



In Response to Modernity: A Study of *Ten Minutes and 38 Seconds in this Strange World* and *Black Milk* as Post-Postmodernist Texts

Huma Saeed¹

Huma Ahmad²

¹*Ph.D. Scholar, Lecturer at National University of Modern Languages (Lahore Campus)*

²*Ph. D. Scholar, Lecturer at University of Lahore, Lahore*

Abstract

The study explores the notion of ‘Modernity’ in the two texts *Ten Minutes and 38 Seconds in This Strange World* (2019) and *Black Milk: On Motherhood and Writing* (2007), written by British Turkish novelist Elif Shafak. Modernity contends German philosopher Jurgen Habermas is an ongoing process of rationalizing. In contradiction to the postmodern and post-structural theorists’ view that modernity has ended, Habermas argues it is an incomplete project initiated by scholars of Enlightenment. Moreover, Habermas contends that Postmodernism is a critique of modernity. The study views post-Postmodernism as a contemporary critical response to modernity. It analyses the role of modernity in steering the discourse of women and the outcasts of society to the center in the chosen texts. Modernity manifests itself in Shafak’s art of storytelling, as it aspires to bridge the cognitive and emotional gaps left by postmodern irony. The study delimits the vast notion of modernity to the exploration of two questions: Firstly, how does modernity help in bringing people close to each other by establishing relationships of friendship based on trust and sincerity? Secondly, what are the effects of modernity on women writers’ choice between their career and their motherhood responsibilities? in postmodern and post-postmodern times? The study seeks to open the research gamut for aspiring researchers to explore new avenues and a cosmopolitan space for tabooed and marginalized persons. Furthering the cause of providing a fecund ground for women who are self-reflexive and ready to respond to modernity in the rapidly changing present times.

Keywords: Post-Postmodernism, Modernity, Women, Writing, Career

Introduction

Elif Shafak is an award-winning British-Turkish contemporary writer, political scientist, activist, and feminist. Adequately equipped with her experience of multicultural belongings, Shafak has responded to the challenges of the present times through her art of storytelling. Freedom of choice and individual liberty in deciding one’s sexual lifestyle are major concerns of the contemporary era. Identity politics, sexism, fundamentalism, and nationalism erode human relations and relations of trust and friendship. Solidarity and feelings of empathy for others and sisterhood among women are major themes of Shafak’s novels. She brings people belonging to different backgrounds and having different personalities in her novel *Ten Minutes and 38 Seconds in This Strange World*. She has placed them in a situation that demands them to make choices and rise above their differences. They take control of their lives by taking decisions and listening to their inner voices. Shafak skillfully promotes solidarity and sisterhood among her characters and presents prudently a solution to cope with the inherent diversity human of nature. Britain and Maynard (1984, p. 199) point out, "domination always involves the objectification of the dominated; all forms of oppression imply the devaluation of the subjectivity of the oppressed."



The term postmodernism is a debatable one, specifically in literary theory (Bordo,1992) ‘There are many channels for this new supplanting cultural logic, this shift to a ruling belief system. To name a few, alter modernism, postmodernism, digimodernism, metamodernism, performative, post-digital, post-humanism, after modernism, and post-postmodern (Giddens, 2017) Postmodernism is a late-twentieth-century architectural, artistic, and critical movement that has expanded into the field of literature. Postmodernism is linked to Deconstruction and Poststructuralism. It is essentially the end of modernism, and it is also linked to Reader-Response Theory. In the United States, postmodern literature began in 1972. The term "postmodern literature" refers to a literary movement that emerged after World War II. Some notable novelists with ties to postmodern literature include Kurt Vonnegut, Vladimir Nabokov, Thomas Pynchon, Ishmael Reed, John Barth, and William Gaddis. In the post-postmodern world, judicious acceptance of differences and diverse tendencies act as existential glue, binding the existential crevices by yielding meanings to nuances of human life. Postmodern and post-structuralism scholars Derrida, and Michael Foucault, rejected modernity and alleged that in its celebration of reason and logic, modernity has pushed the discourse of women and marginalized persons to the periphery. Modernity, argues Habermas is a continuing process. One of the major reasons which held modernity redundant unconvincing after World War II was increased interference of the state into the ‘public sphere’ which affected the ‘lifeworld’ of people. It hindered the growth of the democratic public sphere and affected the ‘lifeworld’ of people. In Habermas’s understanding, the public sphere is the sphere that should be separate from the state. It should be separate from the market and the economy, and it should be separate from the private interest of the people. The public sphere should be a place that provides the opportunity for citizens to discuss, debate, and argument, to come to a kind of consensus on what constitutes the public good. The ‘life world’ of people can be improved by the active participation of people in the ‘public sphere’, by promoting dialogue and communication among them. State interference in the public sphere triggered by globalization led to feelings of anger, frustration, anxiety, and mistrust among people in postmodern and post-postmodern times. Globalization, on one hand, has shortened distances and changed the world into a global village, but on the other hand, it has triggered inequalities, insecurities, mistrust, and resentment among people.

Max Weber viewed ‘cultural modernity as the separation of substantive reason expressed in religion and metaphysics into three autonomous spheres namely, science, morality and art.’ (Giddens,2015) Enlightenment Philosophers wanted through their project of modernity waned to extend the ‘accumulated of specialized culture to enrichment of the everyday life.’ Post-postmodernism is modernity manifested in its latest contours and colors. Post-postmodernism text is characterized by the copulation of both reason and faith strives to promote faith and trust in humane values. It bridges the emotional and cognitive gaps left by postmodernist irony. ‘The postmodern texts cloak the readers’ mind in abstruse verbosity where art extends no meaning and history narrates no truth; and language contorts rather to inform reality.’ (Ahmad, 2020) ‘Modernity revolts against the normalizing functions of tradition; modernity lives on the experience of rebelling against all that is normative. (Richters, 1988) In his book *The*



Consequences of Modernity (2015), Anthony Giddens defines modern society as such which is ready to reflect upon its own traditional values and is ready to accept changes in order to keep pace with the changing times. Jordan Peterson said in an interview ‘to believe means to act it out. It does not mean to state’ (Prager, 2019).

Post-Postmodernism reconstructs the deconstructed connection and relation between reader and text by tempering reason with faith. The main definition of "trust" in the Oxford English Dictionary describes it as "confidence in or reliance on some quality or attribute of a person or thing, or the truth of a statement. Post-Postmodernism introduces feelings of belonging and connection in the isolated and dissociated life of postmodern man. By appealing to the innate human emotions of empathy and care, modernity helps in inculcating faith, trust, and sincerity among people and generates healthy ‘dialogue’ and ‘communication action’ and sincere performance. Both selected texts by Shafak are excellent examples of post-Postmodernism. She promotes empathy for women and the outcasts of society through her art of storytelling. Empathy is a most powerful emotion and acts as an existential glue, binding all humans, regardless of their race, gender, and inequalities into the powerful bond of humanity.

Theoretical Framework

This is a qualitative cum analytical study and is anchored by Jurgen Habermas’s Theory of Modernity: The Unfinished Project. Modernity posits Habermas is the child of Enlightenment scholars and is nurtured by reason and democracy. This research piece is an analysis of two primary texts including ‘*Ten Minutes and 38 Seconds in this Strange World*’ and ‘*Black Milk*’ written by British-Turkish author Elif Shafak. Anthony Giddens’s critical essay ‘Consequences of Modernity’ Moreover, journal articles, newspapers, and interviews are the secondary sources of the study. The analytical research methodology is most suitable for its delivery of an unbiased and modern gaze into the chosen texts. The novel ‘Ten Minutes and 38 Seconds is fiction and is populated by characters with multicultural belongings. The other novel ‘Black Milk’ is a blend of Shafak’s journey into motherhood and its related postpartum depression. The book is also an account of the experiences of Victorian and twentieth-century female writers. The chosen research methodology is supportive in the exploration of the texts for the answers to questions raised in the study. Firstly, how does modernity help in bringing people close to each other by establishing relationships of friendship based on trust and sincerity? Secondly, what are the effects of modernity on women writers’ choice between their career and their motherhood responsibilities? in postmodern and post-postmodern times? The study aims to explore the chosen texts in the context of post-Postmodernist scholarship, and to assert the idea that ‘Modernity’ has not marginalized the issues of women and outcasts of society, as alleged by postmodern scholars of deconstruction; rather ‘modernity’ in the contemporary era has pushed to the center the problems of marginalized persons, including women, transgenders, LGBTQ, by tempering reason with faith and promoting trust, dialogue, performance and sincerity among people.



Literature Review

Postmodern literature exemplifies a culture that exemplifies postmodern living. This type of literature also reflects an individual's identity problem and attempts to integrate into society. Grey (1994) considers 'Postmodernism' to be a nebulous phrase that gained acceptance in the late 1980s. In terms of intellectual notions and style, it incorporates contradicting meanings and values. Postmodernism, according to Murfin, is "completely experimental work in the domains of art and literature" (2003:297). Postmodernism is an aspect of late capitalism, according to Jameson (1992), although it is a different form owing to fragmentation. There are distinctions between postmodernism and modernism in terms of culture. According to Martin postmodernism is more of a habit than a philosophy, theory, worldview, or system of thought. Postmodernist habits are characterized by irony, ambiguity, ambivalence, fragmentation, and, on occasion, anger. Post- postmodernism addresses those gaps which are left by postmodernism irony. It tries to fill them by appealing to readers' feelings of empathy, promoting trust and friendship. Multiplicity, a belief in pluralism throbs at the heart of Postmodernism. It implies that there are many ways to comprehend and experience the world. The study posits that both selected texts are post -Postmodernist, as the issues of loneliness, alienation, and fragmented identity; characteristics of postmodern text, are traversed by the struggle waged by the characters to develop empathy, bonds of friendship, faith, and trust among them. The women in both novels are strong and fight back and resist the insults and oppressive strategies hauled at them by patriarchal society. Elif Shaffak in *Black Milk* documents the perils of postpartum depression and the crucial question of choice between career and womanhood responsibilities. Her stylistic excellence is at par in the delineation of her women characters. She is among those prominent feminist writers who have made valuable contributions to highlighting problems faced by modern working women.

There are many other notable women writers who have made valuable contributions to women's awareness and women's rights activities after the two World Wars. Among them is the towering figure of French existentialist philosopher, writer, feminist, and activist Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986), and the American activist, writer, and gender theorist Judith Butler (1956). They have brought an egalitarian and modernized gaze into the feminist discourse. Their foundational works have influenced women's ways of rationalizing things. Beauvoir in her book *Second Sex* (1949) propounds that 'one is not born a woman, one becomes one, Butler advocates her 'Performance' theory in her seminal work *Gender Troubles* (1990) and claims that our actions determine our gender. Gender as a social construct has always been manipulated by supporters of patriarchy. Similarly, Halide Edib Adıvar (1884-1964) a Turkish novelist, nationalist, Kemalist, teacher, and political leader for women's rights, criticized the low social status of Turkish women in her novels and she was also critical of women's lack of interest in changing their situation. Indian author Arundhati Roy an important feminist voice has encompassed the taboo issues of transgender and outcasts in her novel, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017). Roy (2017) has also woven the events of partition in the novel along with the story of protagonist Aftab, who leaves his home to live in Khawabghah, a place inhabited by many other transgenders or 'hijras'. But he fails to find true love and sincere



relationship in his surroundings and leaves Khawabghah after three decades. The novel highlights the conflict endured by Aftab between his body and mind, and the conflicts found in a rigid conformist patriarchal society caught in the vortex of history. The novel does not attempt to address mainly these issues from the perspective of creating a space of co-existence and tolerance among people. Her debut novel *God of Small Things* (1997) is about people displaced and discriminated against during British rule of India who lose connection with their cultural heritage due to colonial strategies. Chacko, one of the Anglophile characters in her novel hated to admit his Anglophile status. He believes themselves to be ‘Pointed in the wrong direction, trapped outside their history and unable to retrace their steps—because their footprints had been swept away’ (Roy, 1997).

Analysis

Every reader brings his or her gaze to the text. What is acceptable for one, might not be acceptable for the other. Post-postmodernism welcomes this inherent diversity of human beings. Post-postmodernism with its focuses on generating faith, trust, sincerity, and dialogue, in motivating people to transcend their differences. Shafak presents a wide range of characters from the grand drama of life. People belong to different religions, races, and nationalities. There are Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Christians, Taoists, and Buddhists in her novels. They undergo different experiences in different realistic situations, make choices and rise above their differences, promote faith and trust in each other and participate in active communication action, perform sincerely for the care and welfare of each other. This binds them in an unbiased strong relationship of friendship. The five friends of Leila, the protagonist of *Ten Minutes and 38 Seconds in This Strange World* (2019), are women who come from different backgrounds but are tied in strong bonds of friendship. They pronounced themselves as Tequila Leila’s family at the morgue when her blood relations disowned her and rejected to claim her body for burial. We need to build a connection. We get inspired when we hear stories. Our heart recognizes and transcends national boundaries, racial boundaries, and sexual boundaries. People who are different from us act as a catalyst in our learning process. Zaynab¹²² Leila’s friend was advised by her father too, ‘Make friends, good ones. Loyal ones. No one can survive alone—except the Almighty God. And remember, in the desert of life, the fool travels alone and the wise by caravan.’ (Shafak, 2019, p.131)

Shafak contends that it is only through strong active participatory civil society, that there is a possibility to keep under check the nationalist and fundamentalists whose identity politics thrives in dividing people. To increase ‘communication action’ (Habermas’s term) or dialogue (post-postmodernism term), it is very important to generate empathy and solidarity among people, specifically among women, sisterhood is needed. It is only through active participation in the public sphere that the lifeworld of the marginalized, women, and outcasts can be improved, and they can avail of the virtues of ‘modernity’ which according to Habermas is the child of European Enlightenment. When there is a rise in capitalism or patriarchy, the patriarchal order benefits from it. Identity politics thrives. In literature, we need to generate empathy through stories so that people could relate with others and could unite despite their differences. The solution does not lie with politicians. It lies in strengthening civil society



(Shafak, 2018). Shafak, in her novel, *Ten Minutes and 38 Seconds in this Strange World*, has managed to evolve these sentiments for the outcasts of society. Through strong bonds of friendship, empathy, and solidarity, the five friends in the novel, make their silenced voices heard in the narrative through their actions, perseverance, and deterrence, facing all odds and difficulties impounded on them by the patriarchal, discriminatory social system. They succeeded in fulfilling their desire to give their beloved deceased friend a respectable burial. Shafak's novel, *Ten minutes and 38 Seconds in This Strange World* is a story of five friends who come from different backgrounds and possess diverse personalities. They are brought together by sharing different experiences which helped in inculcating feelings of empathy, tolerance, and respect and strong bonds of friendship among them. Zaynab122 told about Leila's wish to be buried 'rather in water than under the earth.' She says, 'I understand her choices might not match mine, but I still respect them'. (Shafak, 2019, pp. 292-293) Shafak has addressed the existential question of death and man's existence on this earth, and the value of life and relationships in daily life. She has astutely invited the reader to think about the quality of life one spends here in this world. She made us read into the thoughts of Leila, the protagonist of the novel when she was alive. 'The possibility of an immediate and wholesale decimation of civilization was not half as frightening as the simple realization that our passing had no impact on the order of things, and life would go on just the same with or without us.' (Shafak, 2019) Leila was thinking of her five friends in the last moments of her life and was certain that her friends will be devastated by the news of her death and that they will certainly give her a good proper burial. Tequila Leila's five friends are women of unflinching faith and indomitable courage. They possess invincible willpower and determination to fight for their rights. Jameelah was Leila's first friend in Istanbul. She was a child of a Muslim father and a Christian mother. She was born in Mogadishu, Somalia, and brought to Istanbul deceptively by fraudulent agents to work as a sex worker. She left her home after her mother's death, to escape the torments inflicted upon her by her stepmother. While she was in her home country, she held on to the memory of her deceased mother by visiting church despite the wrath of her incensed father and the Muslim community. She develops sincere strong ties of love and friendship with Leila, whom she met on one of her visits to Istanbul Venereal Diseases Hospital. "'Hooker's ping-pong', the prostitutes called it." (Shafak, 2019) Zaynab122 was a woman of 122cm height and disproportionate body. Her neck was almost non-existent. She had a 'broad forehead, a cleft palate, and wide-set, intelligent slate-grey eyes...' (Shafak, 2019, p.125) She used to vacuum floors and assisted prostitutes with their every need. She was the one with whom Leila liked to spend time after she was attacked by a mad client who threw Sulphuric acid at her. Zaynab122 was born in a village in northern Lebanon in a Sunni family. Shafak (2019, p. 129) argues, 'For generations, the Sunni families in the area had only intermarried, and dwarfism was common in the village...' She makes an erudite remark about the importance of blurring the boundaries of race, sects, and ethnicity. Zaynab122 was a fortune teller and read coffee cups in her spare time. She predicted Leila's eventual love marriage. Despite the bitter criticism of her deformed body by the people, she was 'Zaynab122, the diviner, the optimist, the believer; for whom the word 'faith' was synonymous with the word



‘love’ and for whom God, therefore, could only be Beloved.’ (Shafak, 2019, p. 128) There was a big fight at the time of her mother’s burial. Her father wanted a Muslim burial, as she had converted to Islam and her aunt wanted a Christian burial. “Religion for her had always been a source of hope, resilience, and love---a lift that carried her up from the basement of darkness into spiritual light. It pained her that the same lift could just as easily take others down. The teachings that warmed her heart and brought her close to all humanity, regardless of creed, color, or nationality, could be interpreted in such a way that they divided, confused, and separated human beings, sowing seeds of enmity and bloodshed. ‘(Shafak, 2019, p. 275) Nostalgia Nalan another one of the five friends is a transgender. She is a woman of strong build whose determination and iron will surpass her huge stature. She planned to exhume Leila’s grave. She drove the car carrying Leila’s body and also did the digging of the grave twice. She was the one who pushed the wheelbarrow along with others and also saved Sabotage Sinan when he fell into the grave. ‘It had been the wisest for the five of them to start living together in Leila’s flat and share the costs. They were more vulnerable on their own; together, they were stronger.’ (Shafak, 2019, p. 306) Sabotage Sinan another one of the five friends supported and helped his friends to give Leila a decent burial, He ‘had finally, and fully, sabotaged his life. After being shot while pushing the dead body of a prostitute off the Bosphorous Bridge, accompanied by dubious friends, he had been all over the newspapers. Within the same week, he had lost his job, his marriage, his house.’ (Shafak, 2019, p. 305) Together Leila and Humeyra rescued an injured stray cat and took turns to take care of it during treatment. Hollywood Humeyra was a woman with very sensitive nerves. She was born in Mardin, Syria. Due to an unhappy marriage at the age of sixteen, she fled from her in-law’s house to escape her husband’s beating. In Istanbul, she learned fast, and acquired a new identity, changed her name and appearance. ‘Awake or asleep, Humeyra was terrified she might become a victim of an honor killing. ‘Women accused of indecency weren’t always killed, she knew; sometimes they were just persuaded to kill themselves.’ (Shafak, 2019, p. 159) Leila always boosted her confidence in herself and helped in relaxing her friend’s worried mind. ‘She assured her that she was one of the lucky ones, the resilient ones...despite all the odds stacked against her, destined to survive.’ (Shafak, 2019, p. 160) Shafak emphasized the importance of having friends in one’s life. She called them the ‘water family’ who supported and helped each other even though they did not have any blood relation with each other. They rose above their differences and different belongings and trusted in the relationship of friendship. Leila thought of her friends as her ‘...safety net. Every time she stumbled or keeled over, they were there for her, supporting her or softening the impact of the fall.’ (Shafak, 2019, p.183) ‘...and on days when she wallowed in self-pity, her chest cracking open, they would gently pull her up and breathe life into her lungs.’ Power of faith and trust in the goodness of fellow human beings and an acceptance of the diversity of human nature help in strengthening the bond of humanity. The young man who was Leila’s last client before her death was gay. He was forced to have sex with Leila by his father to change his mind. Leila comforted the young man and told him that she understands his problem and he should not worry about her and should ask the person he loves to come over and spend time with him. She assured him that she will not tell his father.



He kissed her hand for her understanding behavior. His care and respect for Leila are evident from his actions before leaving his father's office, where he had gone to inquire about her death. "Before he turned his back, he reached out, grabbed the newspaper, folded it, and put it in his pocket. He didn't want to leave Leila's picture in this cold office. He still had her scarf" (Shafak, 2019, p. 227).

The improvement in the 'life world' of people relies on active 'communication action'. Change in society is impossible without a democratic public sphere. Active participation of civil society manifested in the strong protest against Article 438 of the Turkish Penal Code resulted in repealing of the article. Elif Shafak refers to this amendment in law in the concluding pages of the novel *Ten Minutes and 38 Seconds in This Strange World* (2019). An article that helped legislators to reduce the sentence given to rapists by one-third if they could prove that their victim was a prostitute. Furthermore, Shafak (2019, p. 307) writes, that there have been 'few legal amendments since then towards gender equality, or specifically towards improving the conditions of sex workers. Rhetoric stalks the emotions and fears of people. Post-postmodernist writings with their emphasis on building connections with understanding and patience help readers to find harmony within themselves and in their surroundings.

Politics is not confined to parliaments, wherever there are power relations there is politics. Feminist discourse is also political. Because it asks for women's rights and gender equality. Since ancient times gender conflicts have always surfaced in literature. For example, Lysistrata, the protagonist of Greek dramatist Aristophanes comic play *Lysistrata* (performed in 411 BC, projected women going on a sex strike) fought with other women for the extraordinary mission of persuading men to end the Peloponnesian War between Greek city-states by denying all the men of the land any sex, which was the only thing they truly and deeply desired. They seized the parliament building and locked themselves inside, refused to have any contact with men, and utterly denied men any sexual gratification. Homer's monumental epic poem *Odyssey* written in the 8th century BC (published in English in 1614) is a convincing account of the ordeal and struggle of Penelope loyal and obedient wife of Odysseus King of Ithaca, who was away from home for thirty years due to Trojan War. According to Taylor (2016) Foucault observes in *History of Sexuality* that the idea of a perfect woman celebrated by patriarchy is based on the Victorian ideal of woman, the epitome of obedience, love, care, and sacrifice. The angelic mother figure is tied to the sole purpose of procreation, a commodity of solace for men. Atwood's image of 'walking wombs' is the perfect epiphany of Hitler's idea of woman.

Women's academic intellectual space had always echoed the rift and tension women experienced by women in their domestic space, their choice between their passion for writing and their expected duties as a woman. *Black Milk* is partly an account of the notable women writers' experiences of writing and womanhood. Shafak states that the rule still stands firm, 'Male writers are thought of as "writers" first and then "men". As for female writers, they are first "female" and then "writers" (Shafak, n.d) Shafak writes of marriage as more of a book waiting to be interpreted' and less of a set of 'legal arrangements and conventional institution.' Women responded differently to irony, dissatisfaction, anxiety, dissociation, discrimination,



and a sense of isolation found during times of modernism and postmodernism. Some decided to give priority to the women's role of dutiful supportive Leo Tolstoy's wife Sophie. Louisa May Alcott the writer of 'Little Women' a novel that dealt with issues of the absence of a father figure, financial issues, and non-conformity to gender roles. Shafak (2007, p.172) writes of Alcott, "It takes no little magic to "zoom" a story written in the late nineteenth century to readers across the globe more than a hundred years later." "Liberty is a better husband than love to many of us," wrote Louisa May Alcott. She decided to remain a spinster. Mary Ann Evans (1819), known as George Eliot, fell in love with philosopher and critic George Henry Lewis, a married man, who lived with him and took care of his adopted son. Such outside wedlock relationship was not uncommon in Victorian society but their openness about their love was scandalous. She was a shy introspective child, but her life experiences turned her into an outspoken, headstrong, and non-conformist female writer. She opted for a male pen name. She honored her love and placed her writing style at distance from her counterpart's writings. This successfully widens her female space in a rigidly patriarchal society. It was satisfying for her to unite passion with a challenge in her stories. Shafak in *Black Milk* (2007) quotes George Eliot "If art does not enlarge men's sympathies it does nothing morally".

There is more to the list of warring women writers, who resisted and made their voices heard in their peculiar style. Zelda Fitzgerald, married Scott Fitzgerald, were rivals from the beginning. She accused him of stealing her ideas from her diary and remarked jestingly, "In fact, Mr. Fitzgerald---I believe that is how he spells his name----seems to believe that plagiarism begins at home."¹ She became jealous of his writings and was tormented by his interests in other women. They were unhappy. But did not let each other go. Anxiety, depression, hallucination, and a nervous breakdown, landed her in hospital, diagnosed with schizophrenia. Like the talented women criticized by Doris Lessing, who would change after giving birth and after some time become restless and neurotic. 'The triple role of housekeeper, mother, and wife did not make Lessing happy.' (Shafak, 2007, p. 211) "Dorothy Parker, Audre Lorde, and Sandra Cisneros were among women who opted for a passionate writing career instead of a tool regarded as a tool of reproduction. They introduced their innovative perspectives on making motherhood, sisterhood, and manhood. "They questioned the established norms and, most important, changed the world by changing themselves first." (Shafak, 2007, p. 208) Doris Lessing was a woman who left her home when she was fifteen and raised herself. She was an astute writer who pursued her ideals uncompromisingly. Shafak appreciates in the chapter 'The Festive Banquet' of the novel *Black Milk* (2007) the contribution made by three towering figures of feminism; Simon de Beauvoir, Zelda Fitzgerald, and Louise Marry Alcott affirm hopefully that due to the invaluable contribution of these writers to the welfare of women, they must be together in heaven. Shafak's novels give hope and determination to their readers and invite them succinctly to make connections and associations with characters having different backgrounds by empathizing with them regardless of their discrimination and differences with people in the real world with such belonging.

¹ Jackson R. Brayer and Cathy W. Barks, eds., *Dear Scott, Dearest Zelda* (New York: St. Marti's Press: 2002), xxviii.



For the Sufi poet Rumi, the mind is like a guesthouse, visited by different thoughts sometimes clothed in the outfit of joy or sometimes it is visited by thoughts of anxiety or sadness. The oral tradition of storytelling is valued highly by Alice Walker and Toni Morrison., Ama Ata Aidoo, and Lorraine Hansberry for its convincing rhetoric. Similarly, Shafak has employed her storytelling talent in an innovative and convincing presentation of the problems of indecisiveness over women writers' issue of choice between their passion and their gender roles. In *Black Milk*, she has shared her experience of the tussle between her aspirations as a writer and her responsibilities as a mother and a wife. As a citizen of a highly, homophobic, sexist patriarchal Turkish society, she made her decision courageously by facing her fears and inhibitions with acumen. Through a dialogue between her multiple female selves, anchored in faith, trust, and sincerity in her innate abilities as a woman, she arrives at a friendly space within herself, more welcoming towards her duties as a writer, a wife, and mother. Hers is a story of a determined, but shy and introverted woman writer who decides to step into the 'labyrinth' of her soul and honors the multiplicity of her female self, and concerns swirling in the deep recesses of her mind. She visualized six-finger women, six aspects of her female self the Thumblinas of her imagination. They are Miss Anxiety, Miss Highbrow Cynicism, Mama Rice Pudding, Dame Dervish, and Miss Ambitious Chekhovian. They helped her in her self-analysis. For instance, Dame Dervish helped her in striking a balance between her responsibilities. She said to her, "I want you to stop thinking. Stop examining, stop analyzing and start living the experience. Only then will you know being a mother and being a writer can be balanced." (Shafak, 2007, p. 51) Miss Highbrowed Cynic told Shafak not to get upset at the idea of the co-existence of the multiple aspects of self. She said, "If we take the time to read Habermas's theory of 'communicative action' we will see that we all can coexist. Since system rationality and action rationality are not the same things, as autonomous finger-women agents we can relate to one another through communicative reasoning and develop mutual understandings." (Shafak, 2007, p. 87) She resolves to have an active 'communicative action' and intelligent dialogue with the voices of six aspects of her female self. Thus, by pulverizing her skeptical thoughts, doubts, suspicions, and strength of her concern and suspicious of the natural abilities of womanhood.

Modernity Stance in Post-Postmodernism

The quality of the 'lifeworld' of people is tied to the idea of active participation of individuals in the democratic 'public sphere'. People's contribution in a 'communication action, through a dialogue infused with faith and trust in each other, is the key to establishing strong relationships of friendship and understanding, motivating individuals to rise above their differences and create a space of tolerance and acceptance. We learn from people who are different from us. Diverse aptitudes and individual tendencies, rather provide challenging situations, which could only be conquered by overcoming our fears of perception by others. Faith, trust, dialogue, and sincerity result in the production of effective performance by the individuals. Furthermore, acquiring knowledge of various disciplines such as science, literature, and art, according to one's interests and aptitude in a friendly environment help in the development of what Gramsci termed as 'organic intellectuals. Sociological knowledge



spirals in and out of the universe of social life, reconstructing both itself and that universe as an integral part of that process. This is a model of reflexivity of modernity.’ (Giddens, 2015) Post-postmodernist texts help in bridging the cognitive and emotional gaps left by postmodernism irony and decentered postmodern sensibility.

Conclusion

To sum up, the study affirms that modernity is an ongoing process and thrives in societies that are self-reflexive. Churchill rightly said in 1944, ‘... the longer you can look back the farther, you can look forward.’ We need to come out of our self’s ghettos and step out into a post-postmodernist space, building connections and strong bonds of friendship and understanding. Post-Postmodernist gaze enlivened by faith, trust, dialogue, performance, and sincerity is ‘modernity’ at its best in its service to humanity.

Future studies on Modernity, Postmodernism, and post-Postmodernism can be sparred by the critical insights introduced in this study. These approaches to the analysis of literary texts can help in dealing with the examination of scholarly texts and can provide a fecund ground for young researchers in multiple disciplines of critical thinking.



References

- Ahmad, H., Mahmood, R., & Saeed, H. (2020). A Comparative Analysis of the Themes of 'War', 'Love', and 'Illusion' in Postmodern Age in A Farewell to Arms and Eye of the Needle. *Liberal Arts and Social Sciences International Journal (LASSIJ)*, 4(1), 140-148.
- Bordo, Susan. "Postmodern subjects, postmodern bodies." (1992): 159-175.
- Butler, J. (1999). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York: Routledge.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. Routledge, 2002.
- De Beauvoir, S. (2010). The second sex. Knopf. Farrugia, David. "Addressing the problem of reflexivity in theories of reflexive modernisation: Subjectivity and structural contradiction." *Journal of Sociology* 51, no. 4 (2015): 872-886.
- Grey, M. (1994). *A Dictionary Of Literary Terms*. Longman York Press.
- Jameson, F. (1992). *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism (PostContemporary Interventions)*. Duke University Press.
- Martin, M. (2009). Taking on Being: Getting beyond Postmodern Criticism. *The Midwest Quarterly*, 51(1).
- Murfin, R. & Ray, S. M. (2003). *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Henderson, J. (Ed.). (2011). *Lysistrata*. Hackett Publishing. Richters, Annemiek. "Modernity-postmodernity controversies: Habermas and Foucault." *Theory, culture & society* 5, no. 4 (1988): 611-643.
- Postmodernism is dead. What comes next? - Literature - TLS*. TLS. (2021). Retrieved 12 January 2021, from <http://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/public/postmodernism-dead-comes-next/>.
- Shafak, E. (2013). *Black Milk: On Motherhood and Writing*. Penguin UK.
- Shafak, E. (2019). *Ten Minutes and 38 Seconds in This Strange World*. Penguin UK.
- Shafak, E. Elif Shafak talks to The London Book Fair [In person]. London Book Fair.
- Shafak, E. (2018). Elif Shafak on Multiculturalism, the power of stories and making the political personal [TV]. 4 News Channel.
- Taylor, C. (2016). *The Routledge Guidebook to Foucault's The History of Sexuality*. Routledge.



@ 2021 by the author. Licensee University of Chitral, Journal of Linguistics & Literature, Pakistan. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).