

Writing, Motherhood, and the Myth of Shared Female Experience: A Postcolonial Reading of Elif Shafak's *Black Milk*

Amna Zahid¹, Salvia Islam² and Uzair Murtaza³

Abstract

This study examines the representation of women writers in *Black Milk* with a particular focus on the relationship between writing, motherhood, and the construction of a shared female experience. Employing a qualitative textual analysis within a postcolonial feminist framework, the study analyzes selected passages from the memoir to investigate how Elif Shafak portrays women from diverse cultural, geographical, and historical backgrounds as confronting similar struggles. The analysis draws upon the experiences of women writers including Sylvia Plath, Doris Lessing, Sandra Cisneros, Toni Morrison, Betty Friedan, Zelda Fitzgerald, and others, whose lives are presented as revolving around recurring conflicts between literary creativity, motherhood, marriage, and womanhood. The findings suggest that *Black Milk* constructs a generalized narrative of female suffering by emphasizing common psychological and emotional experiences associated with balancing creative life and maternal responsibilities. Through these narratives, the memoir advances the notion of a shared female condition that transcends cultural differences. From the perspective adopted in this study, however, such representation tends to universalize women's experiences despite the diverse socio-cultural realities in which women live. The paper argues that Shafak's portrayal of women writers contributes to the literary construction of a universal female experience, while raising critical questions regarding the extent to which differences of culture, history, and geography can be accommodated within a single narrative of women's suffering.

Keywords: *Black Milk*, Motherhood, Women Writers, Female Identity, Shared Female Experience, Literary Representation

¹⁻²⁻³ Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University, Peshawar – Pakistan

Introduction

The study focuses on the critique of western feminism in the name of universal sisterhood. It highlights how women writers suffer differently all over the world, which cannot be sheltered under the umbrella of universal sisterhood. The challenge to feminist theory, then, is to uncover the dynamics of a “cultural citizenship” which could clearly be seen in the works of Spivak and Mohanty. The experiences of women have long been a central concern of feminist literary studies, particularly in relation to the challenges of balancing personal identity, motherhood, and professional aspirations. Women writers across different historical and cultural contexts have frequently depicted the tensions between domestic responsibilities and creative expression, revealing the complexities of negotiating multiple social roles. These recurring concerns have encouraged feminist scholars to examine whether women's experiences transcend geographical and cultural boundaries or remain deeply shaped by their specific socio-cultural contexts.

Elif Shafak's memoir *Black Milk* presents an intimate exploration of these issues through the author's reflections on motherhood, writing, and female identity. Drawing upon the lives of numerous women writers from different countries and historical periods, Shafak portrays recurring struggles associated with literary creativity, family expectations, emotional conflict, and selfhood. By bringing together these diverse experiences, *Black Milk* presents the idea that women writers, despite differences in culture and history, encounter remarkably similar dilemmas in reconciling their creative ambitions with socially prescribed gender roles. The representation of shared female experiences has generated significant scholarly interest within feminist and postcolonial literary criticism. While many feminist perspectives acknowledge common patterns of gender-based oppression, postcolonial critics argue that women's experiences cannot be understood independently of their cultural, historical, and social circumstances. Consequently, the depiction of universal female experiences remains an important area of academic inquiry, particularly in literary texts that draw upon voices from diverse societies. This study examines how *Black Milk* constructs the notion of a shared female experience through its portrayal of women writers and their struggles with motherhood, creativity, and identity. Using qualitative textual analysis, the paper investigates the literary strategies through which Shafak represents common patterns of female suffering while considering the implications of presenting these experiences as universally shared. By focusing on the memoir's representation of

women across different cultural backgrounds, the study contributes to ongoing discussions on women's writing, motherhood, and the complexities of representing female experience in contemporary literature.

According to Adrienne Rich (1980), a phenomenon called snow-blindness exists in South Africa among white people who belong to a privileged class just as everywhere around the globe in which there is a tendency to imagine that the world is defined by whiteness. A further description over solipsism was given by her as a firm belief that all other races are inferior to a single superior one but this is only one way to look at things in isolation neglecting other factors that do not simply recognize the existence or experience of white people as significant importance (Shafak, 2007, p. 248). Many modern feminist intellectuals have also agreed to the theory of Simon de Beauvoir (1946) that female gender identity is not cast at birth but is constructed by society. However, this does not mean that the topic of gender identity could be simply shunned down. This means one cannot avoid the specific gender roles, it is mandatory to follow the rules set by the society. The gender roles are constructed by the reinforcement of systematic institutions such as the law, the family, media, and education (Shafak, 2007, p.114). Shafak (2007) talks about different debates which have come to the fore about the victimization of women but none of them proved beneficial. 'Unfeminine methods' were used by women in the name of motherhood and womanhood by mobilizing the right show which included their activities of empowering, enabling them to actively participate and mobilize in the public sphere (pp. 41-42).

Review of the Literature

Global publishing industry is criticized by many intellectuals and academics for making diasporic writers to come up with narratives that serve the Western world through their artistic works, such steps are taken by the diasporic writers to mystify the reality in order to gain personal benefits and in harmonizing strong bonds with the western world. This gives fame to these new writers as a result their works sell widely (p.93). These writers initially come up with the empathetic thoughts of helping the subalterns in order to raise their voices in the world through their writings but they use ulterior motives by mystifying the harsh reality with their artistic writing and acculturate the Western hegemony in an exotic manner (Davis, 2011).

Early feminist social and political struggles, during the twentieth century Europe and North America had fought for the freedom of basic rights of women in different areas of life, but it started in the western philosophical tradition of the liberal humanism. The basic idea of humanism is that all human beings are the same; the original matter, emotions, struggles, values in theory share the same basic human rights. Somehow according to Simon de Beauvoir (1908) a famous French feminist thinker suggests that in the universal humanist subject or 'Man', women generally are defined as the 'Other', or inferior. Previously goals like the women's reproductive rights, equal wages, and equality in the workplace were focused as the political task. Men and women are different which is a common fact, defined by the tradition of universal humanist thought which further defined a grounded biological foundation prior to social and cultural influences. The famous line by Simone de Beauvoir presented, widened the picture that "a woman is not born a woman infact she becomes one". Identity is rather determined as a category in which gender is a social construct rather one's biological sex, which could be opposed through political and social struggle. Beauvoir had failed in answering the differences between female and male gender initially which she used in order to justify oppression faced by women in the patriarchal world. By leaving the scientific category of sex unsearched, her theory does not justify. Judith Butler argues about gender troubles, understanding sex as a biological category. Dominant discourses of medicine and the church including family and educational institutions are shaping the roles prior to one's sex/gender. What Butler wants to highlight is how discourse holds power of language in the determination of human identity and the restricted roles offered by the dominant social institutions of the society. For example, immediate names are defined, the moment a girl is born according to the norms and values of the society. According to Butler, many feminist thinkers agree with de Beauvoir's concept of gender identity theory which is molded by the society. This however leads us to the question of gender identity which simply cannot be avoided at any cost. The gender identity is constructed and generated by different law-making institutions such as the Media, in shaping minds. Spivak recognizes and appreciates the works of Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva for their effortless and effective ways of redefining the western thought of feminism. In the name of Feminism and Third world women Spivak further argues, that the very definition and the concept of a woman depends perpetually on the word 'man', it gives meaning to the word 'woman', this gives birth to the foundation for the literary criticism. This might seem a reactionary answer." Could I as a woman can carve a definition of a woman for my own self?" (Spivak 1987).

Luce Irigaray's argument in this regard is very similar to Spivak's definition that The word man is essential in order to complete and elaborate the theory of a woman. Spivak reciprocates that the very definition of a female in one's culture always fall as a prey to the opposite gender that shows women's submissiveness and marginalization in the society. Spivak suggests a critical scheme against this dual system of thinking, it mimes the minority groups or the working class marginalized as the subaltern, such as the negative representation of women. This tactical approach used by Spivak is known as strategic essentialism. Many thinkers have certainly been informed to contemporary feminist contribution by Spivak. In order to focus on the regional differences between women in the developing countries and women in the developed countries, Spivak shifted her focus of the debate from sexual differences to cultural and historical differences that is shared amongst individuals belonging to different countries and states. Kristeva (1981) mentions the idea of transition, which needs to evolve under a multi-cultural modification as to become part of a dynamic-cultural unit. It would create an authentic example. However, in the interaction between feminists of developed and underdeveloped worlds have the pattern which seems to show the lost unity in becoming a part of a White-dominated-dynamic unit. She presented this idea which could only prove results if both are equal in power and possess the same historical backgrounds. The idea of hybridizing becomes troublesome when a politically strong cultural-dynamic ensemble, as in European culture as it sets matters differently in ensembling such as that of Asia.

In this context, the less dominant socio-cultural collection is threatened by the dominant one. In light of this, the authenticity of Spivak's argument that Kristeva's views it as Eurocentric which cannot be ignored as the importing of the West-centric relations of "marginalization" and "agency" within the developing world, feminist discourses also agree to this fact. It contradicts Kristeva's own theorization who believes that when a specific culture blends within the first world feminism it meets a different cultural mixture and exposure such as that of feminism related to developing world, both should proceed in the same way.

Helene Cixous (1937) is known as the famous French feminist, although she was born in Algeria. She worked on poststructuralist feminist theory which focused on sexual difference in language inspired by psychoanalysis. It was to give a positive representation to female sexuality. In one of her famous works "The Laugh of the Medusa" She uses a different set of words to portray a distinctive variant image in

order to celebrate female body and sexuality. This symbolic language is brought forward in her essay to bring a significant change in linguistic terms.

Methodology

The methodology, used in this study is inductive and qualitative in nature. Inductive reasoning starts with the theories proposed towards the end of the research (Bernard, 2011). It is based on learning from patterns, resemblances and regularities. Here qualitative research starts with the novel which constitutes the main data in order to reach conclusions. The research method employed in this research is qualitative in nature which includes interpretation of selected passages from the novel. The source used for data analysis relies on the text passages of *Black Milk* (2007). Various informative articles and research papers related to feminism, Third World society and hidden agendas behind the concept of Universal Sisterhood have been studied to explain the novel. The results of the study support how the suffering of women characters is artistically presented as being the same by keeping in mind the Eastern and White culture.

The textual analysis examines the interpretations of selected passages about different female characters from the feministic view. Such as, characters such as Sylvia Plath, Marry Ann Evans, Elif Shafak herself and many other writers are analyzed to show how they all suffer similarly, in fact which is not the case. This research is focused on unearthing the western feminism which claims women all over the world are facing the same issues. Hence, the novel is studied for textual analysis by contextualizing the novel. The study explores the role of western imperialism in subjugating the Third World women in thirst of power and personal political benefits. The complex techniques used by the Western feminists are analyzed in detail in forth chapter of the thesis which is a detailed analysis of the novel. This study focuses on the Western dogmatism reflected in the writer's viewpoint of exemplifying female characters suffering the same, not in keeping the idea about differences. Therefore, the study contextualizes the role played by the author in favoring the Western world.

Theoretical Framework

Mohanty (1984) shows that the cultural discourse about the “third world” is produced and denoted from the ranging exploitative economic exchange of the term

‘colonization’. Third world women are treated in an essentialist way through this discourse, women instead are seen as a separate entity from the mankind which views them abstractly rather than as real living humans belonging to their collective history in the existence of mankind (Mohanty, 1991). Spivak’s account of ‘neo-colonialism’ aligns well with the broad definition of ‘colonialism’ presented by Mohanty which relies on the alignment of suppression and supreme authority of the superiority of the in questions in subject (Mohanty, 1991). According to Spivak, third world people’s heterogeneity is overlooked in a superficial way, which understands foreign cultures, ‘neo-colonialism’ is one of the expressions which exemplifies openness to diversity, ethnic inclusiveness, cross-culturalism, and multicultural acceptance (Spivak, 1991).

Data Analysis and Discussion

Social anxieties of women as writers

Elif Shafak portrays a picture of female characters struggling in the run between womanhood and writing in *Black Milk* (2007). The novel is written in the background of struggles faced by women in treading the path of writing. Spivak (1991) argues about women’s virtue which is restricted to global laundry. Elif Shafak (2007) presents various female characters who suffered in their career as writers. Sylvia Plath is one of the writers who was meant to write. Sylvia Plath got married to Ted Hughes, began with an irresistible attraction which ended into a rocky marriage that caused much pain. Sylvia Plath went through various anxieties while shifting her role from womanhood to motherhood. First, she was afraid of the pain and consequences that come with childbearing but eventually she got convinced that being a mother could give her new aspirations to write, one of her greatest works *Ariel*, came out after becoming a mother (Shafak, 2007, p.77). From then onwards she took interest in household chores with scribbling in her diaries along with changing diapers. She spoke of her uncompleted work as “unborn babies”. She called herself a perfect Poet-Mother. Shafak (2007) presents a complicated situation where a woman has to choose between motherhood and writing. Sylvia chose both and gave birth to many poems. In her famous and only novel, *The Bell Jar* she wrote in detail about the mental breakdown and suffocation of the modern life that one has to face (Shafak, 2007, p.80). She often called the world a dark place to live and tried to commit suicide at the age of twenty but got rescued. On February 11, 1963 she finally decided to kill herself. She closed the door of the room in which his sons

resided, went into the kitchen and killed herself by swallowing sleeping pills one by one and fell into the eternal sleep. She became famous as a writer after her tragic death and turned into a very well-known name into the world of writing.

A split between Eastern and Western Cultures

As Spivak (1991) puts it, in one of the terms, 'subaltern' where a blue colored man is silenced as he is marginalized to which he cannot speak for himself. Elif Shafak (2007) describes her own personal experience of becoming a writer and the dilemma of a split inside, half Eastern and half Western (p.94). A woman who was more in love with the world of imaginations than the actual world living inside. Elif Shafak (2007) talks about the split and fragmentation of the self. She writes about the finger-women living inside her imaginary harem quarreling with each other, every finger woman represents Elif Shafak's self. All these finger-women represent various suppressed selves, as a woman one has to face. The career focused finger-woman such as Miss Little Practical presents a psychological state of Elif Shafak's mind which is career focused and has no time for sentimentality. Whereas The spiritual finger-woman, Dame dervish focuses her spiritual side opening the door to Sufism and spirituality. Mama Rice Pudding finger-woman shows her soft and maternal side whereas Blue Belle Bovary finger-woman shows her hidden side in want of love, marriage and appreciation of femininity. All these finger women show split in Elif Shafak's personality in preferring one over the other. The conflict within the Harem started when she fell in love with Eyup which started a civil war between the Thumbelina's over the conflict of prioritizing career/writing or femininity/motherhood. Elif Shafak further writes, as she has to learn how to live peacefully with the voices inside because in the end all these voices within her completes her as a whole and gives the embodiment of oneness. This dilemma shows various suppressed voices of Shafak which includes various hallucinations of finger women which she faced in choosing between the roles of a writer, womanhood and motherhood (Shafak, 2007, p.96).

Women writers, anonymity and pseudonyms

Elif Shafak (2007) was one of the writers who was not happy with her name and one day she stood up, changed her second name. People thought she might be getting married as per changing the second name which was in fact not the case. This brought her to the idea of men never changing their names, since birth onwards

towards marriage, settlement etc. (Shafak, 2007, p.99). Whereas women are like nomads given a certain name at birth then further on changing it for another man in the name of marriage, struggling further for new passports and designing new signatures upon new names, if they get divorced they have to go back to their old names and get back to a new name if married for the second time (Shafak, 2007, p.99). Men on the other hand keep their own signatures, or slightly change a curve here or there (Shafak, 2007, p.100). Elif Shafak in her early days of writing suggested a pseudonym for herself, a specific male name, like "Vincent Ewing". Spivak (1991) talks about creating a women's movement but unfortunately it lacks solidarity amongst women due to cultural and geographical differences. Women in old times expressed their opinions under pen names. Mary Ann Evans, one of the greatest Victorian novelists, otherwise known as George Eliot preserved her name under a male pseudonym. Britain in the 1800s gave a share to women in the world of writing but it was limited to romance, love, heartache which were seen as more suitable for a woman to write. Mary Ann Evans wanted an equal footing regarding the gender in the world of writings (p.101). She showed her disinterest and disliked the "women's literature" openly. She further on divided fiction written by women into four kinds the frothy, the posy, the pious and the pedantic (p.101). This article was published under a pen-name, titled, "Silly Novels of Lady Novelists". This clearly shows how a conventional woman of that era had to use a pen-name in order to hide her identity from the society to get her intellectual works appreciated not on the basis of gender but on the basis of intellectual/debatable content, ideas used in her works. Shafak (2007) presents the distressed positions of Bronte Sisters who felt the need of molding their names and turning it into pseudonyms. They retained the initials and changed their names into Currer Bell, Acton Bell and Ellis Bell (p.102). The sisters drew a safe shield around themselves from judgments of the critics and society. The sisters played this game for a long time until it was hard to deceive the postman anymore, in order to trick the villagers and the postman the sisters solved the dilemma by convincing that all correspondents sent their letters to a certain "Currer Bell in care of Miss Bronte" (Shafak, 2007, p.102).

George Sand is yet another example of one who changed her real name. Her real name was Amantine-Aurore-Lucile Dupin, one could think she changed her name because it was too long (p.102). She married Baron M. Casimir Dudevant, very soon they decided to split apart. Sand saw this detachment as a gateway to liberation where she enjoyed the utmost freedom. She wore male-clothing. She used to roam around in gatherings with a male outfit along with a pipe in her mouth and mind

filled with several creative novel ideas. As she belonged to an aristocratic family she did what she desired truly. Non-other woman of that time could think about such freedom and liberation which was enjoyed by George Sand. Lula Carson was one of the writers who shortened her name to Carson. This made an anxiety among the people and readers about her gender identity as if how to address her, as her gender was unknown and confusing to many. Carson had an air of freedom around her and was more comfortable in wearing tennis shoes or into wearing heels, which were the fashion of her time. The love of her life Reeves McCullers entered her life, she fell for his looks. Afterwards she fell for his pureness and good heart. They had a rocky relationship, filled with mistrust, anxieties and difficulties. They married each other, divorced then finally remarried, which shows complexities and complications in their relationship as a couple (see this on pages, 104-105).

Role of Feminism in writing

Spivak (1991) talks about the elite class on generating the discourse and rules onto the society, molding women into household chores. She furthers encourages the marginalized class to break the silence and speak for themselves. Shafak (2007) talks about Simone de Beauvoir, though dead physically but her works gave a steadfast stepping for other feminists to take in the field of feminism. She questioned the customs and norms related to motherhood of that time. Motherhood was seen as something unquestionable. It was seen as a sacred duty to perform by every woman. She and Sartre made a pact of telling everything to each other no matter what wrong doing it could be (p.114). They both gave each other the freedom to have love affairs freely so that they both don't feel tied to one another in the bond of marriage. She truly respected her husband and knew her value in the eyes of her husband. She hated the idea of motherhood, yet she was ready for this new sun in her life if he demanded so (Shafak, 2007, p.114). She was hurt by Sartre's infidelities yet she respected the pact agreed between both and supported him like a wife, a friend in all the utmost possible circumstances. Shafak (2007) highlights how writers of that time were least interested about women's issues such as postpartum depression, premenstrual syndrome, postmenstrual syndrome or menopause, the world of writing ignored the feminine topics and caste a blind eye towards women's issues (p.114). She used an analogy of Bermuda triangle related to feminine roles expected by the society, a selfless mother-diligent housekeeper-ideal wife in keeping the triangle intact the woman somehow gets lost into the waves and relentlessly forgets her interests, talents, wisdom in the pool of expectations. De Beauvoir (1949) wrote

furiously about the prejudices women had to face. She clearly wrote how women were forced to choose between brain and the body. A woman was not allowed to keep both the options. In her writings she stated that even the lowliest of men see himself as a greater being once encountered with a woman. She talked about the gender inequalities openly which were responded with rage and hate by the patriarchal middle-class societies. She wrote even all the hate she received, her pen was furious, her ideas were open, she stuck to her views and kept on writing with the believe that one day people will receive these ideas with open minds (Shafak, 2007 p.114).

Japanese feminist movement

Shafak (2007) presents various feminist movements which took place in this run. Yuko Tsushima was one of the famous Japanese writers who wrote about gender inequalities in the form of fiction. One of her famous book *Child of Fortune* deals with the similar issues, the protagonist is a headstrong divorcee woman who feels tortured and torn between the self she has and what the society expects from her (p.116). This shows the split personality of the protagonist in the novel. A torn self-unable to express yet she fought her inner demons on daily basis. She never considered herself as a feminist writer but the horrors faced by women used to haunt her which fortunately ended up in writing novels mainly about women and issues related to feminine gender (Shafak, 2007 p.116). Like Spivak (1991), Toshiko Tamura one of the country's earliest writer out spoke about the injustices faced by women on the basis of gender. In one of her famous stories titled "A Woman Writer" describes a scene where the husband disapproves the writing abilities of his wife on the basis of gender. Somehow due to societal norms it got embedded in his mind that women writers cannot write good as they are only restricted to household duties. He made fun of her and told her wife that instead of wasting pages and writing one serious thing in it, it's better to stop writing and get back to her household duties where she belongs. According to him men write on sublime and serious issues making them earnest writers whereas women write only for pleasure and take it as a pastime hobby. Sevgi Soyal an influential writer, in her writing she questions the prose writing culture supporting patriarchal ties on all sides. She created female characters which were headstrong and led lives according to their wishes and desires, leaving the expectations of patriarchal society behind. She portrayed her characters as normal human beings who would stumble down upon their knees, they made mistakes and somehow managed to pull themselves back

together, the harsh comments she faced from her husband led her portray a complete opposite image of the “Ideal women” expectations from women in patriarchal society (see this on pages, 116 and 117).

Balancing Writing and Motherhood

Spivak (1991) talks about her childhood where she saw bloodshed on the streets as a child. She talks about the horrors she faced as a child. Childhood traumas haunt and shape lives of individuals. Shafak (2007) talks about Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald, in her childhood she was known to be a fearless child who would mess up things, go to the edge and then calmly watch the panic she created (p.132). Her father was a distant parent, who was a formidable judge. She got less affection and time from his father, distance grew greater and Zelda found her shelter in keeping herself busy in unusual things. She used it as a stance to distract herself from the real world through which she got really spoiled as a kid (Shafak, 2007, p.132).

Shafak (2007) talks about Zelda who first fell for a man's mind then she would proceed her love for the suitable mate. Zelda married Scott Fitzgerald, the relationship started with a strong magnetic pull, they knew each other well and were aware of the weak points that they both possessed. The relationship was rocky, it had its ups and downs like a roller coaster but the bond of love was strong enough to mend the fights and misunderstandings of their relationship. Both the lovers were carefree and a lived life in a way they both wanted, freely without any ties. Zelda got fame for her works, many times she complained about the facts of entries in her diaries were found in her husband's novels. In one of her interviews she clearly declared of plagiarism begins at home (see this on pages, 132 and 133).

According to Zelda it takes a lot for a writer to channelize the ideas, thoughts into words. A writer goes through the fires of hell to get the content for the next poem or novel. Stealing her ideas and writings were seen as a great offence. It takes a lot for a writer to manage the content and then drafting the imaginary world of ideas into the physical realm through a pen in the form of words. The “literary patent” between Zelda and her husband could still not be resolved completely. Scott Fitzgerald indulged himself into the habit of drinking wine which eventually made him distant from Zelda. He was often found drunk and sleep in random places. The distance grew greater after his friendship with the famous bohemian writer, Ernest Hemingway. Her outgrowing jealousy made her insane, she made scenes to get his

attention but it was of no use. Zelda and Scott had a daughter, a nanny was hired to look after the child. She called her child as a beautiful fool, due to her young age and innocence. She got three abortions, to stay free from motherhood entanglements (Shafak, 2007, p.134). Zelda's continuous sadness, one day got her into a nervous breakdown, hallucinations and got diagnosed as a schizophrenic. She spent her last eighteen years under psychiatric care, yet she used to write letters to her husband about the cruelties love brings along. During the psychiatric care in hospital she got her passion of writing back. She discovered herself split in two personalities, one a carefree soul while the other passionately in need of love, care and affection. During this time Zelda wrote a novel, she sent the novel to Scott's publisher, during this time Scott also sent his novel to the publisher, the content was overlapping as the plot, characters were same because they both wrote about one of their trips to Paris to which the story overlapped. Zelda was told to reexamine her novel, she made changes but the novel was not well received by the readers. This incident broke her heart, Zelda died out of the fire combustion in the hospital (Shafak, 2007, p.136).

The Lesbian writers

In the novel, Shafak (2007) has also mentioned the courage and strength of female writers, as it is important to write without limitations and fear of judgement. The first condition is lesbianism. It is important for a female writer to accept it openly and address it in the writings. The second condition is old age, where writers are appreciated for their life experiences. They can talk openly about sexuality; the readers will take it as their wisdom which they received through their old age. For this, many female writers have stepped forward and took part bravely into writing about lesbianism freely. It's important to talk about the body and who else except for women themselves can write properly about this heated subject. Rita Mae Brown, a famous American writer published a book under the name *Ruby fruit Jungle*. In 1970's, this novel openly challenged and questioned the audacity of sexuality and lesbianism (Shafak, 2007, p.160).

Sarah Walters a British novelist also stood forward in breaking grounds for the emergence of new thoughts and ideas into the world of writing. In her book *Tripping the Velvet* she openly addresses how one has to hide her sexuality in order to please the surroundings and society. She called her books as "Lesbo historical romps" (Shafak, 2007, p.160). Alexandra Kollontai a Russian revolutionary writer and social theorist wrote about her life experiences. She openly celebrated sexuality in her

novels. In one of her controversial novel *Red Love*, she talks about fetish pleasures and possessive love. The readers responded bitterly towards this subject and treated the novel in a very hateful way. This did not break her spirits in the world of bitterness from the critics, she still wrote and published a new novel "Make way for the Winged Eros", this novel also had the same streaks of lesbianism and was not rewarded well by the critics and writers. The struggle of writing about lesbianism has caused various harsh comments, especially from the opposite gender of the society (Shafak, 2007, p.160).

Struggles of few Gifted writers

Shafak (2007) mentions Ayn Rand as one of the female writers who was known to be a gifted child with many talents apart from writing novels, she was also a playwright, a screenwriter, an essayist and a philosopher. She from the very start was different, she was not into playing dolls or worrying about her looks as most women to this day do. She moved to United States with little money in her pocket and never looked back (Shafak, 2007, p.164). She married an actor named Charles Francis O'Connor. She started to write screenplays but it did not bring her much fame. The heights of fame touched her once she wrote her best-selling novel *The fountainhead*, This novel was very close to her heart and it took her seven years to pen down the thoughts in the form of words. Many critics and readers took the idea that she might be following Kant's philosophy which was clearly dejected by her. She clearly declared her writings belonged to her own personal thoughts and philosophies (p.165). Though she openly addressed women should not follow a certain beauty code yet the heroines in her novels were always with a blond head, long legs and fair skin. There was a pattern of writing found in her writings which suggested how a woman must adore, love and idealize her husband. Her increasing popularity was overshadowing her husband, a time came when her husband started to introduce himself as Mr. Ayn Rand (Shafak, 2007, p.166). Spivak (1991) talks about the bumpy life which the subaltern women have to live, just like characters of women writers are judged through their respective works. Ayn Rand as a female writer convinced herself not to have children in her life, as they create additional drama in the act of life. The books she wrote were her children. She died out of heart attack. She opposed the idea of having children as she was born not to be a good wife or a comforting mother, she was born to write. All her life years she experimented on others and wrote, she was born to write, which she did very well (see this on pages 167 and 168). In other words, Spivak (1991) stood up and wrote her

experiences as a subaltern woman, her thoughts and views opened doors to new theories and debatable wholesome topics. Shafak (2007) included women like Spivak who were ahead of their times. They are born with a talent and know how to use it. Lucky are those who are talented, gifted and make use of their talents and abilities in their lifetime. Louisa May Alcott was one of them. She created a world of her own in her mind and gave birth to that world by portraying everything through her artful, sensuous writing. She wrote and got immense fame in her lifetime. Louisa May Alcott a writer full of enthusiasm and passion for writing. One of her renowned and famous work was *Little women*. This novel was very similar to her own personal life. She was the type of a writer who would meet various people belonging to different fields of life, she would exchange words and would store the dialogues in her mind. In solitude she scribbled down all the dialogues in her mind onto the paper. She always played with the characters, dialogues and plot story in her mind. She was a determined woman and wanted to earn money through writing. *Little women* brought her fame, she had a constant pressure to write a sequel to it, in the passion and love for writing she escaped time for food and sleep (Shafak, 2007, p.173). She decided not to marry as a woman writer liberty is a better husband than love. She said it's better for a woman writer to stay as a spinster than to marry (Shafak, 2007, p.173). The second sequel *Good Wives* was also a great success, In this she writes about a character Joe who is a great writer and due to marriage she struggles between writing fiction and household chores. The struggle of this character somehow gives us a deep insight in Alcott's mind where she goes through this deallliema of choosing writing over marriage. In the last days of her life, she got very disappointed of herself as she was getting old, which created a big hurdle in the path of writing fiction. She cursed and lamented her old age. That's how she died when her talent of writing was serving no more to her, she felt useless in her last days and died due to old age, in Boston in 1888 (see this on pages 173-174).

Women who refuted female identity with reproduction

In order to show female independence, Shafak (2007) introduced Dorothy Parker a well-known American writer famous for her writings. She did not have a beautiful idealized body but her words had the power which less people had. She never fell in love with the right person, every man came and broke her heart or was unreachable from her grasp, she yearned for love which she never got. She went through depression, miscarriages and abortion. After various heartbreaks she finally gave her heart and married the actor and playwright Alan Campbell. Campbell committed

suicide in 1963. This was a heart wrenching moment in her life (Shafak, 2007, p.204). Parker committed suicide many times but survived every time with worsening psychological effects. Parker was not a great fan of motherhood, she saw it as a threat to her peace and happiness. She died out of a heart attack in her hotel room, all alone at the age of seventy-three (see this on pages 204 and 205). Furthermore, Audre Lorde a gifted soul with many talents, a poet, a cancer survivor, writer and a mother of two. In her early days she changed her name from Audrey to Audre, she loved to do experiments and did to herself too. In ceremony after her death, she was yet given another new name, Gamba Adisa meaning warrior. At many times when in need of a mother, sister, daughter she became one for herself, she continuously changed feminine roles within herself for herself. She discovered the power of power of silence in words. She understood how each and every one is blessed with this silence and how everybody wants to pen it down in the form of writing (Shafak, 2007, p.206). She respected both the genders and believed that every man had feminine traits and every woman had masculine traits within. Understanding our traits altogether can lead us to understand the complexities of humanness. Being black, she said all humans have a black mother within, metaphorically it referred to the inner voices of intuition, passion and creativity. Lorde respected motherhood but openly addressed that bringing up children is not an easy task. She was a multilayered person juggling between self-hood, womanhood and motherhood (See this on pages 206 and 207). Being a single woman, Sandra Cisneros saw life through a different perspective. She openly addressed herself as a mother of nobody and a wife of nobody. She belonged to a patriarchal background and was fused of two different cultures, Mexican and American. According to Cisneros writers have a mind that lives through the physical realm and sees themselves live it. She was the only daughter with six sons in the family, she was given a proper space and was loved by both the parents (Shafak, 2007, p.207).

In order to show the emergence of storytelling Shafak (2007) added Cisneros story who was a writer and wanted to tell the tales no writer ever did before. In one of her stories *The House on Mango Street*, she writes about a female character, Esperanza who more or less depict the writer's story. Esperanza goes through various mental illnesses and psychological problems while being raised in the patriarchal society. Soon Esperanza found her outlet of emotions in the form of writing. Writing gave her the freedom to speak her heart out with no boundaries or cultural expectations. Writing became her inner voice which healed her psychological issues which got a gateway to express repressed emotions through writing (Shafak, 2007, p.207).

Cisneros started questioning both the cultures and how a woman is seen in both the cultures, somehow, she did not get satisfied answers while intriguing both the cultures, she questioned the subject of marriage and motherhood, why a woman cannot choose if she is ready for this change or not, the society constantly opposes its gender based views upon the women. Writing helped her in developing natural talents. She never led her gender to come out in her way of writing. She decided not to marry as she considered all her writings to be her children (p.208).

These were these women who used their femininity for creativity and writing. Reading their works give a different perspective in the realm of womanhood. The three of them belonged to different cultural backgrounds yet they suffered the same fate. One thing common between the three ladies was their strength and boldness of not rowing into a river or following others like a herd of sheep. For this they changed themselves first then changed the thoughts of others through writing (Shafak, 2007, p.208). Shafak (2007) talks about Doris Lessing known writer and pursuer of ideas. She was born in Southern Rhodesia and was raised by a domineering mother. She was sent to Catholic school to learn manners and to become a proper lady. She remembered her childhood with less joys and much sadness. Lessing dropped out of school, ran away and from then on, she raised herself as a girl-woman. She bore quite many difficulties as the world is harsh for the young ones to survive all alone but she took up the courage and lived her life independently (Shafak, 2007, p.211). Lessing shared her journey from womanhood to motherhood. She got married at the age of nineteen. She had a son and a daughter who inspired her to write novels like *Under my skin* and *Walking in the shade*. Lessing cherished her time being a mother, talking to ladies about mashed foods, milk and diapers but sooner or later a woman starts to feel trapped under the cage of motherhood. Mothers are known to be selfless creatures, who are supposed to give more and receive less. The constant trauma of giving more can haunt new mothers but a woman is somehow expected to do this job perfectly. Nothing could be so boring for an intellectual woman to spend her whole day with a little baby. Lessing also shared her tiresome routine in upbringing children along with household activities. The triple role of being a mother, wife and housekeeping was becoming a frustrated job altogether. She kept silent about psychological pressures but eventually she decided to go away from the monotonous, burdensome routine. She was unable to balance her married life with work life, this ended into divorce. During this time, her first novel came "*The Grass is singing*" she dedicated this book to herself. Thenceforth she committed truly herself to writing. She cherished every

word she wrote and made her living out of writing. In balancing motherhood and writing, she chose writing and sacrificed everything for the sacred duty of writing (see this on pages 211 and 212).

Mysterious Controversial Muses

Spivak (1991) was like a muse to the modern subaltern studies, she brought new perspectives to female duties and subaltern silence. Shafak (2007) introduces Lou Andreas Salome a muse who inspired men like Rilke, Nietzsche and Freud to look deeply into feminine creativity and womanhood. She wrote excessively but her works are long forgotten. She wrote on eroticism, Russian art, theater, religious philosophy. Salome was a pampered child and was raised along with her five brothers. Since childhood she had the talent of storytelling. Her stories included many fictional, imaginary characters, it was hard for her in leaving them behind and at many occasions blamed herself for abandoning her imaginary characters (Shafak, 2007, p.228). Salome at the age of nineteen went to Zurich where she met Europe's best leading scholars. Salome was an intelligent woman, many times she was found in heating debates with many scholars. She changed the persona about a woman to be always sidelined, silenced, passive on the contrary Salome was always up to new things and knowledge that came in her way. She had a zeal for new discoveries and a boosting confidence which made her shine among the other women of that time. Rilke adored her for the thirst of knowledge she always had in her sparkling eyes. According to Rilke artwork is similar to childbearing, an artist or a writer get inspired within and give birth in the form paintings, writings or any form of art. It was Salome who made Rilke change his name because it sounded feminine, on these grounds he changed his name from Rilke to Rainer Maria Rilke. She finally got married to a Linguistic scholar Carl Friedrich Andreas. She never consummated her marriage and stayed a virgin, some say she was afraid of sexuality or she had a fear in her heart of losing herself for someone else. She was a woman who had strong, firm views but she never hated the idea of motherhood or children, she in fact called the experience of motherhood as the highest calling. She had many male friends, this gave her a deep insight into masculine psychology of how men think, feel and express. She was a writer with strong opinions, her works were loved by men and were equally hated by females (See this on pages 229 and 230). French Diva writers like Marguerite Duras, born in Saigon stepped into the field of writing. Her parents were teachers serving the French government. Her family lived a difficult life, after losing her father. They had financial problems which soon developed into abusive

relationships amongst the family members. When Marguerite was a teenager she had an affair with a rich Chinese man who is mentioned in many of her works and memoirs (p.230). At the age of seventeen she got married to a French man. She started writing plays, essays, short stories, in one of her novel *The Sea Wall*, she writes about her childhood experiences related to financial problems and abusive relationships between the family members. Her mother read the book and gave a discern look of how she portrayed and blurred her childhood stories, to this she argued about fictional writing in which the writer takes characters and molds the dialogues and plot story according to their wishes.

Spivak (1991) talks about the unheard stories of the subaltern third world women which include stories of young naive women like Lou Andreas. Shafak (2007) in her books constantly talks about the rich Chinese man who was twelve years younger to her. As a writer she argues that with the passing and maturing age, writing about their affair gave her a new insight into the novel every time. She liked to relive the past moments by repeating them in different scenarios and new books (Shafak, 2007, p.231). She lost her first child, the pain she carried all her life. The birth of her second child led her out of the lamenting grief. She kept herself busy juggling between household chores, work and motherhood. She got split from her husband but were not separated completely. They were both always there to support their son and visited together in all the parents meeting together, in order to show the love and care they both hold each other for their beloved son. She managed to regain her psychological balance through writing novels. Her passion of writing novels never ended but in this lonely journey with the passing days she became depressed. She never wrote about her family members and never mentioned them in anything. She wanted praise, love and admiration to keep her spirits high. She was swept away in self-pity, guilt and alcoholism (Shafak, 2007, p.231).

Stories of writers like Rebecca West, a well-known critic and writer, born in 1892 is also included in Shafak's *Black Milk*. West had strong opinions on feminist thought and social justices. Her fight as a writer for gender equality lasted a lifetime. She met a famous fiction writer H.G. Wells, he was twenty-six years senior to her but the love bond between them was so strong that they could not help oneself in falling for the other. The affair remained for ten years. During this time Rebecca gave birth to their only child, Anthony. Surviving as a single mother was hard but she never gives up and kept herself busy in writing. She wrote for various newspapers and magazines. She received a lot of fame through writing novels. She was a celebrated writer but

her personal life was not happy or peaceful. Her relationship with Wells was filled with different turmoil and turbulence. She was always surrounded by, lovers, artists, intellectual people, who adored her for her confidence and writing (Shafak, 2007, p.232). Her relationship with her son was stormy. Anthony West a gifted writer wrote about her childhood experiences in his novel *Heritage*. He used a bitter and harsh tone while describing about her mother. On the contrary he wrote good things about his father though many of the times he used to be far from him. When Rebecca Read the novel, she was shocked in reading the descriptions what his son wrote for her. Rebecca was enraged to read it and made hurdles in the way of his son in publishing the novel. During her last days of life her son was not with her. She died a lonely death. After Rebecca's death, Anthony published his first novel *Heritage*. He got fame after publishing it and became a well-known author of his time (Shafak, 2007, p.232). All the three headstrong, witty writers, Lou Andreas Salome, Marguerite Duras and Rebecca West were struggling with womanhood and in becoming a woman. They faced issues with love, femininity and their bodies, becoming women, accepting the changes was hard for them but they accepted all the challenges, world brought to them, they fought all their wars with a pen, respectively.

Alice Walker a well-known American writer. Her works are translated into more than twenty languages. She was the youngest among her eight siblings. Her mother wanted to provide her children with all the opportunities and privileges enjoyed by the whites. During her childhood she lost sight of her right eye, though she forgave her brother for what he did but she became very timid as she was bullied in the school by her class-fellows. That was the moment when she decided to write, the passion of storytelling rose inside her (see this on pages, 223 and 244). Alice Walker followed her heart, married a white lawyer, they were the only interracial couple in the society. Soon she gave birth to a daughter named Rebeca, becoming a mother was a turning point in Alice Walker's life. She got connected with many other new mothers, she wrote an essay on motherhood called "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens". She said her writings had the weight of thoughts and essence that many ancestors would love to pass it on to new generations (Shafak, 2007, p.245).

She got divorced. Ending the matrimonial relation gave her a sense of freedom. She further stated, marriage as a patriarchal construction which desalinates women from harmonizing the internal creativity and natural talents. Marriage is like death for a young free-spirited writer. Yet she playfully adds that she liked being courted

(p.245). Her well-known novel *The Colour Purple* clearly talks about the themes of racism, gender equality and freedom of speech. She says white feminists use feminism for their own personal advantages keeping women of colour in the patches of darkness and disadvantages. She coined a new term womanism which she found more suitable than the term feminism. Rebecca remarked certain views about her own activist mother. She said, as a daughter she was always neglected while her mother was busy saving others. She gave birth to a son at a very young age (p.246). In her memoir she explains how mother-daughter stories could be complex and complicated to understand, as both view the stories differently. If a mother like Alice walker faced problems in parenting a child then it can happen to any mother or daughter (Shafak, 2007, p.246).

Spivak (1991) highlights about the black anger faced by the whites in her writings. One famous and well recognized voice was of Toni Morrison, she had a voice that could speak easily with the crowd, her impressive composure of words, her way of delivering knowledge into the world grew beyond invisible barriers. Toni Morrison had a style, she engaged the readers while constructing the story. For her diving into past is altogether a puzzle which tries to solve through her story telling. Her writings contain pain, historical traumas, vengeance and sorrowful incidents of past. In one of her well-acknowledged novel *Beloved*, Morrison talks about a cottage girl Sethe, with the background of slavery. A different view of motherhood is presented in this novel where Sethe kills her daughter in order to save her from slavery. Morrison's heroines like Sethe seem ordinary in the start but as the novel progresses, the heroine of the novel evolves within, leaving the readers in an awe to see the bravery and boldness of the characters (see this on pages 246 and 247). Toni Morrison married at a young age. She had two sons. The couple split, Morrison started working as a editor in order to support the family. During this time, she started writing *The Bluest Eye*. It was hard for her to work all day long as an editor then to manage household chores as a mother and to write as a writer. At often times she said that she is not just a writer but a mother who writes. Her sons while growing up constantly complained about their mother, as she was not physically or psychologically present for them. Her creativity had a price which had to be paid by her sons. Keeping a balance between motherhood and home runner was getting tough on her. At many times she had to isolate herself for the sake of writing, her friends were cooperative, they understood her well but her children were the ones who suffered. While working on *Song of Solomon* she told her sons that these summer days are going to be boring as she was unable to give them time. Motherhood meant a lot to Toni

Morrison, as it opened a gateway into a different world but her sacred, gift of writing, her sacred duty towards story telling could not be forsaken. As a mother she suffered but as a writer deep down in her heart she knew that it was right to write (Shafak, 2007, p.248).

Shafak (2007) introduces Betty Friedan in her novel, a well-known feminist writer who believed in redefining the definition of success in modern society. Friedan focused on family life and the struggles of a woman in raising children and balancing work. Women tend to break down in facing the slightest failure whereas women should be made tough right from the start so that little failures of life would not end up breaking them (p.251). She herself had three children, as a writer raising them was a challenging experience. People in depression usually end up questioning why me? When difficulties could be seen as opportunities, one can channelize these sad, pensive emotions into creativity like painting, writing or any other form of art. She used an analogy for women as diamonds, one wants to stay as a polished diamond whereas few scratches on the diamond would not look faulty or bad, as a pretty diamond always goes through scratches, polishing and various processes in order to shine bright (Shafak, 2007, p.251). Women in older times use to marry young, in this way they never got a chance to discover their inner talents and creativity. Her grandmother married at the age of fifteen whereas her mother married at the age of twenty. Both never got a chance to live their lives fully. Marrying at an early age makes the woman dependent on their husbands forever, as women were not educated nor they had any jobs which became a restraint in their progress, it made them like a parasite to live with the help of others. In the older times women were open to ask for help whereas with the passing generations the value of sisterhood and asking for help has somewhere lost its value in the run for success and power (p.252). Motherhood in older times was seen as something sacred whereas the modern women portray motherhood, womanhood and work life as a work of a "superwoman" who can handle/balance many things at the same time. In all this, one forgets about the various transformations a woman has to go through. The crystal heart of a woman constantly needs transformation like scratching, cleansing, molding and polishing but all these processes in the end only illuminates light but the struggle is important and that is what matters at the end of the wholesome journey (Shafak, 2007, p.253). Spivak (1991) knew struggles of subaltern women where women are silenced and marginalized due to their gender and societal values. Women need to break the silence and talk about their uniqueness. Helene Cixous a famous scholar and well-known writer wrote in terms of her own unique ways. Her

text is written in a way which represent uniqueness of female gender by using terms like night and day, white and black. She knew the Freudian approach which talks about the lack present in female gender. She used various analogies used by female writers such as child-bearing, post-partum depression, Premenstrual Syndrome, breast feeding and all the allusions related to female body (p.266). Motherhood to Cixous was a beautiful transition from womanhood to motherhood. For her experiencing the intense relationship with her children brought immense happiness, compassion and love. A child completes a mother, the love of a child often completes her lack making her complete. She talks about the present female writers who write like men in order to satisfy patriarchy and readers of a certain community. She says there is no change possible if we are not changing it linguistically. The change is needed, females need to break their silence and rose in their own unique feminine ways of writings (Shafak, 2007, p.266).

Writers like Ursula K. Le Guin started writing from a very early age yet she says writing is not an easy task. She was once asked if she could choose some other profession to which she answered if not a writer then she would have selected death instead. She said writing is a sacred duty which comes with lots of responsibilities in shaping the views and thoughts of the readers. It is the creativity of the writer, firstly to observe the environment and the changes happening in the society then to think about it critically with open eyes then to artistically write it down in the form of words with devoted heart and passion (see this on pages, 266-267).

Shafak (2007) presents various female characters in her novel where she talks about their struggles as writers and mothers. Through these writers she portrays women characters as having same difficulties everywhere around the globe. Shafak through her writing shows how women go through various psychological imbalances in balancing work life with motherhood. Both work life and motherhood are something important to a woman. Shafak (2007) talks about the various societal pressures put upon women in accepting motherhood as something natural. Here Spivak's theory about subaltern women come into foreplay where women are expected to marry, give birth and take global laundry as a manner of reward. Many Lesbian writers have faced criticism as they wrote openly about lesbianism. These communities also come under the subaltern group, as they are silenced by the society. Along with women, LGBTQI communities are silenced as their narratives are not accepted. Shafak through her writings show how women are silenced when

it comes to freedom in selecting work life over married life. Society in general asks women to choose one and sacrifice the other.

Conclusion

Many diaspora writers in the 'new found agency' want to persuade readers through their artistic writings that favors them by satisfying the tastes of Western world. In *Black Milk* (2007), a diaspora writer from Turkey, plays the same role. *Black Milk* (2007), is the latest memoir written with the background of struggles faced by females in accepting womanhood and motherhood. She wrote this memoir in the name of depression following the birth of her first child. It was first published in 2007. Some of its portions entails around the tales of various female characters who suffered in their unique ways. Spivak's works dives down, how every female is unique which cannot succumb under the agenda of Universal Sisterhood.

how Elif Shafak (2007) presents women characters having same issues all over the globe. Elif Shafak took various female characters and discussed their tragic stories to inculcate the idea, how women suffer the same in all parts of the world. Womanhood and motherhood instead of celebrating is shown as something difficult, crucial and troublesome. This shows how balancing writing, womanhood and motherhood could lead up to nervous breakdowns, divorces and suicides. The diasporic writer is trying to create an image for the women which is satisfying the appetites of western world. Strategic Sisterhood comes into foreplay where this term unravels how by concerning for the Third world benefits the Western, white world. Strategic sisterhood is a rapidly emerging and multicultural method for addressing the complex concerns of internationalization and rights of women. These diasporic writers through their content are serving the white feminists for their personal benefits and in making fame out of it. Western Feminists have sought their own strategic plan to fight for women's rights that have been neglected or trampled in the rush to economic progress as a globalism, in the sense of the world's enhanced capitalist integration. Women's rights, according to Northern feminists, are founded on Western liberal notions of moral independence, the personal right and capacity to make ethical decisions about the worth, aims and initiatives that make up the good living. This issue is highlighted in global conferences as liberal feminism is basically about women's rights as individual liberty in their community and in the world economy. Despite the fact that this is an essential twentieth-century ideal, North-South conflicts arise when modern feminists ignore opposing social

moralties that shape how women in other societies make moral judgments about their goals and objectives in life, and use other societal criteria about what it means to be a woman and individual. The diaspora writer through her writings depict a universal image in suffering of women. However, every woman belonging to any respectable field would go through unique experiences with different problems.

References

- Alexander, M. J., & Mohanty, C. T. (Eds.). (2013). *Feminist genealogies, colonial legacies, democratic futures*. Routledge.
- Anzaldúa, G., & Moraga, C. (Eds.). (2002). *This bridge called my back: Writings by radical women of color* (2nd ed.). Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press.
- Bauer, N. (2001). *Simone de Beauvoir, philosophy, and feminism*. Columbia University Press.
- Bennett, J., & Hochmann, G. (1988). *Simone de Beauvoir: An annotated bibliography* (Vol. 774). Taylor & Francis.
- Butler, J. (1992). Contingent foundations: Feminism and the question of "postmodernism." In J. Butler & J. W. Scott (Eds.), *Feminists theorize the political* (pp. 3–21). Routledge.
- Chakrabarty, D. (2000). Subaltern studies and postcolonial historiography. *Nepantla: Views from South*, 1(1), 9–32.
- Changfoot, N. (2009). Transcendence in Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*: Revisiting masculinist ontology. *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 35(4), 391–410.
- Collins, P. H. (2002). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Cornog, M. (2001). Review of *Exile and pride: Disability, queerness, and liberation*, by E. Clare. *Counterpoise*, 5(3–4), 56.
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (Eds.). (1997). *Critical white studies: Looking behind the mirror*. Temple University Press.
- Devi, M. (1995). *Imaginary maps* (G. C. Spivak, Trans.). Routledge.
- Evans, R. (Ed.). (1998). *Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex: New interdisciplinary essays*. Manchester University Press.
- Frankenberg, R. (1988). *White women, race matters: The social construction of whiteness* (Doctoral dissertation, University of California, Santa Cruz).
- Gilliam, A. (1991). Women's equality and national liberation. In C. T. Mohanty, A. Russo, & L. Torres (Eds.), *Third world women and the politics of feminism* (pp. 215–236). Indiana University Press.
- Himmel, R. (2015). Review of *Undoing gender*, by J. Butler. *Revista Lusófona de Estudos Culturais*, 3(1), 411–414.
- Isherwood, L., l'Anson, J., & Jasper, A. (2017). *Schooling indifference: Re-imagining RE in multi-cultural and gendered spaces*. Routledge.
- Kristeva, J. (1977). *About Chinese women* (A. Barrows, Trans.). Marion Boyars.
- Kristeva, J. (1991). *Strangers to ourselves* (L. S. Roudiez, Trans.). Columbia University Press.
- Logue, H. (Year). Review of *Inessential woman: Problems of exclusion in feminist thought*, by E. V. Spelman. [Journal information incomplete].
- Lloyd, M. (2015). *Performativity and performance*.
- Martin, B., & Mohanty, C. T. (1986). Feminist politics: What's home got to do with it? In T. de Lauretis (Ed.), *Feminist studies/critical studies* (pp. 191–212). Palgrave Macmillan.
- McFadden, C. (2011). *Critical white feminism: Interrogating privilege, whiteness, and antiracism in feminist theory*.

- Miller, S. C. (2001). The lived experience of doubling: Simone de Beauvoir's phenomenology of old age. In M. A. Simons (Ed.), *The existential phenomenology of Simone de Beauvoir* (pp. 127–147). Springer.
- Moghadam, V. M. (Ed.). (2019). *Identity politics and women: Cultural reassertions and feminisms in international perspective*. Routledge.
- Mohanty, C. T. (1984). Under Western eyes: Feminist scholarship and colonial discourses. *boundary 2*, 12(3), 333–358.
- Mohanty, C. T. (1995). Feminist encounters: Locating the politics of experience. In L. Nicholson & S. Seidman (Eds.), *Social postmodernism: Beyond identity politics* (pp. 68–86). Cambridge University Press.
- Mohanty, S. P. (1989). Us and them: On the philosophical bases of political criticism. *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, 2(2), 1–31.
- Moi, T., & Payne, M. (1990). *Feminist theory and Simone de Beauvoir*. Basil Blackwell.
- Morgan, R. (1984). Planetary feminism: The politics of the twenty-first century. In *Sisterhood is global: The international women's movement anthology* (pp. 1–37). Anchor Press.
- Morton, S. (2007). Gayatri Spivak: Ethics, subalternity and the critique of postcolonial reason. *Polity*.
- Morgenroth, T., & Ryan, M. K. (2018). Gender trouble in social psychology: How can Butler's work inform experimental social psychologists' conceptualization of gender? *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9, Article 1320. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01320>
- Mulvey, L. (1975). Visual pleasure and narrative cinema. *Screen*, 16(3), 6–18.
- Nayak, A. (2006). After race: Ethnography, race and post-race theory. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*.
- Owen, D. S. (2007). Towards a critical theory of whiteness. *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 33(2), 203–222.
- Press, S. E. (Ed.). (2006). *Color of violence: The INCITE! anthology*. South End Press.
- Rich, A. (1979). Disloyal to civilization: Feminism, racism, gynophobia. In *On lies, secrets, and silence: Selected prose 1966–1978*. W. W. Norton.
- Rich, A. (1980). Compulsory heterosexuality and lesbian existence. *Signs*, 5(4), 631–660.
- Salih, S. (2017). On Judith Butler and performativity. In [Book title incomplete]. [Publisher incomplete].
- Shaikh, S. (2024). Eco-feminism in Han Kang's *The Vegetarian*. *Journal of Queer & Social Studies*, 6(2), 45–63.
- Shohat, E. (2001). *Talking visions: Multicultural feminism in a transnational age*. MIT Press.
- Smith, A. (2020). Heteropatriarchy and the three pillars of white supremacy: Rethinking women of color organizing. In *The color of violence* (pp. 141–147). Routledge.
- Spivak, G. C. (1988). Can the subaltern speak? In C. Nelson & L. Grossberg (Eds.), *Marxism and the interpretation of culture* (pp. 271–313). University of Illinois Press.
- Spivak, G. C. (1991). Neocolonialism and the secret agent of knowledge. *Oxford Literary Review*, 13(1), 220–251.
- Spivak, G. C. (1999). *A critique of postcolonial reason: Toward a history of the vanishing present*. Harvard University Press.
- Spivak, G. C. (2003). Deconstructing historiography. In *Deconstruction: Critical concepts in literary and cultural studies* (Vol. 4, pp. 220–248). Routledge.
- Spivak, G. C., & Harasym, S. (2014). *The post-colonial critic: Interviews, strategies, dialogues*. Routledge.

Article Information:

Received	5-Sept-2024
Revised	22-Nov-2024
Accepted	11-Dec-2024
Published	15-Dec-2024

Declarations:

Authors' Contribution:

- All Authors **Conceptualization, and intellectual revisions, Data collection, interpretation, and drafting of manuscript**
- The authors agree to take responsibility for every facet of the work, making sure that any concerns about its integrity or veracity are thoroughly examined and addressed

▪ **Conflict of Interest:** NIL

▪ **Funding Sources:** NIL

Correspondence:

Amna Zahid

Amna.zahid83@gmail.com
