

## Unhomeliness Vs. Hybridity: Women's Suffering and Crisis of Identity in Elif Shafak's *Honor*

عدم التآلف ضد التهجّن: معاناة النساء وأزمة الهوية في رواية

اليف شافاق " شرف "

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Receive: 19/02/2022

Accept: 28/03/2022

Publish: 30/6/2022

Doi: [10.37654/aujll.2022.176378](https://doi.org/10.37654/aujll.2022.176378)

### Abstract

This paper examines Elif Shafak's novel *Honor*, which was released in 2011, using Homi K. Bhabha's concepts of unhomeliness and hybridity. The study observes the predicament of first and second-generation immigrants from patriarchal cultures to Western societies with laws that differ from the rules of traditional communities. Those immigrants try to hybridise and adapt to the values and customs of the new culture to which they are exposed. The critical study of the novel shows the conditions of two sisters, Pempe and Jamila, who constitute the novel's cornerstone in a destitute household of eight daughters, as well as the mother's frantic attempts to conceive a son. The two sisters live in a patriarchal culture that thinks a man has the right to rule over everything. Subsequently, Pempe marries Adam Topark, and they move to England, where they experience a state of unhomeliness and

hybridity. Women suffer from unhomeliness and alienation, even in patriarchal societies, as a result of patriarchal constraints.

**Keywords:** Patriarchy, Bhabha, unhomeliness, hybridity, Shafak, Honor

### ملخص الدراسة

يقدم هذا البحث نظرة واسعة على رواية "شرف" لأليف شفق التي نُشرت في عام 2012 باستخدام مفاهيم هومي بهابها "عدم التآلف والتهجن". تبحث الدراسة في مآزق الجيل الأول والثاني من المهاجرين من الثقافات الأبوية إلى المجتمعات الغربية بقوانين تختلف عن قواعد المجتمعات التقليدية، الذين يحاولون التهجن والتكيف مع ممارسات وتقاليد الثقافة الجديدة. تُظهر الدراسة النقدية للرواية ظروف شقيقتين: بيمبي وجميلة، اللتين تشكلان حجر الزاوية في الرواية، في منزل فقير يُؤوي ثماني بنات، فضلاً عن محاولات الأم المحمومة لإنجاب ابن. تعيش الأختان في ثقافة ذكورية تعتقد أن للرجل الحق في السيطرة على كل شيء. تزوجت بيمبي لاحقاً من آدم توبراك، وانتقلت العائلة إلى إنجلترا، حيث يعيشون في حالة من عدم الود والتآلف. تعاني النساء من الوحدة والاعتراب، حتى في المجتمعات الأبوية؛ نتيجة القيود الأبوية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الذكورية، الكاتب هومي بهابها، عدم التآلف، التهجين، الين شافاق، رواية شرف

## I. Introduction

Several novelists regard it as their responsibility to investigate the world's significant concerns and challenges. Because women are usually victims of conservative patriarchy, female exploitation and enslavement are among the most explored issues in literature. Through history, women have been denied political, social, and economic rights such as education, property rights, and even the opportunity to vote. Turning women into enslaved people and property is undoubtedly a patriarchal system that blames them for everything. Despite the attention given to the issue of women's oppression by

authors and critics of diverse races and traditional milieus, it remains a reoccurring field in the literature of Non-Western civilizations because of the enduring patriarchal traditions.

Patriarchy manifests itself in several ways, ranging from prejudice to violence, Stereotyping, and oppression. It has a wide-ranging impact on women's lives, including social, economic, and political factors, as well as physical and psychological factors. Women remain victims of cruelty and prejudice in conventional civilizations. Some long-established traditions have had a significant influence on women. This has resulted in ongoing societal challenges, putting women at a disadvantage compared to males.

Elif Shafak is one of the female novelists whose works depict the suffering of women in traditional communities. Shafak is a Turkish novelist whose works have been translated into many languages, including English and Turkish. She has nine novels to her credit, most of which have become best-sellers and have been translated into more than forty international languages. *Honor*, her best-known work, was released in the United Kingdom in 2012. The novel is about Turkish women's fights and hardships. Shafak's work is a narrative about the present and the past coming together. The narrative of a Turkish Kurdish family in 1970s London. It is a mixture of Western and Eastern influences. Since the beginning of time, there has been a conflict between the upper and lower classes, white and black people, fundamentalism and atheism, and East and West civilizations. Despite several attempts, particularly in the sphere of literature, to identify a single pot in which all these characteristics may be blended, the struggle continues. Many philosophers and authors have attempted to develop a suitable formula for correcting the course and achieving cultural and civilised unity. Elif

Shafak is attempting to create a multicultural society in which all of these locations and distinctions are merged. She says:

My novel travels to different cities and location, like my novels do. There are scenes in Kurdish village, and Istanbul, but London has been central. I love the multicultural blending here, which is different than anywhere else. But I also wanted to say if honour related attacks are happening even here and they are, then that means they can happen anywhere. (Q&A with Elif Shafak, Author of Honour Penguin Random House South Africa, n.d.)

*Honor* is a narrative about the cultural divide encountered by the existing culturally divided Turkish-Kurdish family members. The family has moved from a tiny town near the Euphrates to their home nation's capital city, Istanbul, and then to the capital city of a distant country, London, England. The novel digs into the challenges that immigrants have when striving to keep their traditional values in modern British society. The novel deals with a variety of issues, including loneliness, betrayal, obligation, and, of course, family honour. The themes pervade society as a whole, whether in Turkey or London, and not only Pembe and Jamila's home. Individual aspects of each culture are extensively investigated. In addition to Pembe's, her husband's and children's societies, there is also Jamila's society in Turkey.

## II. Patriarchy, Bhabha, Unhomeliness, Hybridity

Women have always been looked upon throughout history and discourses have typically been dominated by men. A woman was defined by a man, not as she is, but as she was in relation to him. She was not perceived as a self-contained creature. All women, regardless of colour, ethnicity, or class,

expressed their experiences of being oppressed by members of their own cultures. As Beauvoir states, "now, woman has always been, if not man's slave, at least his vassal" (2014, p. 29). Patriarchy is described as a male-dominated approach to power that tyrannizes women within political, economic, and social structures. It has been generally considered acceptable throughout history. According to feminists, patriarchy, in all of its manifestations, "is the root cause of all violence against women since it provides an atmosphere in which the husband may abuse his wife by exploiting its principal product, gender inequity" (Tracy, 2007). Cultural practises in patriarchal countries demand women to respect and act in accordance with them. These are cultural characteristics that define women's identities while limiting women's emotional, physical, and psychological growth. As a result of these traditions, women are only suited for pregnancy and working as animals, following their husbands and labouring to serve them continually in order to be good wives.

Bhabha is an Indian-English researcher and theorist of English literature and cultural studies. He is regarded as one of the most prominent figures on the subject of current postcolonial studies. His work is largely concerned with inter-national cultural interactions, particularly those between colonisers and colonised. He offers postcolonial discourses with essential ideas and views present in various literature. One of his most important works (a collection of his writings is *The Location of Culture* (1994), in which he provides a set of notions that aim to weaken humanity's basic distinction between self and others. Bhabha proposes "a critical realignment of the approach of cultural study in the West, away from transcendentalism and towards a performative and enunciatory present"(Amjad & Albusalih, 2020, p.1224). He articulates his philosophical worldview in relation to Western ideology "to establish

less violent relations with different societies; the root of the Western desire to conquer is generally believed to lie in the traditional Western portrayals of distant societies" (2020, p.1224.).

The concept of "home" is inextricably linked to one's genuine identity. This is a positive connection that depicts man's past in his old enslaved civilization. As a consequence, it is a true picture of any civilisation before it was subjected to colonialism and persecution at the hands of any imperialist force inside or outside the culture. As a result, the notion of "home" is closely associated with the concept of freedom and security, which gives the character of the house a genuine and stable reality, and this is the definition of "home" that Bhabha proposes. Once insecurity reigns and individual rights are infringed upon, this will result in "unhomeliness," and the image of "home" and the past will change as a result. Since women have been subjected to a great deal of harassment in their culture, they have a persistent sense of "unhomeliness," leading to feelings of social alienation, helplessness, and loss of identity.

The term "hybridity" comes from biology, but in colonial and post-colonial literature, it refers to any form of a combination of Eastern and Western cultures. This combination demonstrates a novel mixture in which many cultural features overlap. Hybridity "stands in opposition to the myth of purity and racial and cultural authenticity, of fixed and essentialist identity, embraces blending, combining, syncretism and encourages the composite, the impure, the heterogeneous, and the eclectic" (Guignery et al., 2011, p. 3). It describes a new society in which people, whether men or women, have an autonomous and balanced identity. Hybridity, for Bhabha, "is also crucial for diasporic people to remove or at least reduce the differences and gaps which may prove an obstacle in their cultural integration with the culture of the

host countries" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 37). Bhabha was profoundly affected by Salman Rushdie's writings, particularly his opinions on the term "hybridity." As Rushdie states,

[...] it is completely fallacious to suppose that there is such a thing as a pure, unalloyed tradition from which to draw. [...] the very essence of Indian culture is that we possess a mixed tradition, a *mélange* of elements as disparate as ancient Mughal and contemporary Coca-Cola American. [...] Eclecticism, the ability to take from the world what seems fitting and to leave the rest, has always been a hallmark of the Indian tradition. (1991, P. 67)

Thus, hybridity is a meeting point between two different cultures—for example, the cultures of the colonised and the colonizer—with the goal of negotiating the formation of a culture distinct from the initial two cultures. A culture that is "new, neither the one nor the other" (Bhabha, p. 37). The research explores how cultural differences might collide in one person, resulting in the emergence of a third culture or a multicultural society.

### III. Discussion

Traditional patriarchal practises are predicated on men's total dominance in society. These traditions imply that the protection of women is the obligation of the man, who serves as the foundation of the family and society. Men's use of violence to impose their power is socially and culturally justifiable, "in domestic life, women were required to place themselves under the protection of husbands and fathers who were legally and traditionally entitled to underpin their patriarchal authority by actual or threatened violence" (D 'Cruze, 1992, p.379). Despite its location on the European continent, Istanbul society is a traditional community par excellence. In a

patriarchal culture, the woman who possesses the family's reputation must uphold this honour with extreme caution or face death. In patriarchal Turkish society, honour is almost everything. Based on this, the woman bears a huge burden of preserving the family's honour, and her behaviour determines how she chooses to live. "According to traditional beliefs, honor is intimately connected with female sexuality and the only way to restore familial honor once it is damaged by a woman's sexual misconduct is by killing the guilty woman" (Rubin, 2010, p. 3).

In *Honor*, Elif Shafak states that Turkish women are indoctrinated from a young age that a man is everything. Every mother offers her daughters explicit guidelines. A patriarchal culture is one that thinks that man is a flawless being who does not make errors and that his commands are unchangeable:

It was all because women were made of the lightest cambric, Naze continued, whereas men were cut of thick, dark fabric. That's how God had tailored the two: one superior to the other. As to why He had done that, it wasn't up to human beings to question. (Shafak, 2012, P. 16)

In the above scene, the mother, Naze, confronts her daughters about the man's dominance. Man is unique in creation, and this must be accepted without question. This is attributed to God's own understanding. In creation, man is strong and woman is weak, as though they were fashioned of light cambric. Women of *Honor* live in a tiny village, a closed society in which the girl is under the care of a man, an entity that has lost its independence and freedom and lacks room for her to express herself and her rights, "But

when the father is absent like that, the mother's honour is guarded by the eldest son" (2011, p. 61). A manly community ruled entirely by males. Women lack self-sufficiency and they are initially ruled by their fathers, their spouses, and lastly by their eldest sons. They are unable to govern themselves.

The struggle of the mother, Naze, who had previously given birth to eight daughters but was unable to deliver a son, exemplifies patriarchy in its most heinous form. She has given birth to another daughter in the last twenty hours, and there is yet another baby in her womb. She was fatigued, but she really wanted to give her husband a son. Naze refused to go back to bed to relax, despite the women's pleas. She sighed deeply and painfully as she turned to look out the window:

This time Naze did not attempt to run away. She gave a wisp of a sigh, buried her head in the pillow and turned towards the open window, as if straining to hear fate's whisper in the wind, as mild as milk. If she listened attentively, she thought, she might hear an answer from the skies. After all, there must be a reason, a justification unbeknownst to her but surely obvious to Allah, as to why He had given them two more daughters when they already had six, and still not a single son. (2011, p. 5)

Women's suffering of *Honor* varies. The son is preferred over the daughter; a woman does not have the right to leave the house alone. She has a passive character and is forced to obey the man without question. In a polygamous culture, a woman has no right to object to the marriage at all, or else she will face torture, abuse, and ostracism, "Only the wife who had been married first was legal, of course, and could go to a hospital or courtroom or a tax register

office and claim to be a married woman with legitimate children" (2011, p. 34) This excerpt depicts women's societal plight. The second, third, and fourth wives have no right to demand anything. They are all deemed unlawful. It definitely reveals women's inferiority. In the long run, their rights are unprotected. Furthermore, a man's house is a prison for women. She has no right to abandon her spouse and her house, "Naze murmured as she headed to the kitchen. No daughter of mine will abandon her husband. If she does, I'll beat the hell out of her, even if I'm dead by then. I'll come back as a ghost!" (2011, p. 11). A woman, traditionally, is not supposed to leave her spouse, no matter what. Man is both sacred and superior to all other forms of life. Naze, the mother, forbids her daughters from leaving their spouses.

Unhomeliness, as defined by Tyson, "an emotional state: unhomed people don't feel at home even in their own homes because they don't feel at home in any culture and, therefore, don't feel at home in themselves" (2011, p. 250). In postcolonial theory, there are several meanings for the concept of "unhomeliness." It may indicate a sense of alienation felt by the individual when he transitions from one environment to another, a painful experience that causes the individual to reflect on his original identity as he is lost in the new culture that he claims to be his identity. He is aware of his anxiety at times. Bhabha explains it as follows:

I have lived that moment of scattering of the people that in other times and other places, in the nations of others, becomes a time of gathering. gathering of exiles and émigrés and refugees; gathering on the edge of foreign cultures; gathering at the frontiers; gatherings in the ghettos or cafes city centers; gathering in the half-life, half-light

of foreign tongues or in the uncanny fluency of another's language.  
(1994, p. 139)

The protagonists of Honor, Jamila and Pempe, come from a humble household of Kurdish nationality surrounded by a vast Turkish community. Within this little community, the Kurdish minority preserves its identity, feeling protected, belonging, identity, and independence. Following her marriage to Adam, Pempe travelled from this small town to the great metropolis of Istanbul, and subsequently to London, generating a state of unhomeliness. However, as Bhabha puts it, "to be unhomed is not to be homeless, nor can the unhomely be easily accommodated in that familiar division of social life into private and public spheres" (1994, p. 125). Unhomeliness, according to Bhabha, is the place from where one could move further than the "binary opposition" of home and "homelessness" (1994). As a result, Pempe abandons her home culture and relocates to a foreign culture, where she lives in a separate house with her family. She does not experience the constraints of her native culture or the sensation of being homeless until later, when her husband discards her and she finds it difficult to confront the challenges that the new culture puts on her. Such constraints were not there in her previous community.

Most women suffer from unhomeliness in patriarchal systems. Women see this sensation as natural and acceptable, and they lack the resolve to reject it. They take it for granted and accept it as self-evident. The patriarchal culture is a rich ground for weak women who feel alienated, lonely, and unhomely, "hello, this is my sister. She only likes loser, 'Iskender said whenever he introduced me to someone, especially to a boy"(Shafak, 2012, p. 181). This sense of failure and loss has been ingrained in the personalities of women in traditional Kurdish society. Women often associate failure with them,

making it harder for them to feel at home and at ease. Esma, Pempe's daughter, feels like a loser since her brother Iskender considers her a failure:

I found myself fatally drawn to the downtrodden, to the underdog. Even if I watch a football match, I so wanted the score to be a draw that I ended up supporting the losing team. The thought of how terrible the players must be feeling at the moment, crushed under the weight of their fans' disappointment and woe, was enough for my heart to go out to them. (2011, p. 181)

Since they live in an environment that protects, secures, and strengthens them, individuals are supposed to live in their communities with complete freedom, a recognised identity, and a flawless sense of homeliness. If the feelings of dread, anxiety, and failure infiltrate the individual, it causes him psychological trauma that makes him feel alienated and lost, shaking his identity, which is meant to be stable, substantial, and authentic. Based on this, and because she feels different, Pempe moves to Istanbul with her husband, Adam, and later to London. A transition from a limited geographical setting with its own customs, traditions, and stringent laws that put inflexible constraints on women. Pempe wishes to experience the world outside this small community where she feels complete unhomeliness. She is a new woman with new perspectives who has wants and is courageous enough to express them, "Pempe wanted to see the world beyond the River Euphrates. She had the nerve to pursue her heart, and not pay attention to others thought about her" (2011, p. 38). Pempe is not like previous generations of women. She yearns for freedom. She is unconcerned about how people will label her. She desires independence and has her own interests.

The emigration of Pempe's family to London is more than just an individual emigration. It is a movement of people of many languages, religions, and nationalities. They strive to know themselves, to know others, to comprehend them, and to understand their culture. They believe there is no distinction between themselves and others and that they can belong and feel at home in London. They want to feel like a part of this community. As for Bhabha, Pempe's definition of unhomey incorporates the idea that a person is stuck between two opposing worlds and does not feel at home either. She was held hostage by uncanny circumstances. (Bhabha, 1994). *Honor* illustrates that because Pempe lives in-between parallel cultures, she collects feelings of animosity and indifference by not feeling at ease in various places as a result of her subjection and internalisation of ideas that are harmful to her essential being. This has a big influence on her behaviour. She has been hampered in her social development because she has adopted and embodied values that are not hers. She has developed a personality in which she feels uncomfortable with herself. Soon after they arrive in London.

Pempe's husband, Adam, leaves her for another woman. He spends time with a lovely London woman and has abandoned his entire family. Roxana, Adam's mistress, is a formidable woman. She employs her beauty and character against Adam, who blindly worships her. As Pempe highlights,

Adam is no husband to me. He doesn't come home anymore. He has found himself another woman. The children don't know it. I keep everything inside. Always. My heart is full of words unsaid, tears unshed. I don't blame him. I blame myself. (2012, p. 90)

Her husband abandons her in favour of another woman, regretting their marriage. She is deafeningly quiet and doing nothing. It was a blunder she

wanted to forget. She is a helpless victim. Because she is the mother, Pempe is now completely in command of the family, "mum started to go to the houses of the rich, where she would take care their toddlers, cook their food, clean their rooms, scour their saucepans, iron their clothes and occasionally offer a shoulder to cry on" (2011, p. 75). Pempe would not be able to work in a patriarchal society, "unless there was a financial crisis, a woman should not have to look for a job" (2011, p. 151). Nonetheless, after being abandoned, she is forced to work for her family. She is now bouncing about from one home to the next with no feeling of homeliness. Pempe has experienced unhomeliness throughout her life, beginning with her patriarchal society, which imposes harsh constraints on women. In her original culture, the father was in charge of everything, and the other women had to listen and follow. Pempe experienced unhomeliness during her marriage. Her husband did not make her feel loved or cared for. Instead, she was abandoned and began to take on the roles of mother and father at the same time to compensate for her husband's absence. More remarkably, Pempe suffers from geographical unhomeliness because she now belongs to an entirely dissimilar culture to her initial setting. Despite her lofty goals and the future, Pempe envisions for herself, she finds it challenging to adjust to the new setting.

Since then, Europe has been the new home for most immigrants seeking to improve their social lives, financial positions, and freedom. Western society was not always hospitable. In most circumstances, immigrants must work hard. Westerners do not perceive the presence of immigrants as a chance to hybridise, assimilate, and settle into their culture. Shafak states, "the Germans invited you to their country to work, not to mingle, and expected

you to leave as soon as you were no longer needed. Adapting to their ways was like trying embrace a hedgehog" (2011, p. 151).

Bhabha perceives the hybrid identity "as one constructed through relocation and separation in the contact zone. In fact, it is in a third space of enunciation in which every thought by both the colonizer and the colonized finds a means of expression or exchange"(Pourgharib et al., 2018, p. 49). As a writer, Shafak's personality is strongly connected to hybridity. She spent her life hopping between cultures and worlds. This was mirrored in her works, which addressed a wide range of topics, including immigration, different races, ethnic identities, and rich and diverse Western and Eastern traditions. Shafak stated in an interview that multiculturalism is the major source of her native nation, Turkey. She is "shaped by the history of her country." (Shafak, 2007, p. 29)

The search of the diverse characters in Shafak's novel *Honor* to find a means to adapt and coexist in the new Western society, while some of them cannot sense a genuine belonging, is what makes the work totally compatible with Bhabha's notion of hybridity. Shafak argues that Iskandar's murder is the consequence of Iskandar's inability, as an immigrant from an eastern culture to a western one, to overcome his history and his patriarchal surroundings, which pushes him to safeguard the family's honour. As a result, Iskandar was unable to absorb the new culture's beliefs because he felt abandoned, unhomely, and separated from the two cultures:

We didn't live in this flat, only sojourned. Home to us was no different than a one-star hotel where Mum washed the bed sheets instead of maids and where every morning the breakfast would be the same: white cheese, black olives, tea in small glasses never with milk. Arshad might someday play in League Division One, for all I knew. He could fill his pockets with pictures of the Queen and his car

with gorgeous birds, but people like us would always be outsiders. We Topraks were only passers-by in this city – a half Turkish, half-Kurdish family in the wrong end of London. (Shafak, 2011, P. 44)

The father, Adam Toprak, is a first-generation immigrant who feels at home exclusively with other immigrant groups and has minimal interaction with the original white population,

There were unwritten rules here that everyone obeyed. Indians, Pakistanis, Indonesians, Bangladeshis, Caribbeans, Iranians, Turks, Greeks, Italians ... Everybody spoke English but swore, conspired and prayed in his mother tongue. The Lair, they called it. Run by a taciturn Chinese family who had lived in Vietnam for generations and been forced to leave after the war (2011, p. 39)

Adam's first hints of hybridity are shown when he meets his mistress, Roxana. She shows her dissatisfaction with his look, so he shaves his beard and abandons the ideals and beliefs he was taught in his traditional community. She constantly tells him, "Englishmen don't have them," she often says. 'When're you gonna cut it? It makes you look like Stalin" (2011, p. 116). Adam was attempting to replicate the new ideas of Western culture while avoiding what Bhabha refers to as "space in between" (1994, p. 2), and this eventually resulted in the identity crisis.

Pempe, the novel's protagonist, was compelled to work and learn English after her spouse abandoned her. Later on, she had the incentive to hybridise and accept Western culture, and she even had a boyfriend called Elias. However, the stereotype challenged this hybridization, and Pembe was unable to shake the customs she had received from her patriarchal culture since childhood. Her letter to her sister Jamila demonstrates this:

Sister, I've met someone. Please don't frown. Please don't judge me. Give me a chance to explain, though I'm not sure I understand it myself. I cannot confide in anyone but you. Nobody knows. I'm scared witless. But I'm also full of joy and hope. How can this be? (Shafak, 2012, p. 155)

The second generation of immigrants appears to be more hybrid with Western society than the first. Esma, the family's daughter, recalls a few of her village's traditions but seems at ease in the cosmopolitan environment that surrounds her, "I loved the neighborhood. Afro hair salons, the Jamaican café, the Jewish baker's, the Algerian boy behind his fruit stall who pronounced my name in a funny way..." (2011, p. 63). Yunus, the Toprak family's youngest son, appears to be the most prominent member of the second generation, who considers himself a part of Western civilization and feels a sense of total belonging as well as total hybridization. He was born in London, spends most of his time with English friends, and has entirely cut himself off from his parents' traditional culture, which he knows nothing about,

When she opened the door, she found her youngest child, her baby, listening to the loudest, harshest music on earth. 'What're you doing?' my mother asked. Yunus didn't look up at her. Or at me instead, he kept his eyes on the carpet, as if fearful that his face would disclose something. Curious, my mother retrieved the album from the floor and inspected it. There was a man on a horse, an eerie figure, and another person lying on the ground, being eaten by vultures. In a red frame above it, in capital letters, was written THE CLASH. Underneath there was another line: Give 'Em Enough Rope. (2011, p. 219)

This clearly demonstrates how the third generation of immigrants does not have a tough time assimilating into Western society. It finds itself an inherent part of it and does not confront any of the major obstacles that past generations did. Furthermore, this generation is unaccustomed to the patriarchy that existed in traditional communities and lives with complete independence in making decisions and selecting the proper lifestyle for it, free of any constraints.

## Conclusion

This study examines Elif Shafak's *Honor* in relation to Homi K. Bhabha's conceptions of unhomeliness and hybridity. Women face homelessness in patriarchal civilizations dominated by men's total dominance. Migration to more civilised societies is the only option for women to maintain their identity, individuality, and independence. However, they quickly realise that they are still locked in the customs and beliefs imposed by their former civilization, and they are unable to free themselves from their clutches. As a result, women, like the first generation of immigrants, suffer from alienation, unhomeliness, and loss between the two cultures, as Homi Bhabha labelled them "in betweenesses." In contrast to the previous generation, the second generation of immigrants is able to prune and hybridise with the new society. Elif Shafak, as an author, attempts to portray a multicultural society as a melting pot of all ethnicities, races, and faiths. The novel tells the narrative of a Turkish family of Kurdish background living in a patriarchal culture.

Pempe marries Adam Toprak and travels to London to live with him. The family members live in a state of unhomeliness and hybridization, each having their own path in life. The first generation of the family, like most immigrants, struggled to integrate into Western culture and felt unhomey throughout their lives. This generation is unable to shake the ideals and values instilled in them by the original conservative culture. The second generation, unlike the first, did not struggle to adjust to Western ideals since they felt fully integrated into a multicultural society that represented Shafak's personality and the purpose she wished to achieve.

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