during the act of displacement.

## 2.2 The Double Edge of Displaced Womanhood in *What Comes with the Dust*

Similar to Shafak's *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006), Mustafa in *What Comes with the Dust* (2016) depicts the concept of displacement both as a mechanism of oppression and a tool for liberation. The novel narrates the story of Nazo, a young Yezidi woman, who endures the horrors of the ISIS invasion. Abducted and abused, Nazo experiences intense physical and emotional trauma. As Mustafa portrays the shared suffering of women during wartime atrocities, especially in patriarchal societies where violence is used to assert control and suppress identity:

He yanked her hair and forced her head into his lap. 'If you make any more moves, I will cave your head in with the butt of my rifle,' he snapped...There he forced her to

watch a video of ISIS men strangling a woman to death. He warned her that she would suffer the same fate if she disobeyed him or showed any resistance. (Mustafa, 2016, p. 44)

This scene depicts a realistic incident through young female character, Nazo, who goes through harsh experiences at the hands of ISIS terrorists. ISIS is a terrorist group that manifested after the United States invasion of Iraq in 2003, and they were inspired by al-Qaida in Iraq. ISIS grew deeper in 2014 and gained global attention for committing brutal crimes such as, mass executions, beheading, and sexual slavery. ISIS's main target was Yezidi people, also destroying their culture and imposing radical Islamic beliefs on them. They controlled Yezidi women, moved them from one place to another and forced them to marry and serve them as faithful concubines. This fictional depiction is a mere reflection of the realistic incidents that happened to Yezidi women as Farida Khalaf, in her memoir, *The Girl Who Escaped ISIS: My Story*, that she and other Yezidi women experienced enslavement, physical violence, rape, and were sold multiple times. According to her, physical violence was a means of punishment when Yezidi women attempted to escape or rejected to convert to Islamic religion (Khalaf, 2016). Similarly, Nazo was subjected to rape and physical abuse, also faced punishment whenever she exhibited any form of rejection or resistance. Such physical exposure to enslavement and violation is deeply entrenched in Nazo's experience that causes an unfulfilled identity crisis after being relocated to a new place by ISIS fighters:

Her soul would continue to reincarnate in different bodies until she achieved a certain level of purity... But Nazo's biggest fear was that she would reincarnate into the body of a person from another religion and lose her own faith (Mustafa, 2016, p. 47).

This scene depicts Nazo's fear of losing her religious identity due to her forced conversion. In "Yazidi Women During the ISIS War," Roza Omer Hamadamin criticizes ISIS fighters for causing forced displacement during ISIS invasion. Many Yezidi women faced forced displacement from one place to another, and it led to clash of cultures, hybrid identity, forced conversion and psychological struggles of Yezidi women (Hamadamin, 2022). Similarly, Nazo fears of being reincarnated in another religion and losing her religious identity. The sense of losing her own identity is her biggest fear. According to Bhabha's concept of "hybridity," identity is flexible, not fixed. A certain image of identity is pre-given

to each person, but it is shaped and distorted by external influences. An image of identity is constructed within specific historical, cultural, and social contexts that relate to a particular territory. When ideas challenge or fall outside of that territory, they create a different identity beyond the “pre-given” one. In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha refers to the concept of the “in-betweenness spaces” as a liminal space between cultures, identities, or languages—where hybrid identities are formed in the act of migration. This concept of the “in-betweenness spaces” can be applied to Nazo’s hybrid identity during the act of forced displacement, as she no longer fully belongs to the Yezidi culture after ISIS fighters imposed their religion, culture, and traditions on all Yezidi prisoners.

The concept of homeland turns shaky for Nazo since it is no longer a safe haven that could embrace her. She starts a new beginning by leaving to an unknown culture awaiting her:

Nazo walked with slow but confident steps behind Angelika and Sarah down the corridor, then the aisle of the plane. (Mustafa, 2016, p. 173)

Her painful past and memories still haunt her, and she no longer feels safe in her own homeland due to traumatic experiences she went through during ISIS invasion. In *Gender and Nation*, Nira Yuval-Davis discusses how women often leave their homeland to escape from violence, oppression, and war. This act of displacement is a form of seeking safety and protection (Yuval-Davis, 1997). Similarly, Nazo starts a new beginning by leaving her homeland and traumatic experiences behind. As side effects of Nazo’s traumatic experience are being examined in the following scene:

Today is Nazo Heyde’s wedding day, and today she will set herself on fire. Wearing her white gown, Nazo walks toward the bathroom door. In her right hand, she clutches the handle of a kerosene jerry can. Once inside, she turns and locks the door. ... Warm tears streak her cheeks as she raises the heavy jerry can over her head. (Mustafa, 2016, p. 5)

Shafak demonstrates side effects of such traumatic experiences after forced displacement. Nazo, as a Yezidi slave held by ISIS terrorists, suffers from psychological trauma after being sexually and physically abused and raped by different men. The above scene portrays the

image of a young woman who attempts to set herself on fire during her wedding day because she is forced to marry an Arab man. Nazo's experience is that of those Yezidi women who went through such violence. In "Trauma and Perceived Social Rejection Among Yazidi women and Girls Who Survived Enslavement and Genocide," Hawkar Ibrahim criticizes the act of displacement during the ISIS invasion and the psychological impact it has on Yezidi women. He argues that forced displacement can lead to sexual violence and psychological trauma, and the survivors are often haunted by these memories and their long-term effects (Ibrahim, 2018). Similarly, Nazo's attempt to set herself on fire reflects her traumatic experience and serves as a form of resistance, whereby she chooses death over marrying a stranger.

### **2.3 The Encounter of Cross-Cultural Experiences in the Bastard of Istanbul and What Comes with the Dust**

In *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006), Shafak illustrates Armenian women as being victims when they face displacement. Armanoush represents the predicaments of displacement; she is a grandchild of genocide survivors, as she states, "I am the grandchild of genocide survivors who lost all their relatives at the hands of Turkish butchers in 1915" (Shafak, 2006, p. 53). This sentence introduces Armanoush as a victim of the Armenian genocide that was committed by the Turks. At the same time, she goes through an act of displacement. In "Lullabies and the Memory of Pain: Armenian Women's Remembrance of the Past in Turkey" Melissa Bilal explores Armenian women's displacement and trauma. She indicates that Armenian women are programmed to deny Armenian genocide and forced to leave their homeland (Bilal, 2019). Similarly, Mustafa, in *What Comes with the Dust* (2016), demonstrates a similar issue of women in the act of displacement through the character of Nazo: "You are my share of the gift that God has bestowed upon the mujahedeen" (Mustafa, 2016, p. 44). Mustafa demonstrates that Nazo, a young Yezidi woman, undergoes forced displacement by ISIS attackers who take her as a hostage. Lamiya Haji Bashar, a Yezidi woman human right activist and survivor, in her personal testimony, declares that Yezidi women were forced to move from one place to another. She speaks of the gendered and brutal nature of the displacement where the people, particularly Yezidi women, were targeted for enslaving and raping (Bashar, 2016). Thus, in the light of the American School of Comparative Literature, both Shafak and Mustafa engage in the same theme which is to say women during the time of displacement, also

the parallelism between both texts is to explore the experiences of women during displacement and emphasize the underlying causes behind it. The novels reveal that women are often the primary targets of war crimes, with both Yezidi and Armenian women being forcibly uprooted from their homelands and subjected to various forms of trauma and oppression.

Moreover, the forced displacement of women is reflected in the women's lives when they are forced to accept a new identity and be a member of a new community with its distinctive culture and religion. As Armanoush, in *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006) states: "I need to find my identity" (Shafak, 2006, p. 117), depicting a clear sign of Armanoush's aspiration to recover her identity which has been lost during the act of displacement. In *They Can Live in the Desert but Nowhere Else*, Ronald Grigor Suny argues that the Armenian genocide is a serious identity crisis. According to him, the Armenian diaspora's displacement resulted in the loss of the Armenian identity, language, religious practices, cultural memory, the historical connections between language and culture, mass killings, forced deportations, and erasure of cultures (Suny, 2015). Similarly, Mustafa in *What Comes with the Dust* (2016) mentions: "Nazo's biggest fear was that she would reincarnate into the body of a person from another religion and lose her own faith" (Mustafa, 2016, p. 47), indicating the fear of losing a religious identity because of the forced displacement. Nareen Shammo, a Yezidi journalist, and human rights activist has not held back her critical stance towards the ISIS attacks when she reflects on their impact on the Yezidi traditions and religious identity. She argues that ISIS terrorists forced Yezidi people to be displaced, also erase Yezidi's identity and tear their communities apart (Shammo, 2015). Therefore, in the light the American School of Comparative Literature, a diachronic similarity is found between both Armanoush and Nazo, as well both Shafak and Mustafa examine the issue of losing identity during the act of displacement, regarding to their cultural contextualization.

The act of displacement as a tool for liberation is one of the central themes in *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006) and *What comes with the Dust* (2016). As Shafak presents women's displacement through the character of Armanoush: "This is a journey into my family's past, as well as into my future" (Shafak, 2006, p.117), it demonstrates how Armanoush decided to revisit her homeland and reconnect with her ancestor's cultures and traditions, also liberating from the traumatic experience of the Armenian genocide. In *The Historiographic Perversion*, Marc Nichanian explores similar ideas in his work, where

he examines the Armenian genocide and the significance of displacement in shaping historical memory and personal identity. He argues that displacement is not always a catastrophic act but can also serve as a means of liberating from pre-given identity, and language. He discusses that displacement was an act taken by Armenian people in order to survive, as well as a way to redefine their Armenian identity (Nichanian, 2009). Armanoush liberated from her pre-given identity by revisiting her homeland after Armenian genocide. Similarly, Mustafa in *What Comes with the Dust* (2016) presents the act of displacement as a tool for liberation through the character of Nazo: "Nazo walked with slow but confident steps behind Angelika and Sarah down the corridor, then the aisle of the plane" (2016, p. 173). This scene reveals how Nazo decides to go abroad with her baby, Sarah, and Angelika to start a new life after fleeing from ISIS terrorists and the threats she faced in patriarchal society for bringing a "bastard." In *Women, War, Violence and Learning*, Shahrzad Mojab explores the act of displacement of Yezidi survivors after ISIS captivity. She argues that the act of displacement as liberation from traditional gender roles imposed on Yezidi women by ISIS and their patriarchal society; also many Yezidi women seek for a fresh start in different places (Mojab, 2010). Moreover, Nazo seeks a new place, so she can start a new life and liberate from past traumatic experiences. Thus, in the light of the American School of Comparative Literature, the parallelism between both texts is to demonstrate the act of displacement as a tool for liberation through their female characters, also this diachronic similarity can lead the act of displacement as a tool for liberation and new beginning. Displacement is not solely a negative experience but can also be a transformative process and a path to liberation.

Women's traumatic experiences and rape as a form of controlling are other central themes displayed in both texts, where Yezidi and Turkish women endure physical, emotional, and psychological suffering. In *What comes with the Dust* (2016), Mustafa illustrates the traumatic experience through Nazo: "if you make any more moves, I will crave your head in with the butt of my rifle" (Mustafa, 2016, p, 44). It highlights the brutal experiences Yezidi women face, including rape, and physical violence, performed by ISIS terrorists as a form of colonizing and controlling Yezidi women. In "Liberated, Not Free: Yazidi Women After Islamic State Captivity," Gina Vale argues that ISIS terrorists use sexual slavery strategically as a form to colonize and dominate Yezidi women, aiming to break down their identity, culture, and religion. She further states that even after their physical liberation, Yezidi women are still haunted by such traumatic experiences (Vale, 2020).

Additionally, Nazo was raped and physically abused multiple times and haunted by this experience. Similarly, Shafak, in *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006), demonstrates traumatic experiences through Zaliha: “she attempted to pull her skirt back down, but in next to no time he had lifted it again” (Shafak, 2006, p. 316). The act of a brother raping his own sister for disobeying him demonstrates that the assault is not driven by desire, but rather by a need to assert male authority over women. In *Sürüne Sürüne Erkek Olmak*, Pınar Selek criticizes Turkish patriarchal society for using sexual violence as a tool for controlling women. She claims that rape functions as a mechanism within patriarchal system to suppress women, enforcing gender roles, and empowering male dominance (Selek, 2011). In a similar vein, Zeliha experienced rape as a means for controlling her body and behavior. Therefore, in the light of the American School of Comparative Literature, this study demonstrates the parallelism between Turkish and Yezidi women during the act of rape and physical violence as a form of controlling women. Regarding cultural contextualization, Turkish and Yezidi women share similar traumatic experiences in patriarchal societies and during war crimes.

### Conclusion

This study has examined Elif Shafak’s *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006) and Gharbi Mustafa’s *What Comes with the Dust* (2016), which are the depiction of multifaceted struggles that Yezidi, Armenian, and Turkish women have faced within the context of conflict and war. It explored that Shafak and Mustafa’s works are pure reflections of gendered conflicts generated by patriarchal structures, cultural and traditional norms, and politicized religious mindsets. Third Wave Feminism was employed for this study as a means for analyzing the texts, also focusing on Bhabha’s “hybridity” and “in-betweenness spaces.” It has therefore established a critical analysis to explore marginalized and silenced women, and the act of resistance within postcolonial and patriarchal systems. This study demonstrated the shared, yet differentiated experiences, of women despite their different backgrounds; Yezidi, Armenian, and Turkish women are united in their confrontation with patriarchal structures, cultural and traditional norms. This study thus analyzes that such predicaments lead to paths towards liberation. The act of displacement, initially a tool of oppression, is transformed into a tool for liberation as practiced and embodied by Armanoush (Armenian) and Nazo (Yezidi). Hybrid identity is correspondingly represented through both female characters Nazo and Armanoush, who experience forced displacement. Female

characters are haunted by traumatic experiences being shaped by patriarchal structures and violent acts of war. The study therefore demonstrates that Shafak and Mustafa's works are not merely stories, but are also acts of literary testimonies. They give voice to the silenced figures and challenge the historical marginalization of women's voices.

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