



**ABJECT ILLUSTRATIONS IN CONTEMPORARY
WOMEN'S FEMINIST FICTION**

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PhD THESIS
ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE**

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THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that in my opinion the thesis submitted by Gözde Begüm MIZRAK titled “ABJECT ILLUSTRATIONS IN CONTEMPORARY WOMEN’S FEMINIST FICTION” is fully adequate in scope and in quality as a thesis for the degree of PhD.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own work and all information included has been obtained and expounded in accordance with the academic rules and ethical policy specified by the institute. Besides, I declare that all the statements, results, materials, not original to this thesis have been cited and referenced literally.

Without being bound by a particular time, I accept all moral and legal consequences of any detection contrary to the aforementioned statement.

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FOREWORD

First and foremost, I would like to extend my gratitude for my beloved supervisor Assoc. Prof. Dr. Harith Ismael TURKI, who has patiently encouraged and assisted me both mentally and professionally and has not lost his faith in me during this tough process. Additionally, I would like to present my special thanks to the head of our department Prof. Dr. A. Serdar ÖZTÜRK, who has guided me during his lectures and in the thesis monitoring committee with his valuable feedback. I am also pleased for Prof. Dr. Sinan YILMAZ's existence in my committee throughout the procedure. I am genuinely happy that it has come to an end turning me into a more mature version of myself and that the view is worth it after this long, exhausting, but equally satisfying journey. Furthermore, I cannot express how lucky and grateful I feel to have the existence and backing of my precious family – my mother, father and brother, who lighted up my way with their sunshine as I proceeded. Last but not least, I appreciate the invaluable presence and support of Prof. Dr. Asalet ERTEN in my life, who has never given up on me since our paths crossed and has been an inspiration for me for her dedicated academic career and lifetime achievement.

ABSTRACT

The dissertation primarily aims to explore the use of abject both as a theme and as characterization with a feminist lens in contemporary women's fiction. The examination has been conducted under Julia Kristeva's Theory of Abject. For the study, Iris Murdoch's *Nuns and Soldiers* (1980), Anne Rice's *The Queen of the Damned* (1988) and Elif Shafak's *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006) have been chosen. The analysis reveals that writers from diverse nations and backgrounds unite around the same purpose, which is to challenge the social norms that do not benefit women. By employing contemporary narrative techniques such as reversing and deconstructing binary oppositions, including contrasts and grotesque elements in the plot, and using multiple narrators, these writers draw attention to the possibility of a new world order where women and other marginalized minorities are not relegated to mere survival on the periphery. The conclusion reached is that the male and female complement each other in the way opposites coexist, and that humanity is essential for a balanced self and a united society. Exploring one's identity, which has been lost and fragmented for a long time, lies in communication and taking action and has been regarded as a resolution. Murdoch, Rice, and Shafak, as contemporary female writers with different origins, demonstrate that women's suffering is universal and that women supporting women is crucial to maintain the desired new world order in the long run.

Keywords: Abject; Julia Kristeva; Iris Murdoch; *Nuns and Soldiers*; Anne Rice; *The Queen of the Damned*; Elif Shafak; *The Bastard of Istanbul*

ÖZ

Bu tez, çağdaş kadın yazınında abjectin hem bir tema hem de karakter inşası olarak kullanımını feminist bir mercekten incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. İnceleme, Julia Kristeva'nın Abject Teorisi çerçevesinde gerçekleştirilmiştir. Çalışma için Iris Murdoch'un *Nuns and Soldiers* (1980), Anne Rice'in *Lanetliler Kraliçesi* (1988) ve Elif Şafak'ın *Baba ve Piç* (2006) eserleri seçilmiştir. Analiz, çeşitli milletlerden ve geçmişlerden gelen yazarların kadınlara fayda sağlamayan sosyal normları sorgulamak amacı etrafında birleştiğini ortaya koymaktadır. İkili karşıtlıkları tersine çevirme ve yapıbozuma uğratma, kurguya karşıtlıkları ve grotesk unsurları dâhil etme ve çoklu anlatıcılar kullanma gibi çağdaş anlatı teknikleri kullanarak bu yazarlar; kadınların ve diğer marjinalleştirilmiş azınlıkların kenarda hayatta kalmaya zorlanmadığı yeni bir dünya düzeninin mümkün olduğuna dikkat çekmektedirler. Ulaşılan sonuç; kadın ve erkeğin, karşıtların birlikte var olması gibi birbirini tamamladığı ve dengeli bir benlik ile birleşmiş bir toplum için öncelikli olarak insanlık kavramının gerekli olduğudur. Kişinin uzun süre kaybolmuş ve parçalanmış olan kimliğini keşfetmesi, iletişim ve harekete geçme ile sağlanmakta olup, bir çözüm olarak kabul edilmiştir. Farklı kökenlerden gelen çağdaş kadın yazarlar olan Murdoch, Rice ve Şafak, kadınların acısının evrensel olduğunu ve kadınların kadınları desteklemesinin uzun vadede arzulanan yenisünya düzenini sürdürmek için oldukça önemli olduğunu göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Abject; Julia Kristeva; Iris Murdoch; *Nuns and Soldiers*; Anne Rice; *Lanetliler Kraliçesi*; Elif Şafak; *Baba ve Piç*

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SUBJECT OF THE RESEARCH

The dissertation examines the depiction of abjected female characters in contemporary women's feminist fiction under the light of Julia Kristeva's Theory of Abject. It focuses on the works of Iris Murdoch, Anne Rice, and Elif Shafak, exploring how these authors portray women's struggles against patriarchal norms and their journey towards identity formation and self-recognition. In that sense, the selected fiction from these writers are as follows: *Nuns and Soldiers* (1980) by Iris Murdoch, *The Queen of the Damned* (1988) by Anne Rice and *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006) by Elif Shafak.

PURPOSE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of the study is to challenge and reverse the patriarchal social order and rules that have traditionally marginalized women, both in literature and society. By focusing on the representation of women in contemporary English Literature, the research aims to draw attention to the suppressed, silenced, and marginalized female individuals, advocating for their recognition as equal individuals. The study specifically examines Iris Murdoch's *Nuns and Soldiers* (1980), Anne Rice's *The Queen of the Damned* (1988), and Elif Shafak's *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006) to highlight the ongoing objectification and discrimination against women resulting from the male gaze.

The importance of the research lies in its effort to illustrate that women can move from object to subject positions while maintaining strong and independent identities. It seeks to deconstruct binary oppositions such as man vs. woman and dominant vs. submissive, emphasizing that gender roles are not fixed and can be more fluid and adaptable. By reversing negative stereotypes and promoting for a more egalitarian social order, the research aims to contribute to the long-term goal of achieving gender equality.

Moreover, the dissertation underscores the importance of women telling their own stories and reclaiming their narratives from the male-dominated discourse. By analysing works by Murdoch, Rice, and Shafak, the research aims to show how women's perspectives can challenge and change mainstream views, providing new insights into the portrayal of female characters in literature. By exploring these novels through the lens of abject theory and feminism, the research aims to open new avenues for further study and contribute to the diversity and depth of feminist literary criticism.

METHOD OF THE RESEARCH

For the method of the research, Kristeva's psychoanalysis is chosen for its ability to address the limitations of traditional psychoanalytic theories, its feminist perspective, and its relevance to analysing abject female characters in contemporary literature. This method will provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the transformation of female characters from marginalized figures to empowered individuals, contributing to the ongoing discourse on gender equality in literature and society.

HYPOTHESIS OF THE RESEARCH / RESEARCH PROBLEM

This dissertation addresses the problematic position of women as the 'other' gender in society and the abject image of the female resulting from that representation. In traditional English Literature, women have often been depicted as silent, obedient, and harmless as long as they conform to patriarchal norms. However, when women assert their voices and agency, they are frequently labelled as insane, dangerous, mentally ill, or are dehumanized as witches or vampires, rendering them as disguised threats. Patriarchy pragmatically uses this classification of women as threats, or abject, to maintain male dominance.

Historically, female characters in literature who questioned their societal roles were often subdued by the end of the narrative, typically through a 'happy marriage' or a return to unchanged, male-benefiting conditions. This trend was perpetuated by predominantly male writers, who illustrated society from a patriarchal perspective and often neglected female suffering to maintain their prestige and wider audience appeal.

The contemporary period; however, witnessed an increase in female writers who focused on powerful female characters and their struggles against abjectification. These writers began to challenge and subvert patriarchal norms, depicting female characters who took action rather than passively questioning their roles. This shift in narrative not only destabilized the long-standing binaries of male dominance but also highlighted the physical and psychological impositions placed on women.

The hypothesis of this dissertation is that female writers of the contemporary period and beyond aimed to subvert the gendered and biased discourse. They transformed the negative connotations associated with the term abject and the female

gender into a more positive understanding, demonstrating that what society, identified with the male view, calls abject, does not have to be abject at all.

By analysing the depiction of abject female characters in the works of Iris Murdoch, Anne Rice, and Elif Shafak, the dissertation aims to show that these characters are not threats to society, but rather contribute to its regulation and balance. The study will use Julia Kristeva's psychoanalytic theory, which integrates feminist perspectives, to explore how these characters exemplify the continuous process of female individuation.

Kristeva's concept of the subject-in-process, which suggests that women's identities are not fixed but continuously evolving, supports the idea that abject characters can positively influence societal dynamics. The hypothesis extends to assert that the suffering of women is universal and that abject female characters, as portrayed by female writers using feminist psychoanalysis, can help deconstruct gender binaries and foster a more equitable understanding of female identity. This understanding is crucial for the progression of both male and female identities, emphasizing the mutual need for each gender in achieving a balanced and progressive society.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS / DIFFICULTIES

This study primarily employs Julia Kristeva's Theory of Abject, which was detailly explained in her seminal work *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982) to analyse the selected literary works. The scope encompasses Kristeva's psychoanalysis as central, supported by secondary sources that either focus on or incorporate the theory in their research. The novels *Nuns and Soldiers*, *The Queen of the Damned* and *The Bastard of Istanbul* were specifically chosen to highlight the portrayal of abject female characters by female authors from diverse cultural backgrounds, emphasizing that the concept of abjection transcends borders and is not confined to English Literature. Literature's capacity to reflect and articulate crises makes it a privileged signifier of abjection. The literary language's potential to trigger and intensify the abject experience aligns well with Kristeva's psychoanalytic insights.

The study will explore the socio-cultural dimensions of abjection, particularly how marginalized and suppressed women are represented as abject and how this perception legitimizes their exclusion from society. This will be examined in the context of the selected works' themes and characterizations.

Regarding limitations, while Kristeva's theory of abjection is comprehensive, it primarily focuses on psychoanalytic and feminist perspectives. The study may not fully address other theoretical frameworks that could offer additional insights into the selected works. Also, Kristeva's complex theoretical language and the intricate stylistics of the selected literary works may pose challenges for interpretation and analysis. Readers unfamiliar with psychoanalytic terminology might find the analysis demanding.

The study is limited to three specific novels by female authors. While this selection aims to demonstrate the universality of abjection, it may not capture the full diversity of literary representations of abject female characters across different genres and periods. Furthermore, the emphasis on female characters as abject may overlook the broader applicability of Kristeva's theory to other marginalized or abject figures in literature, such as racial or ethnic minorities, queer individuals, or other socially excluded groups. Moreover, although the selected works represent British, American, and Turkish backgrounds, the analysis may not fully account for the cultural specificities and nuances of abjection in other national or regional literatures.

In terms of difficulties, abjection's interdisciplinary nature requires integrating insights from psychology, sociology, philosophy, and literature, which can be methodologically challenging. Also, the intricate and multifaceted nature of abjection, involving emotional, psychological, and social dimensions, may make it difficult to provide a unified and coherent analysis. Addressing the representation of women in literature through the lens of abjection involves navigating sensitive issues related to gender, identity, and power dynamics, which require careful analysis. In addition, analysing complex literary texts for abject themes and characters requires a deep understanding of both the primary and secondary texts, which can be intellectually demanding.

By focusing on these aspects, the study aims to contribute to the understanding of abject female characters in literature and the broader implications of Kristeva's theory in feminist psychoanalytic discourse.

1. INTRODUCTION

This dissertation covers the struggle and individuation process of women characters that have been marginalised, outcast, and forced to survive on the edges of the society by the stereotypical values of the patriarchal system that holds onto standardized binaries. In other words, the main focus of the analysis of the research will be the abjected female characters and their self-recognition, identity and subject formation process in Iris Murdoch's *Nuns and Soldiers* (1980), Anne Rice's *The Queen of the Damned* (1988) and Elif Shafak's *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006). Set in different time periods and produced by authors from diverse nationalities with various backgrounds, each novel displays a considerable attempt of women against a gender-oriented social and cultural system. The chosen works present the universality of women suffering resulting from the discourse and mind-set created by such a system and its set of values comforting the male while distressing the female. Though it may change form according to the adopted genre, setting or over time, the objectification of women characters and the expectation from them to internalise this inflicted condition stay still.

The problematic position of women as the other gender in society and the abject image of the female resulting from that representation can be identified as the main concern of the study and the research problem. So far in traditional novels in English Literature, women have been positioned as silent, obedient and harmless characters on condition that they behave in the way they are instructed; however, when their voice is heard and they start to outspoke even slightly more than usual, they are labelled as insane, dangerous, mentally ill and non-trustable characters or are attributed non-human statutes such as of a witch or of a vampire, which make the female be regarded as disguised threats. The rule of patriarchy functions knowing very well that a threat can be made ineffective only if it is moved away from sight, so classifying women as threats; in other words, as abject has been a pragmatic excuse for the male to maintain the dominance of their gender. Even though there is a certain degree of questioning this situation by some women characters of traditional novel style, the ending does not differ drastically – a happy marriage takes place or the already existing conditions maintain without any change that would possibly benefit the female or the society as a whole. Besides, the majority of the producers of the genre consisted of men who illustrated the society with that reigning patriarchal view and handled the condition of women with a

male gaze. Mostly they neglected women suffering because of financial reasons knowing that if they wanted to address a wider audience, they needed to proceed the path prepared by the preceding writers, which was important to keep their prestige at the same time. If they strayed from that path, they were informed that they would not be accepted among the community again being similar to the condition of women. Just as the society was represented by the male, the literary community was also subjugated by them. Even if some women writers attempted to take over, they either had to use pseudonyms or soften their language of criticism and end their storyline meeting the traditional writing criteria, so the plots usually revolved around the same circle. In the postmodern period; however, with the increase of women writers in number concentrating on powerful female characters, their abjectification and struggle, the circumstances started to change. Although similar story patterns were followed at first without considerable change, the characters began to take action instead of being satisfied with mere questioning and then returning to silence again.

The female writers of the period managed to shake the stable boundaries founded on binaries and on male dominance strictly for centuries. They have been fighting with the impositions stuck on women both physically and psychologically without sacrificing or depriving themselves of what they believe to be true to lead an honourable and worthy life. Starting from that point of view, this study will explore how abject female characters are depicted from the eyes of female authors and as a result, the hypothesis will unroll that the female writers of the postmodern period and onwards aimed to subvert the gendered and biased discourse and transformed the negative connotations associated with the term and the female gender to a more positive one proving that what society, which is identified with the male view, calls abject might not and does not have to be abject at all. Writers like Iris Murdoch; for example, employed everyday characters with ordinary professions, appearance and lifestyle such as a nun with a completely extraordinary mind-set. This shows that perceptions are open to change and to be able to do so, one does not have to possess a set of opportunities or a higher standard of life. Furthermore, abject characters are not threats to society and do not always have supernatural appearances; instead, they contribute to regulating the society in which one gender lacks peace and contentment. The dilemmas and obstacles caused by gender distinction in society serving to feed the ego of the male were troublesome and were making the relationship between the two genders more complex while yawning the gap

between them every passing day. The traditional psychoanalytical theories used to analyse such novels were approaching women mainly as a mother and were using a technique that did not make a distinction between the concepts of a mother and a female. Women were either equated to the object of desire both for the male and female child and for the adult male as Freud asserts or to a mother whose standard set of behaviour is pre-shaped by the society.

To divert this situation and to raise awareness on the issue, Julia Kristeva's psychoanalysis is considered to be the appropriate theory for the intended analysis in this study for a number of reasons. In line with that purpose, her primary essay *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982) has been chosen to be the main source and the secondary sources that touch upon the theory or treat it as the main subject matter of their research will be consulted. First of all, and most importantly, Kristeva's psychoanalysis focuses on the root of the subject formation of an individual and relates this process to the semiotic chora which represents the maternal. Unlike Freud's 'Law of the Father' which is associated with the male, father and the paternal and is bonded with the symbolic while cutting the child's connection with the semiotic, Kristeva believes in the inclusion of the mother's law in the subject's integration and acceptance into society. Although she bases her ideas on Lacan and his mirror stage, she diverges significantly from him in detecting the point where exactly the child's self-identification takes place. According to Lacan, it happens during the mirror stage coinciding with six to eighteen months in the child's development. When the child is able to identify her or his separate self from the mother in the mirror, s/he starts to form a detached identity formation and it is when s/he disconnects from the mother by rejecting her for the sake of uniting with the pre-determined cultural codes of the symbolic. However, Kristeva holds the opinion that the identity formation of a child starts much earlier than the mirror stage and it does not only in direct relation with the symbolic but also with the semiotic. For her, the child's awareness that s/he is a separate self from the mother starts to take shape in the womb which is called the semiotic "chora" in Kristevan terms. (Kristeva, 1982, p. 14) Upon leaving the mother's womb and rejecting the mother's milk or embrace, the child becomes aware that s/he is not in the womb anymore, but outside. The stage between the mother's womb and the mirror stage is called the 'abject' state by Kristeva. It is "in-between" and an "ambiguous" state as no matter how aware the child is of the separate identity of himself or herself, s/he still belongs to the mother and

needs her close existence. (p. 4) That is why, this detachment from mother is not a clear-cut literal detachment. It aims at supporting the forming of an individual's development. To Kristeva, as she states at the very beginning of *The Powers of Horror*:

There looms within abjection, one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable. It lies there, quite close, but it cannot be assimilated. (Kristeva, 1982, p. 1)

What is attempted to be abjected is an indispensable part of the self and is not totally removable. For this reason, the abject state is regarded as not subject nor object since it stays there somewhere at the border. To Kathleen Adams, who is an awarded clinical psychologist: "The more a young child is unable to forge a meaningful and consistent bond with his or her parents, the more desperate, alienated, bereft, and *abject* he or she is likely to feel." (Adams, 2011, p. 336) A child who witnesses that the mother or another female is treated in a way that others her absorbs that incident and takes it as a role model to apply later in life. It becomes a natural and unquestionable part of his/her identity, which would be tough enough to change in the future. The internalising or interiorising of this situation is articulated either in language or through defilement.

Accepting that improving a society's current situation and growing hope for the future generations start in childhood, Kristeva attributes utmost importance and meaning to the theory of the abject and this also constitutes a considerable part of why it is considered to be a convenient theory for the analysis of the aforementioned works. Indeed, the particular significance attached to semiotic lies there. Since she is of the idea that the expected changes and outcomes are likely to occur during early childhood right before the child meets the cultural domains required by the symbolic, Kristeva attaches particular attention to the semiotic. She wishes to distort and collapse the male-dominated language, which is possible by "a movement from a privileging of the symbolic aspect of language to that of the semiotic. Because the semiotic is pre-verbal it cannot be grasped logically and cannot be adequately described in words." (Ablett, 2014, p. 67) Kristeva asserts that abjection functions as a bridge between the semiotic and a symbolic and is to be approached in art and literature mostly implicitly through the use of mimics, gestures and non-verbal rather than being explained fully and explicitly. (Kristeva, 1982, p. 17) Acknowledging the issue in *Powers of Horror*, she implies that coping solely with abject subjects as the main focus of a text is not exactly what takes one to success, but the implementation of a relevant writing technique, which

is “drowning of narrative in a style” (p. 137) and the reflection of it on abjection, could help one achieve a proper analysis.

Another reason why Kristeva’s method is believed to fit in the analysis is that although the bases of psychoanalysis for the sake of getting a better understanding of the psychology of human beings and their nature were constructed by Sigmund Freud in the late 1800s, Kristeva worked on the development of it upon realising some gaps in the theory regarding the individuation of women that is not in accordance with her mind-set. In psychoanalytical theories in general, sexuality is taken as the utmost determiner in evaluating human psychology, subjectivity and individuality; however, in societies where patriarchy rules, it is the male figure that is dependent upon to represent human beings. While the sexuality of the male was taken into serious consideration to provide answers for behavioural psychology, that of women was acknowledged to be a subsidiary one, which stands there to adapt itself to that of male’s and to accept its facts without questioning, in traditional psychoanalytical theories. For this reason, feminist theorists such as Kristeva conveyed criticism against those older versions of psychoanalysis and administered in-depth approaches to the already available ones, which show that “understanding of female sexuality is confined to patriarchal ideologies” (Aktari, 2010, p. 65) and this needs to change.

The suppressed, victimised and othered statues that are stuck upon women have been paralleled to what is regarded as abject, which then have also been called marginal by that dominant male group of society. This belief of marginality pushing women to remain on the peripheries of society covers another facet of abjection which is its “social dimension”. (Arya, 2014, p. 406) The perception that they pose a threat for the society that “legitimizes their exclusion from the social fabric” (p. 407) causes fear in the majority of the public, which has the power to affect the rest. The idea that any possible sparkle of strength in the object of the dominant’s fear, which is obviously the marginalised in that case, may totter the dominant’s reign causing ‘the other’ to be regarded as abject. Such intolerance to differences in society resulting from that deliberate treatment to the abject specifically to the female abject, who experience the situation twofold because of their gender and the archetypic attributions loaded onto them, shows the social side of the theory, which suits the analysis of the selected works in terms of the topic and characterization. The social aspect of abject can also “function as material through which to reflect on pressing concerns related to crime, ecology,

health and wellbeing.” (Arya & Chare, 2014, p. 2) When correlating abject with the themes and other characters of the works rather than the female ones only, this function is believed to be helpful. The duty of abject is not limited to raise awareness towards the areas mentioned in the social sense. Stemming from this function, abject has a role in regulating the society and building on it by replacing the outdated practices with sensible, reasonable and logical ones, as well. Karen Zivi declares on the topic:

(...) abjection is a process through which we create individual, social and political order. It is a process by which we demarcate self from other ... a process which begins the realm of the psyche ... is most often known through its secondary manifestations—the exclusionary rituals (incest taboos, dietary laws, even writing) by which we bring order and stability to our society. (Zivi, 1998, p. 35)

Abjection indeed paves the way for encouragement to speak up through writing and any reader who is informed about the term, theory, abjected characters and the analysis of the current situation can contribute to forming the new, balanced and permanent order. In addition to these, abjection, according to Kristeva’s understanding and approach owns “an ethical aspect when situated within the broader framework of her thinking.” (Lechte & Margaroni, 2004, p. 90) The philosophical and ethical sides of abjection are adoptable to the social matters and women’s condition in patriarchal systems, which are also in harmony with the feminist perspective. Kristeva’s such notion assents to the writers of the selected works for the aimed analysis in terms of putting the human life, its value and humanistic standard of judgment before any other belief systems and of regarding women as separate individuals not dependent on the opposite gender. Moreover, the abject is already suitable in nature for the analysis of prominent female characters in these works in that just like these characters’ crossing border in their abject statuses, abject has been subjected to many interdisciplinary areas from psychology to literature from philosophy to sociology and from performance art to film studies crossing borders of several fields.

The next reason for the specific choice of Kristeva is that as she argues in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, literature works as a “privileged signifier” (Kristeva, 1982, p. 208) of abjection. It “represents the ultimate coding of our crises, of our most intimate and most serious apocalypses” and is “an unveiling of the abject: an elaboration, a discharge”. (p. 208) By these, it is probable that Kristeva means the absolute capacity of literature to perplex and confuse its absorber via the language in which abject resides. Since in psychoanalytical sense and terminology “the language itself functions as the

primary reason of breakdown –a transition to the symbolic-” (Duman, 2019, p. 38), especially literary language with peculiar stylistics may trigger, aggravate or intensify a linguistic breakdown caused by the fact that the surroundings of an individual are marked off by significations and this ends up stimulating the abject, which means being “abject-ridden” to put in another way. (p. 38) Issuing from this, the undeniably close connection between abject and literature has become an important ground for the dissertation. According to Kristeva, as abject drives the ones exposed to it “toward the place where meaning collapses” (Kristeva, 1982, p. 2), the language in works, which take abject as a theme, include such characters or integrate it in the style they use, may happen to be complicated for readers and hard to grasp; however, examining such works closely and analysing them in the light of her theory of abject is to be enlightening, subversive and norm-changing.

Last but not least, although at first the abject may seem like a condition to deal with on a personal level addressing individuals, as Jerrold E. Hogle puts, the will to get rid of what’s ambiguous, “in-between” and/or “composite” is social and cultural as much as it is personal. (Hogle, 2002, pp. 7-8) For Kristeva, the theory of the abject is “the necessary core of relationships between mother and child and any relationship taking that form including, arguably, many ordinary relationships between women” (Bousfield, 2000, p. 330) carrying the subject to a global scale. The ongoing abject representations of women by the symbolic order so far is possible to be converted to a more positive comprehension thanks to especially contemporary women writers handling similar topics. To that end, taking all the aforementioned reasons into account and keeping the fact that the women characters are pushed to exist on the borders as secondary citizens with the excuse that they do not fit in the criteria determined by the patriarchal laws in mind, the traditional psychoanalysis focusing on the superiority of the male sexuality would not be useful in this dissertation. If a transformation and awareness are sought with the examination of the selected works in societies, then, a transformed, updated or rewritten edition of the theory had to be preferred. The analysis of female characters written by female writers in the light of a female theorist with a feminist approach has been thought to be the healthiest one to reach reliable conclusions.

Thanks to the analysis that will be gained from these writers and their works, the study will argue that it is possible to reverse the patriarchal social order and rules, which have been settled according to traditional living conditions and thus frequently found

their reflections in the works of the period, to draw attention to the suppressed, silenced and marginalized female individuals and to ensure that they are referred as equal individuals and citizens in both literary works and in social life. Furthermore, specifically in the post-modern and contemporary period works written in English language and relatively recently in English Literature, the continuous representations of female figures that have been followed since traditional works and the negative, objectifying, excluding, and discriminating definitions conducted on women resulting from the male gaze are aimed to be reversed. The impression made on the reader deriving from such imagery is also targeted and the permanence of the trend is hoped to be achieved in the long run.

Besides, the fact that women can move from the object position to the subject position and at the same time have a strong and independent mother identity if desired and that there should be no clear and strict lines between these identities are to be some other conclusions to be reached in the dissertation. It will be underlined that the viewpoint, which is an imposition of society causing female characters to be perceived as abject, ambiguous, unwanted, other, worthless, dangerous, monstrous or dirty, is in fact essentially subjective and in disguise. It is presented as if it were the general, canonised and highly objective view and has been allowed to represent the mainstream perspective of the society guiding it for centuries. It will also be emphasized that the facts or events defined as abject by the male individuals who are thought to be the spokespeople of the community they belong to may not be perceived in the same way by female individuals. As a matter of fact, abject representations can make female individuals gain a positive characteristic and can remove them from the bystander position. Abject figures take the responsibility of the obligation to be a mother if a woman wants to be respected or of the compulsory sacrifice of a mother if she wants her child to gain respect, individuality and independence from women's shoulders, which have been loaded as a burden by the classical discourse. If a woman is labelled as abject, it means that she shows the signs of power, desire, affection and individuality simultaneously, which are also signs of threat for the male in the symbolic order. Sensing this threat, the male takes guard and operates suppression, domestication and taming strategies on the opposite gender equating that label of 'the abject' to 'the other'. However, from a woman's perspective, this stigmatization can be the sign of a change

towards the positive hinting that she has the capacity to have a word and make her voice to be heard.

Related to that, another outcome to be achieved will be observing the evolution of the phenomenon of the abject from the negative to the positive in the chosen literary works and that binary oppositions such as man vs. woman, male vs. female, masculine vs. feminine, victimiser vs. victimised and dominant vs. submissive are open to deconstruction and replacement. Kristeva would like to put an end to such certain binaries in her peculiar psychoanalysis in which she combined Freud's and Lacan's approaches with her own, and she came up with the idea that women's individuation is neither determined by physiological determiners merely meaning that the bond between the mother and the child is cut right after the child sees oneself in the mirror and mingles with the society as Lacan says nor is limited to motherhood which is believed to be a blessing and the most important victory a woman could have. Rather, Kristeva supports that a woman's individuation is a continuous process and as a subject she can be regarded as a subject in process, which is what society may call abject. Comprehending women with that view proves that abject as a term is indeed closer to positive apprehensions and contemplating upon nuances as Kristeva did can make crucial changes in the order of societies since this situation is not applicable to one specific society only. For this reason, it will be assumed that the suffering of women is international, which is to be examined in the selected works by writers with British, American and Turkish backgrounds and the complications posed in society because of patriarchy can be overcome by abject female characters written by female writers with a feminist psychoanalytical theory by deconstructing binaries and making the abject gain a positive understanding simultaneously. After all, to Kristeva the subject is in direct relation to what is construed as the other and counts on to that in order to define oneself in a meaningful way showing that the impact and existence of an independent female identity is crucial for the presence and progression of the male identity in that both genders are in mutual needs for one another. It will be stressed that the two genders complement each other as well as need one another and an egalitarian social order is possible if dynamics are constructed in a more righteous way, which is possible with the implementation of a discourse adjusted accordingly especially in the post-modern and contemporary works. Gender codes and the typical behaviour adhered to them are not fixed and stable, which can become more adaptable and fluid when necessary.

Therefore, stereotypical ideas beginning from the biblical stories such as the Garden of Eden and showing the female gender as femme fatale need to come to a halt, which is manageable with brave women writers. Strengthened from such bases, the female representations which are sinner from birth, monster or witch placing the male in a victim position are to be abandoned, which is probable with a reversed discourse, awareness and understanding.

The study will touch upon the importance of women's sharing their stories and the inspiration they can make for the other women in a similar condition or for future generations. Calling upon the work of Sally Robinson, Elaine J. Lawless argues that the humanist side attributed to women are captivated by the "privileged" male and women's stories are under the auspices of Western white discourse, in particular. (Lawless, 2003, p. 263) "Women's stories have been "de-legitimized" and, thus, the woman as the subject has been left out of the history of (hu)mankind." (p. 263) When representing themselves on their own, women turn into "(engendered) subjects" (p. 263) and their discourse agitates and annoys the ruling discourses proving that female symbolic is achievable. By telling their stories, women gain insight through the power of articulation. It is not a coincidence that so far in many cultures and societies women are likened to "nature" while men are equated to "culture"; ironically however, they damage and contaminate nature and its sources while lots of resources are created in abundance for their use in academia. (p. 240) For this very reason, the fact that women need to take over, break the monopolization and give redirection to the studies conducted in the related areas of literature will be highlighted.

It will also be possible in the study to trace the notion that being similar to the distinctive feature of postmodern texts where the meaning is reconstructed, developed and interpreted varyingly each time it is read by the same reader or different readers with diverse backgrounds, the abject character develops in the individuation process through the course of the novel and is in need of close exploration by the reader in order to grasp the core of the text. This scheme of subject-in process grants fundamentally to the research area and to the feminist way of thinking since "it puts forward a liberated identity which cannot be pinned down by gender distinctions." (Aktari, 2010, p. 54)

Lastly, in the study, the combination of abject and feminism where necessary will provide room for criticism towards the notion of patriarchy and the concerns shared

above, which create feminist consciousness when come together. Female characters who are reduced to mere bodies or “lesser citizens” (Bacchi & Beasley, 2002, p. 326) suffer from segregation physically by being ignored and kept out of sight. More importantly, they suffer from mental and emotional segregation resulting from the common thought that they possess disabled identities, which double their discrimination in a sense. Women’s abject state and bodies are a ceaseless reminder of a threat for the dominant gender in the symbolic realm undermining their able and decent bodies as well as so-called healthy mentalities haunting them with “what the able-bodied are trying to avoid, forget and ignore” (Wendell, 1997, p. 268), so the idea is to transform this subaltern status of the abject female characters into the ubiquitous human norm and to integrate the semiotic in the symbolic in a heterogenic way in the status quo, which will be the final outcomes to have at the end of the study.

To be able to reach the above mentioned conclusions, certain reasons have been taken into account in choosing the literary works for the analysis. In the dissertation, the fact that a literary work by a Turkish woman writer in the field - *The Bastard of Istanbul* by Elif Shafak is handled together with works by native female writers from British and American nationalities within the boundaries of English Literature, which are *Nuns and Soldiers* by Iris Murdoch and *The Queen of the Damned* by Anne Rice respectively, will distinguish it from other Turkish works that are studied in the field and are fewer in number. Furthermore, Shafak’s novel was originally written in English and has not suffered any loss of meaning in translation as a result, which distinguishes it from many other Turkish novels analysed in the field. Although *The Bastard of Istanbul* has been the subject of sociological and political research in both national and international contexts before, it has not been subjected to much scrutiny in the field of abject and psychoanalysis. When all these components come together, it is aimed to make a difference in the field.

Similarly, even though Anne Rice's work *The Queen of the Damned* has been the subject of feminism before, the research conducted on it has been limited in terms of areas because the novel also belongs to gothic literature, is part of a series, and has a film version, as well. Working on it from a feminist perspective with the theory of the abject will contribute to the diversity in the field. As for Iris Murdoch, despite the fact that the writer has been selected for various studies owing to her philosophy, which is based on humanistic world view putting the value of human beings above all doctrines

and impositions harming them such as patriarchy or religious extremism, she has not been exposed to abject research much and the works of her chosen for the research areas were mainly *The Black Prince* and *The Sea the Sea*, which was awarded Man Booker Prize in 1978. Researchers so far have preferred to bring her Irish nationality to the front in related studies such as the ones concerning the history and independence of Ireland and the country's mother image, so examining Murdoch and *Nuns and Soldiers* from the abject point of view will hopefully open the doors of further research in the field.

These works coincide with the postmodern and contemporary periods in literature where the pre-destined roles of women are being subverted in society and the female subject takes the lead in the development of the plot. Delving into the abject portrayals of those female characters through Kristeva's theory of abject will show that it is achievable to convert the statuses of women from the unwanted 'other' to an 'individual' who can be a mother, a working woman, a married or single individual or an independent citizen at the same time as she wishes for. Managing this in a literary world where patriarchal discourse is still dominant is significant and extraordinary. Simultaneously, thanks to this practice, it will enable the reader to find out about the drive and initiative behind the desire to deconstruct the binaries and to transform the discourse as well as exploring the societal dynamics and cultural values of the era in question. Additionally, this will depict Kristeva's ideology in which she blends her understanding of psychoanalysis borrowed from Lacan and advanced later with her linguistic approaches cumulatively. As she believes the subject is not only bodily but also socially and politically constructed willingly or not, it is constantly evolving and growing both physically and mentally, which reveals the basis of her idea for the subject-in-process illustrating the abject female that is the state of in-between, not a subject nor an object.

What is more, the fact that the suppressed, outcast and marginalised are stored in the unconscious and return via dreams in Freudian terms finds expression in postmodern and contemporary narratives in the forms of vampires, gothic characters, monsters, insane character - especially women - depictions, which can be observed in the selected works and be evaluated according to abject formulations. Regarding such characters as abject gives them the opportunity to disclose themselves relatively in a more unreserved and freer way as they pose a threat for the society in the eyes of the male and what is unknown becomes scary and somehow untouchable. Though the society and the

dominant gender try to resolve this condition by repressing and othering the female abject, theories such as Kristeva's feminist psychoanalysis that aim to reverse the patriarchal discourse and deconstruct binaries contribute the challenge for creating awareness and maintaining the revolution in the long run.

In order to stress that abjection does not have borders and does not only take place in the works of British writers and in English Literature whose works have mainly been selected for analyses drawn on the theory of abject so far, the study is limited to three women writers with differing nationalities. Their specifically selected works will show that the theory of abject examining female characters does not have to be the subject of canonised works of literature solely and that it functions in the universal sense. As mentioned above, although the most well-known works of these writers have undergone almost abundant research until now, it is not the case for the works picked for this dissertation by the same writers. For this reason, to expand the research areas of these works and to grow the analyses conducted on abject studies, *Nuns and Soldiers* by Iris Murdoch, *The Queen of the Damned* by Anne Rice and *The Bastard of Istanbul* by Elif Shafak have been determined meticulously for the scope of the dissertation. Overall, it is believed that abject figures together with the term itself have been presented more positively, and stereotypical and biased binaries have been reversed in a mind-opening way in these novels by specifically female writers who have been born into a patriarchal society and have experienced the practices of it first hand or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously.

The next chapter will focus on the theoretical framework of the dissertation and display Julia Kristeva's theory of the abject based on her renowned work *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982) together with the other essential resources discussing the theory and her psychoanalysis in a more detailed way.

2. THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, it is aimed to lay the foundational groundwork necessary for a comprehensive understanding of Julia Kristeva's theory of the abject by first delving into the seminal contributions of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan to psychoanalysis. Freud, as the founder of psychoanalysis, introduced groundbreaking concepts such as the unconscious, the Oedipus complex, and the mechanisms of repression, which have profoundly shaped the understanding of the human psyche today. Lacan, later building on and revising Freud's theories, further enriched psychoanalytic discourse with his notions of the symbolic, the real, and the imaginary. By exploring the insights of these two pivotal figures, a better appreciation of the intellectual context from which Kristeva's ideas emerge can be gained, as well as a thorough understanding of how her theory of the abject both aligns with and departs from traditional psychoanalytic thought. This background is believed to be crucial for recognising the innovative aspects of Kristeva's work and its implications for the comprehension of subjectivity, identity, and the boundaries of the self. Therefore, the chapter begins with a presentation of background information regarding Freud and Lacan, which then, paves the way for Kristeva's theory of abject.

2.1. Psychoanalysis from Freud to Lacan

The chaos and conflicts of the previous century regarding wars, economies of the countries, innovations and revolutions were not only influential in the societal level but also on the individual level leading to significant changes in the relationships between people, which became as tumultuous and complicated as the political and ideological condition of the society at times. Though the relevance between the social matters and literary theories had long been proven and advanced upon and the effect of the mental state of individuals had started to be acknowledged on theories by the literary community, it was not until the late 1800s that psychology as the science of studying the experiences of human mind was accepted as a new field to expand on among literary theories. It was Sigmund Freud, who initiated a technique in psychology that is called psychoanalysis. The need to work to survive in such tough conditions directed people to change their priorities in life and sacrifice the pleasure principle for the sake of getting by. (Eagleton, 1996, p. 131) Keeping the desires and the drive for pleasure under control

due to the realities of life can be hard to endure for some and makes them experience a condition called 'neurosis' by Freud, which is not only related to our depressed and dissatisfied state but also to our nature and disposition. If one's desires are transferred to something more wholesome and useful for the wellness of the society instead of personal satisfaction, neurosis can be handled as the person is satisfied with something else that is of higher importance and compensative for sexual disappointments. Freud argues that the "imprisoned emotions" (Freud, 2020, p. 22) when they meet an obstacle on the way out to express themselves are repressed and are delivered in other forms, which is one of the main components of our personality shaping process. This repression is done in the unconscious part of our minds and helps us overcome the "absence" (p. 23) of the fulfilment of desire together with the lack of memory in relation to that. The unmet sexual desire is in struggle with the reasonable, modest and ethical desires that fit into the norms of the society as well as with the personality of the individual. It is referred as the "irreconcilable wish" (p. 32) by Freud and the existence of it with all its incompatibility threatens the individual in terms of a possible inner paradox which causes mental suffering. (p. 32) To be able to prevent this, ego takes the lead and finds a balance between the instinctive desire and the etiquette of the society. The repression of which ego is in charge acts as a protector of the individual's personality and secures hi/her place in the community. It is what essentially differentiates human beings from the rest of the creatures.

Another feature that is peculiar to our species is humans' need for affection, care and dependence especially to the nuclear family members when they open their eyes to the world. Freud describes this dependency as a material one (Eagleton, 1996, p. 133) because of our vulnerable state as the newcomers of the world. Babies need to be fed, taken care of and be protected against any kinds of danger until they are capable of taking such responsibilities on their own. In that way, the survival instincts of the baby are met and in time, s/he is aware of the sexual satisfaction gained from sucking the mother's breast as an addition to doing this act for nutritive purposes. It shows that the baby's dependence on the parents are not restricted to biological needs only and this stage is the beginning of sexuality for Freud. Mouth has now become an "erotogenic zone" (p. 133) alongside of being a physical organ for survival. The child then may stimulate it once again by kissing, which makes the child-mother relationship earn a new characteristic. From the infant stage to the childhood, sexuality moves to a more

developed state rising out of biological instincts towards a rather complicated and authentic one, which is a more self-governing position.

The baby's growth calls for the inclusion of some other erogenic zones following the oral phase, which is mainly about taking objects in. The next one is named as the anal phase where the child is aware of the satisfaction s/he gets during defecation. In the phallic phase which arrives after the anal one, the child directs his/her sexual drives to the sexual body parts. The reason behind naming this stage as such comes from the viewpoint of Freud as he focuses his attention on the male child's genital organ and recognises his sexuality over the female child. (p. 133) At that point, it is significant to acknowledge the flexibility and adaptability of these drives since unlike instincts, they can be addressed to various objects or people and be replaced by one another as time passes. For this reason, particularly in the early childhood, the child is believed to be an active, complicated and ambiguous being whose boundaries between the self and the outer world are not sharply determined. S/he does not see his/her own body as a whole object and a sole centre of attention for sexual drives because the drives can easily change direction and the child does not have a fixed centre inside as an individual subject.

Freud describes the child as a being who is in constant search of sexual satisfaction rising out of the abovementioned drives and is completely unfamiliar with gender codes. These drives flood in the child's body that can also be called "libidinal energy" (p. 134); however, whether they are masculine-oriented or feminine-oriented is not clear to the child's knowledge yet. The smooth acceptance in the society is in close relation to the support s/he gets from the parents and the key for which is the reputed term Oedipus complex coined by Freud himself. Children who complete the phases prior to the Oedipal one start to show some incestuous inclinations towards the parent from the other gender. The male child who is already in sensual intimacy to the mother tries to establish a forbidden and unconscious sexual bond with her. Similarly, the female child whose first choice is the mother's body, as well has some other unusual homosexual desires; however, she gradually turns her sexual desires to the opposite gender, too, which is obviously the father in this case. Thus, the child-mother relationship gains a new dimension with the involvement of the father and the parent with the opposite gender turns into a rival from the child's perspective in their family union.

The successful overcome of the Oedipal phase lies in the father's threat of castration against the male child and the child's submission for it assuming that the female child is already castrated because of the same reason. He somehow accustoms himself to the condition in hand and manages to restrain the desire for the mother. Thinking in despair that there is no probability to beat the father in this battle, he obeys the father and reconciles with him while he simultaneously distances himself from the mother to some extent. This act results in taking the father as a role model to be in his position in the future and prepares the male child for the upcoming gender roles that are pre-set by a society dominated by his own gender. The association with the father helps him to get over the Oedipal phase and now he is aware of the gender roles and the differences between masculinity and femininity as a subject and an individual. Unfortunately, there is still one other thing he is not aware of yet, which is the covering and hiding process of those repressed desires and storing them in the darkest and deepest part of the mind that is called 'unconscious' by Freud. This opens up a new chapter in the child's life and brings dozens of duties with itself.

The Oedipus complex regulates the scattered and unstable sexual desire which was previously interested in various objects during the pre-Oedipal phases. The focus is now on the genital sexuality rather than anal or oral organs as it was the case in the earlier phases. Any complications or insufficiencies that might be developed in this phase possibly end up with the male child's struggle to fit into the patriarchal society and to perform a decent sexual intercourse. Furthermore, he might position the mother figure to a special place that is beyond the reach of any other one from the female gender and this may result in the male child's interest in the same sex relationships. Another outcome of a problematic Oedipal period that is slightly more far-fetched than the former ones may be the fearful and disturbing sexual affair or the difficulty of starting one with a female holding the opinion that the opposite gender is castrated, which is a kind of punishment that can also affect or leave traces on him. These explain the core of Freud's thesis that human beings lead their lives for the sake of finding pleasure preferably a sexual one that satisfies their desires. However, the inability to find it which is closely connected to the Oedipus complex and the failure of getting over the period have a life-long effect on the child's mental health and related experiences. For this reason, he places desire in the core of all types of relationships that include human beings. Julia Kristeva extends this understanding of Oedipus complex by reviewing how the abject

referring to beings that are repressed or cast off disrupts the formation of identity. The encounter with the abject might generate a kind of crisis in the subject, which mirrors the struggles and resolutions coped with during the Oedipal period.

The equivalent of Oedipus complex is called Electra complex for the female child, which is thought to be less smooth when compared to that of the male child. It is tougher because Freud mainly centres his studies and theory on the sexuality of the male child and proceeds his analysis taking that as a departure point while he attributes superficial attention to the sexuality of the female child as a man of the patriarchal society. Naturally, his approach to the female child is a product of such a mind-set making the female sexuality seem inferior and his theory biased, sexist and less credible for some literary critics and environments. He does not even step back from calling the female sexuality “a dark continent” (p. 135) referring to its unknown, unexplored and surprising aspects. The female child is also conscious of that inferiority to the male one due to the false idea that she has already been castrated. This causes her to stay away from the mother figure who is in the same secondary position and makes the female child grow intimacy towards the father as a compensation and tries to attract the full attention of him. At the end, she goes back to the mother, though for she understands the impossibility of such a mission. Signing an agreement of peace with the mother, the female child hopelessly accepts her position in the society as an incomplete and less important being, who is jealous of the male genital organ as it apparently provides privilege and superiority in contrast to her castrated female genital. The strictly coded gender roles begin from the early childhood and creates the most outstanding difference in these roles. The drastic significance of the Oedipus complex takes the stage here one more time since it clearly displays the discrimination in the sharing of the roles. For the male child, stepping into the society and successfully passing the Oedipal phase is like a reward and his sexuality is celebrated with the continuation of his breed after taking over the awaiting male roles, which is a promotion bringing prestige, superiority and many advantages. For the female child; on the other hand, overcoming the Oedipal phase consists of acceptance and subordination. It is a rather disappointing process in which she has to welcome the inferior roles as the second sex and her sexuality is ignored let alone being rewarded or celebrated. She is not promoted, but degraded and does not climb the social ladder, but descends it always taking a step back in the shadow of the male gender. The feeling that she needs to substitute for the missing penis with a baby

from the father figure and seeing the futility of it do not take long causing more despair. While the male child finds logic in the castration threat and compensates the impossibility of an incestuous love with the mother by maintaining the love for the mother in the maternal sense, the female child has a harder time finding a reasonable base for the withdrawal from the father. As she has nothing to lose in terms of castration and it is actually this feeling of being castrated that directs her to the father to cover this penis lack with a baby, she keeps seeking consolation, compensation and an explanation. Altering the first love object from the mother to the father is difficult enough, but rejection as a result of this change is even more difficult. She turns her love back to the mother, but it is an unwilling performance at first since she does not want to be like her. That is why, getting out of the Oedipal phase is much more challenging for the female child and the society does not help at all in the meantime.

The Oedipal complex does not only form the core of the family concept as a mother-child and father triangle and the male-female gender roles, but also has a sociological side touching on all the other concepts regarding people in societies. It is a transitional process from being an infant to a child with gender awareness and also from a family unit to a social unit where we have to find some other bonds apart from the incestuous ones. It is a movement from theory to practice that makes the child meet the realities. The pleasure principle is accompanied by the reality principle throughout the journey “from Nature to Culture.” (p. 135) The child who has been commanded by the power of id so far with plain desire and survival instincts learns how to keep the prohibited feelings under control with the interference of ego after taking part in the social life in the Oedipal phase. Now it is time for him/her to meet the power of superego in the adaptation process to the society’s rules. The participation of superego to the psychological health of the child is crucial as it introduces the standards, principles, ethical and non-ethical behaviours together with proper moral values. Since the seeds of integrating an individual into society are planted in the Oedipal phase, it becomes highly important for a child’s development. Identification with the gender roles paves the way for a regular and so called ideal life when combined with the obedience to the governmental and other authorial rules and with giving in to the father’s supremacy. Nevertheless, it needs to be noted that this is achievable only if certain types of desires are repressed. Securing a place in the society and playing the game according to its patriarchal rules costs the child to postpone or ignore such improper desires and to store

them in a place called the unconscious, which usually poses a danger to emerge at unexpected times in unforeseen styles. It is because the individual is now open to confusions and distractions as a separated subject stuck between the conscious and unconscious acquisitions. As abject disrupts this symbolic order shaped by patriarchy, it challenges the boundaries of the symbolic as well as the established norms, which shows the sensitivity of social structures together with the constant chaos that circulates within. Since the cause of this chaos is believed to be abject beings, mainly women, they are the ones to put the blame on in the unconscious even though there is also certain curiosity and desire towards them, which are in repressed forms. Thus, the abject represents what the conscious mind is in search to evacuate for the sake of keeping a stable self, which shows the connection between Freud's repressed desires and the abject.

To get more insight of the unconscious, Freud invites dreams to the play, which offer people some extraordinary tips on how they process and what they symbolically represent as to our hidden desires. They are in disguise and in lightened forms not to shock us with their sudden revelations. They in a way lock themselves in a mental box whose key can only be obtained through chasing the clues of the dreams, which is apparently interpreting them thoroughly. Here, the work of ego is a bit different than what we have accustomed to. Instead of helping us to follow the right path as it does in daily life by balancing, it may lead us to misinterpretations or shifts in meaning because of its filtering, editing and blocking mechanism. The meaning, then, can be more complicated, denser or replaced. For Freud, other ways to assist us in learning more about the unconscious are memory gaps, misreading or misplacing some objects, "parapraxes" (p. 137) meaning the slips of the tongue that present the unconscious desires or intentions and jokes. Jokes include the marks of the reality principle; thus, reflect part of the reality most of the time hinting the secret meaning behind. In addition to that, they are frequently served with sexual ingredients. The repressed guilty desires are uncovered via jokes which can be offensive, aggressive and attacking at times harming the mind as a result and may lead to mental disorders. One may possibly have such desires and do not refuse them, but unfortunately cannot find a way out from this dilemma. When that is the case, the desire pushes itself to go out of the unconscious, which results in stoppage by ego's barrier to guard itself. As a consequence of this inner clash, there occurs neurosis. The person affected by it starts to show manifestations for the sake of covering the unconscious desire, but s/he cannot help expressing them in a

reluctant and implicit way at the same time. While some neuroses are obsessional such as stepping on every cobblestone when walking, others can be hysterical such as feeling physical symptoms without having a physiological reason. There are also phobic neuroses which mean to be scared of something without providing a concrete reason such as fearing rats. (p. 137)

The main goal of psychoanalysis according to Freud is to bring the buried reasons behind those neuroses to the light and relieve the affected person by doing so. Generally, a relationship between the type of neurosis and the childhood period prior to the Oedipal phase where the child is captivated is detected. Psychoanalysis works for demolishing the peculiar symptoms that disturb the person. What is more disturbing and distressing; however, is a situation called psychosis when ego fails to keep the prohibited desire under control and ends up falling under the domination of its rule. Under these conditions, the connection between the outer world that is the true representative of the reality principle and ego is cut off, which results in the unconscious' creation of fake realities. At that point, psychoanalysis comes into play by explaining these inner conflicts to the affected person and unfolding the unconscious desires of him or her, which are some effective, but not adequate methods on their own in healing the person. Freud believes that they need to be supported with a special technique called 'transference'. (p. 138) During the analysis, the affected person may start to transfer the inner clashes and conflicts to which s/he falls victim to the psychoanalyst in an unconscious way. What needs to be careful about is to prevent the identification of the characters in the affected person's story with the psychoanalyst. This may lead to re-experience for the person and cause further traumas or problems. When the analysis is completed successfully and professionally without any complications, the analysed person benefits from it in a dramatic way. Thanks to this transference and the information gained in the process, the analyst has a chance to gradually reformulate the conflicts of the person in line with his/her psychological development.

This slowly takes us to the relationship of psychoanalysis to literature and literary works, which will be concentrated on more in Kristevan terms later in the chapter. Within that scope, the problems of the analysed person resemble to the fiction of a literary work in that these problems are never identical to the real life problems of him/her just like the plot of a fiction which is in harmony with real life, but is never exactly the same as life itself. For this reason, psychoanalysis is not a magical treatment

that manages to deal with all the conflicts of the analysed person and helps him/her get rid of them completely. The person typically and naturally opposes to the reach of the psychoanalyst to the unconscious at first and the unmatched narrations to the reality when describing the conflicts may constitute hardships for the psychoanalyst; however, if everything goes as planned and the psychoanalyst makes observations attentively and intervenes in when necessary, the analyst is able to resolve the transference pattern of the person and s/he is purified from the conflicts with high probability at the end of the analysis. All the repressed traumas and desires are brought to the surface meaning that they are transferred from the unconscious to the conscious part and the person stops denying them. Now, the story makes more sense, is coherent and in tune with the realities s/he has causing the analysed to comprehend and construe his/her own story more clearly.

No matter how accomplished the practice of psychoanalysis seems from the sufferer's side, this success has been approached with suspect and become the subject of many debates from the other psychologists and critics' side. How the teachings of it are assessed or proven correct and the efficiency of the analysis have been found dubious by certain environments since they asserted that Freud contradicts with himself while putting forward his theory. While he claims to be unbiased and objective, his case studies and doctrines are loaded with his own unconscious desires whose facts are twisted intentionally based on his philosophy at times. Though he is totally against following a subjective trend as an analyst in the transference process of the analysed, such deliberate actions are thought to impact his credibility and make his studies become counter-transferred. (p. 140)

The criticism he received is not limited to the reliability and feasibility of his theory. These underlie the negative commentary he gets from the feminist parties not only with his ordinary patriarchal views of the era but also with his attributions to them labelling women as selfish, subordinate, envious and less moral in comparison to the male gender. Freud was in the firm grip of the feminists as they attach utmost importance to psychoanalysis due to the fact that the dogmatic belief regarding the inferiority of women to men is initially grounded in family unit and in our sexual development, which are clearly the centre research areas of psychoanalysis.

With that in mind, the feminists also turned their faces to another psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. The motive behind this turn is not because Lacan has a completely different mind-set when compared to Freud or he totally follows a feminist fashion, but because he radically prefers to focus on the human subject and where it is placed in society. Moreover, he digs the issue further and dwells on the relationship of human subject to language. Last but not least, Lacan actually pursues the passion of rewriting Freud's theory in a cumulative and authentic way. He makes efforts on finding evidence as to the link between the subject and the language used by him or her, which attracted the attention of the literary theory community and is what essentially distinguishes him from Freud.

From a Freudian perspective, there is not a clear line available separating the baby itself from the outer world, which was stated before. In other words, in the earliest stages of its development, the baby is not aware of itself as an unattached subject from the mother and is not knowledgeable about the existence of an outside material world. However, Lacan does not neglect that period and recognises that as the 'imaginary' state that coincides with the first six to eighteen months' period of the infant's lifetime. During that period and in this state, the child is deprived of having a fixated self; instead, it is in fluctuation negotiating with objects. What we have as the self in the meantime reciprocates between the child and the objects constantly. Before the Oedipal stage, the child leads a mutual life style with the mother and it is not easy to make a distinction between them in the physical sense. The child is addicted to the mother's presence and affection in order to survive, but at the same time falsely assumes that the world outside is in need of himself/herself in the way s/he needs the mother because of the limited knowledge that is at hand.

Following this imaginary stage, there arrives the 'mirror stage' in Lacan's understanding when the child observes himself/herself in the mirror. This is the tiniest steps of the formation of ego and a fixed sense of individuality in the child's development for the first time and is crucial for that reason. However, it is not possible to mention a complete individuality here, yet because the image that the child sees in the mirror is both himself/herself and not keeping the in-between state of subject and object interaction. It stems from the fact that what the child sees as a delightfully unified self in the mirror is still imaginary and s/he maintains taking an interdependent position in life. The child holds a narcissistic kind of relationship with the image in the mirror as it

is reflected through an intermediary to him/her in the real word. That is why, while s/he manages to identify with the image, the child comprehends it as an 'other' at the same time. It is a part of the child from within, but is also unfamiliar and foreign to him/her, which shows how Lacan's ideas are connected to abject. Since it represents what is excluded from the self, abject is perceived as a perpetual threat for 'I' in the identity formation process. This is misleading in terms of the child's perception and confidence of himself/herself as it shows a 'reality' that is not indeed something experienced in the body. The image of this enjoyable integrity is deceiving and may cause misidentification or recognition with the real self. According to Lacan, as the child keeps making such false identifications with some other objects later in the course of life, the ego grows bigger which makes us stay in an imaginary and fictitious world of self-recognitions. He also makes an interesting association here and 'identifies' ego with this narcissistic process itself. (p. 143)

As examined above in Freud's Oedipal period, the child's reception of the world consists of two dimensions in the existential sense, which are his/her own and the mother's body. This narrow pattern is shaken to some extent with the inclusion of the father figure. The mother figure which previously describes the outside world now leaves its place to the father's dominance and in a way, the cards are dealt again. An obvious shift in power occurs when the father pulls in with the announcement of his rules prohibiting the incest strictly. He situates himself at the top of this newly formed triangle and starts representing the whole society as a spokesperson. The male child that has no way out of this societal order has to accept it without questioning and know his place. He now fathoms the seriousness of such an order in which he loses his earlier desire for and intimacy with the mother and creates bonds with the father who promises him a chain of privileges in an organisation called patriarchal society of which he is also a part. All he has to do is to obey the system, play his part and enjoy the favours it offers now. However, he has to pay for these pleasures by repressing his sexual desire for the mother and by pushing it to the depths of his unconscious. Since these happen right after the appearance of the father and the introduction of his rules, Lacan calls this process as the Law of the Father, which coincides with the emergence of the unconscious desire. The child who senses the danger of it after inhibited by the father represses the guilty desire, which then, turns into the unconscious itself. (p. 143)

One of the most fundamental elements that differentiates Lacan from Freud is composed as a consequence of this process during the Oedipus complex. The child who is more or less mindful of his sexual disparity from that of the mother or women in general with the help of the father appreciates the 'phallus', which is an important term for Lacan pointing and stressing that disparity of genders as well as preparing the child for the inclusion into the society in the most ideal way. What Lacan innovatively attempts to do is to recast this operation by using the means of language. In doing so, he consults to Saussurean terms and labels the child looking into the mirror as the signifier and the image he sees in the mirror as the signified, which refers to the meaning of the child as the sign produced at the end. This is still a splendid image for the child's sight because s/he hasn't met a situation where real life itself and the image would not match unlike the current condition of the mirror where the reality principle and the elements of the language are in effortless harmony.

The involvement of the father figure in the child's life does not only affect his/her familial and social relations but also drags the child into Saussurean apprehensions regarding the identity, which shows up by virtue of externalising or ignoring another subject. Then, the identity is believed to find its essence and is counted valid. When the child has language acquisition and start to speak the language, s/he unintentionally learns that the sign is meaningful as long as it differs from other signs. It is noteworthy that the child's exploration of the language and understanding the sexual differences between the two genders overlap with each other. This takes us to the fact that the child gains such experiences in language unconsciously in the scope of language, but s/he undergoes the same practice for sexuality. While s/he makes observations as to the triangle of relationships in the family unit and to the taboos that cannot be destroyed, the child arranges himself to set up a journey to social units. In Lacan's terms, this is a movement from the imaginary to 'the symbolic' that is the representative of the world of adults run by patriarchal social orders. The child also increases his/her self-awareness by finding a resemblance between catching meanings in signs and having a meaningful identity. Just like signs make sense only if they are different from the other signs, the child realises that his/her self is complete and meaningful if s/he has distinctions from the other subjects around as an individual. This transition from the imaginary to the symbolic in Lacan is the equivalent of passing the Oedipus complex smoothly in Freudian psychoanalysis. When it comes to Kristeva, because abject exists at the border of the

symbolic and the real, it is treated as something to be expelled to maintain the symbolic order; however, it returns regularly. It displays the fragility of the symbolic and the chronic threat of the real, which is how abject is in connection with Lacanian terms.

Stepping into the symbolic brings its own problems for the child and just as it was the case in the imaginary stage, everything is not actually as flawless as it seems in the symbolic. The child who is already fragmented inside between the guilty desire towards the mother in accordance with id and the pleasure principle and the obligatory repression of it by ego infinitely together with the superego calling for conscience in accordance with social taboos and the reality principle faces a new challenge. With the insertion of the language in his/her life, the child now has to follow an endless chain of signifiers to load meanings to the objects or people around. The male child, in particular, who has just accepted the fact that he cannot entirely have the mother for himself needs to admit that the signifiers are not in stable forms and they can change what they imply or symbolise directing the subject from one to another. This is an implicit proof for the child that just as he cannot possess the mother completely, he cannot gain access to language completely, either. Lacan links this system to the inability to reach desire and to the act of looking for it in other areas as substitution. In his terms, desire also becomes the word for the constant action from one signifier to another with the futile hope of replacing a certain lack or insufficiency with it. It works as a tamp when it comes language to function properly. He holds the opinion that words have meanings thanks to the fact that the objects they signify do not really exist. This non-existence of objects that are referred to or the insufficient state of the already existing ones or directly eliminating them makes a word own a meaning. For him, language undermines the state of being existent and sacrifices it for the sake of transforming it to desire.

Getting into language lays the ground for Lacan's final stage 'real'. Since it is not possible for us to find the eventual meaning gathered in one object, we are now unattached from the unreachable zone that has always been out of the imaginary and the significations, which is the mother's zone – especially her body. The child is out of her orbit and she has settled in a permanent state of being unattainable even though s/he spent an entire Oedipal and pre-Oedipal state dreaming of having her one day. In the real state and onwards, the child tries to replace this gap or lack with some other less important subjects in vain. The thought of wining the mother's body which has stayed in the centre of his life so far leaves its place to the idea of austerity and content. Now

there are substitutions of substitutions in the centre, instead and are back and forth movements in search of a so-called complete self-identity.

Lacan indeed gives us the opportunity to examine the relationship between the unconscious and the society by reinterpreting Freud's teachings in the light of language which is a social activity in nature. Detached from Freud, he displays the unconscious as a term appearing as a result of our interactions with each other as human beings not something that we keep inside secretly like a black box or a volcano that is ready to erupt at any time. In that way, he treats the unconscious in a more positive and constructive way unlike Freud as he believes that it emerges naturally as a concept after we mingle with the society in the external world, so the unconscious is always with us, among us or outside us. (p. 150) As we use the means of language in such relationships, the unconscious intertwines with it. The unconscious is an outcome of language; however, no matter how optimistically and naturalistically Lacan takes a position towards it, he does not deny the fact that we as human beings are not capable of being in complete charge of it. That we enter into the language in the symbolic does not show that we can maneuver it or take it for granted. Conversely, the language itself is able to split or fragment us inside with its pre-existence. With that, Lacan takes a parallel approach to structuralists and attributes a determiner position to it. We as humans do not have a chance to make a choice regarding our place in it; rather, we are positioned according to its desire. It is ironic since human breed is once again led by 'desire' though indirectly. It has a much more stable characteristic than the human mind which has ties between the ego and the repressed desires and taboos. He also believes our relationship with language and our parents are somehow similar in that they both precede us. That is why, he creates faint categories as us and the others as our predecessors such as our mother and father, language or the unconscious. They exist out of our control over them and having a relationship with them is inescapable for human race. While this common feature of 'the other' provides it untouchability and unreachability, it makes the human subject ambitious to chase it more. As a result, we are driven by our unconscious desire for the other – something we do not have, but looks more pleasing than what we already have. The grass is always greener in 'the other', but to Lacan, this phenomenon works in accordance with exchange principle. The desire we get passes from the other to us at the same time because of the complicated set of linked relationships explained above. We feel desire for the mother or something else in the unconscious level, but desire can

only arise when we enter into the sphere of the other's influence such as language and libidinal or societal relationships that produce desire. Besides, the people we have desire for outside the family unit who are basically the other in the symbolic order may have the counter desire for us unconsciously and this also shows the interchangeable characteristic of the relationship between the desire of the unconscious and the other.

Lacan's interest in language and concentration on its contact with the unconscious together with the human society as a whole nonnegotiable makes the way for discussions about psychoanalysis and literature. When we read a literary text such as a novel, just as it is the unconscious works in our daily life, we make assumptions and create desires – desires to make out the storyline or the motives behind characters' certain actions etc. By doing so, we in a way form subtexts as an alternative to the main text and can call it the unconscious of the literary work in question. These subtexts do not appear randomly, though. They become available as a result of the writer's style that inevitably reflects bits and pieces of his/her background or ideology. The way the writer prefers to deliver an idea, prefer not to say an idea or cannot deliver it in the way s/he wants because of the current conditions contribute dramatically to the formation of subtexts, which may provide important tips as to the untying the knots of the story or sensing the upcoming plot twist in advance as well as showing the pathway to the writer's mind.

The analysis of criticism of literary works can be conducted from the perspectives of the writer, the content, stylistics or from the reader's point of view. Literary criticism may put its focus on deliberate gaps left in the flow of the story, on contradictory or incoherent points and on repetitions of some words. The selection of the same words instead of using synonyms can hint the unconscious desire of the writer towards one object, person, idea or concept. The criticism aims at uncovering such hidden facts behind the scenes as well as examining the subtext the work presents. That is to say, literary criticism can be interested not only in the straightforward meaning on the surface but also in how the text functions in every level and aspect.

Some critics such as Holland reverse the case and handle the issue from the opposite view. They conclude that the genuine function of a literary work is to form unconscious fantasies and conscious defending mechanisms against them in the reader's mind. Throughout this process, we as readers take pleasure in experiencing the events

that we can only imagine in real life. This is mainly because the literary work uses adaptation techniques and applies some indirect stylistic strategies to turn our deepest guilty desires, anxieties and fears into socially acceptable incidents. In that way, we feel that we finally take control over them; however, if all these social taboos are not played on or toned down for cultural reasons, the pleasure gained from the work decreases equally. Otherwise, we may need to submit to the symbolic order's notions again and lose our allies to stand by us as readers. The same happens when the literary work pushes forward the repressed desire too much or makes them grow stronger inside us. Then, the work ends up being ineffective in the eye of the reader as the satisfaction it gives fails and s/he may feel triggered.

In Freudian view, losing the track of the meaning in a literary text may cause troubles for the reader as humankind is accustomed to the comfort of finding the lost object or obtaining what is lost back. Getting out of this comfort zone is challenging because it is a source of consolation and relief for many people. The lost items bring about anxiety as they provoke some deeper and darker unconscious losses. For this reason, witnessing the sight of their replacement to where they really belong always gives satisfaction. Setting out from here, Freud argues that in the climax of literary texts, the reader gets excited, confused or moved, but at the end, having an opinion about how to resolve the conflict corresponds to losing an object which is the climax and then finding it back which is the resolution. This is the essence of the pleasure we get from the reading experience.

As for Lacanian view, what is mainly lost and takes away all the joys of life with it is the mother's body. With its presence, the subject feels safer, joyful and life seems more bearable while its beauties stand out. With its absence; on the contrary, life is perceived as dull, always lacking and we are driven to keep chasing the mother's physicality or a substitute as it is forbidden in exhaustion. This results from the need to go back to the safe harbour where we think we can survive and supply our fuel which is a mix of the mother's unconditional love, energy and affection to fight back the dangers we face in the symbolic order. If the subject stays there, there is no need for him/her to stand up for himself, speak out and share a story. However, as we have to leave that safe zone, we have the urge to produce works of art to speak what we keep to ourselves as our deputies so that we dismiss the responsibilities of such guilty acts in real life in case of threats. In order to break the lock and open up in literary works, it is required to have

a missing object that is worth chasing for to make the story look genuine, sincere and valuable. Despite the fact that this lack sounds depressing and worrying at first, it keeps the tension high in the storyline, which makes the work catchy and exciting. Since the object is not possessed just like the image of the mother, it alarms the desire and the literary work is regarded effective as well as flowing. In that way, the reader identifies himself and herself with the text, which makes literature and the subject come closer to one another. Nevertheless, if the missing part is not regained through the course of the story, the text slowly loses its efficiency and causes disappointment for the reader. As a result, the excitement turns into stress and the reading experience does not provide satisfaction; instead, it generates despair. Thus, knowing secretly that the knot will be untied in the ending of the text and the missing item will return to its place are essential both for Freud and Lacan because of the calming feature they provide, which takes us to the point that the binaries complete each other and only in that way they become meaningful. The two inseparable components of the opposition missing vs. present and the special relationship they maintain are what makes the literary work satisfactory in the mind of the reader, so the practice of psychoanalytical applications on literature grant multiple dimensions in the comprehension and the analysis of literary works.

The mutual benefits gained from the connection between literature and psychoanalysis is not limited to the pleasure revealed above. Psychoanalysis also makes literary works gain a more realistic characteristic and helps the reader confront with the fact that they exist in a society surrounded by ideologies built on interests. Literature in a way takes its guard and pre-admits the processes and outcomes of the Oedipus complex. Many contemporary texts in particular links the lack or the gap produced in the text to the fear of castration – lack of the phallus – since they accept the unavoidability of this fear, lack, loss and the physical differences between the two genders. While being absorbed in such texts, we face this reality and are obliged to detach ourselves from the imaginary phase where we believe we have an inter-dependent relationship with the world and wrongly assume that we are irreplaceable or indispensable. Due to the format of such a relationship, the concept of death is not available in the imaginary, but dealing with a literary text from a psychoanalytical perspective hits the reader hard with the necessity of moving to the symbolic where the existence of death awaits. As long as we keep our existence in the imaginary, we boast with false facts and live in a world of fantasies, which keeps us away from the social

order and creates huge adaptation problems. Especially the male child struggles with acceptance into the patriarchal society. Transporting ourselves as subjects to the symbolic order during our reading experience aids us in meeting our true selves and stimulates us to take a reasonable approach towards the social values. It keeps us in the game and protects us against being used for irrational ideologies. It also helps us discovering our own or finding the right one we feel closer to as well as developing a critical eye for illogical thought systems that we are not a side to. Unlike the strong belief we improve in the imaginary that we have a fixed and centralised selves as individuals and that the world goes around us with its stabile realities, we find out in the symbolic that the reality can be misleading or change forms after its interaction with numerous signifiers. We stay away from having a deceiving opinion of ourselves and meet the real self inside us when we stop looking into the mirror but start looking at the outside world. In that way, we learn how to evaluate and question it with an analytical set of mind.

2.2. Kristeva and Psychoanalysis

Julia Kristeva as a philosopher and one of the latest representatives of the theory was greatly influenced by Lacan's ideas on language and literature. Following Lacan who developed Freud's set of thoughts on psychoanalysis by bringing the language effect to the fore, Kristeva took over and expanded his concept especially on the symbolic. Even though this close interest in Lacan came out at the expense of harsh criticism from the feminist parties because of the fact that she was described as a feminist philosopher and a theorist, she came up with the term 'semiotic' emphasising the role of linguistics on a child's development. The main reason why feminists were rigorously opposed to Kristeva's interaction with Lacan was his focus on the patriarchal world order in the symbolic. While he introduced his symbolic order, he basically took the male dominant order into consideration, which was not a very different approach from Freud's. What Lacan means by his famous 'Law' is the law of the father that is the leading delegate of the male and the society of which it is under the rule. This implicates that the rule is shaped by the male genital organ phallus that is given divine qualities. As a counter term for that social order, which is the symbolic in Lacan's terms, Kristeva offers the semiotic which refers to sounds or "play of forces" (p. 163) produced by the infant in the pre-Oedipal period. There is no proper language or the mention of mother

tongue at this stage as there is no performance of speaking, but still the infant is activated by scattered drives inside the body. These can be roughly referred as pieces of speech or language since to be named as language these pieces need to come together in a homogenous form and act in completeness. They should not be floating disorderly; instead, they are supposed to stick to each other to have fixed forms and places. This can only happen in the Oedipal stage when the child is able to speak the language and gets ready to enter the symbolic. For the sake of the symbolic; however, this semiotic stage is usually underestimated and ignored. For Kristeva, it is not possible to ignore or repress this stage entirely since the semiotic can exist as drives in language, intonation, rhythm, meaning, self-censoring, silence and absence, which makes the semiotic ‘the other’ of the language. (p. 163) Just as desire cannot be repressed totally in the unconscious in Freud’s and Lacan’s teachings, the semiotic shows a similar characteristic in Kristeva’s. She also adds that regardless of this ‘other’ state of it, the semiotic is almost always in collaboration with language. One of the most significant distinctions from Lacan occurs at that point: Kristeva prepares the child for the social order through the mother and maternal. Because the semiotic capabilities start in the pre-Oedipal stage, it is directly related to the mother and the bond with her body. While the symbolic is mostly paternal and works on the advantage of the male, the semiotic is maternal and prioritises the female. Nevertheless, as it initially appeared before the Oedipal stage, it is not under the sole hegemony of the mother when the infant was not conscious of the gender discrimination, so Kristeva’s semiotic language does not specially belong to the female.

Kristeva uses that language to damage and sabotage the symbolic order. The semiotic works against the already accepted common language which is run by the symbolic and it dysfunctions or deconstructs its definite meanings by pushing the limits of the signs, assessing their linguistic qualities and by stimulating the unconscious drives that are potentially destructive for the settled common meanings of the language in the social sense. The semiotic is not static, in flow and relatively multiple in terms of meanings. That is why, it gets satisfaction from disrupting rather old-fashioned, rigid and established meanings while objecting to all kinds of stabile and surpassed meanings at the same time. Instead, Kristeva aims for “a theory of the speaking subject” (Kristeva, 1986, p. 27), by which she means “a theory of signification based on the subject, his formation, and his corporeal, linguistic, and social dialectic.” (Kristeva, 2002, p. 29) Knowing well that patriarchal societies obtain their power through fixed and

unmoveable meanings and abuse terms such as father, government, rule etc. with that purpose in their visions, Kristeva honours literary works to be quite revolutionary with their adverse power to fight with them. The use of semiotic is not only radical in literature but also through it, semiotic dismantles binaries that have stubbornly been at the roots of the social structure for a long time. When a type of style that is in flow, cluttered, or fragmented is applied to a text, the text in a way rebels against the symbolic and it also makes the reader feel baffled who is used to fine lines and hypothetical facts in texts so far. Especially in modernist and post-modernists texts with certain stylistic techniques such as stream of consciousness or intertextuality, the writer can intensify the effect of the semiotic both in the text and on the reader. The possession of the male genital around which the symbolic is oriented gives unnecessary and imaginative strength and self-esteem to patriarchal societies. They believe that if they have the phallus that is pretty real, the facts it brings must also be real, direct and solid as the association recalls. For this reason, such societies in general are called phallogocentric, but logocentric at the same time as explained above or phallago-centric as Derrida calls as a result of their combination. (Eagleton, 1996, p. 164) The term yields both carnal and administrative power to its beholder and provides an unfortunate sort of confidence.

There lies in the spirit of the semiotic of Kristeva the idea of its not being a counterpart to the symbolic. It does not intend to be in competition with the symbolic or try to prove that it is superior to that. It has its own standards and dynamics within itself as a process where it pushes the borders of the traditional sign and belief systems in their own places. The aim is not to reinvent a language system that is completely different from what we call usual or typical. This peculiar language of Kristeva is referred to as “poetic language”, which is a “kind of language [which] through the particularity of its signifying operations (...) accompanies crises within social structures and institutions—the moments of their mutation, evolution, revolution, or disarray.” (Kristeva, 1975, pp. 124-125) This language does not claim to be the only right way to express an opinion; rather it is open for collaboration with the symbolic as long as it agrees on flexibility and criticism. It stays really close to the symbolic and threatens its boundaries with its existence. This creates rivalry and causes the symbolic order to adhere to the semiotic such as negative adjectives as out of order, the other, a borderline formation, unusual etc. It condemns the semiotic to keep its existence on the edges and since it is associated with the female identity, there occurs an idea that women belong there and they deserve these

imputations. The symbolic reverses the structure on behalf of itself and correlates women with the threat itself and with dangerous and ambiguous characteristics. The women and the feminine that are expelled out of the social order are treated as hypocrites existing physically in the society, but also living outside of it as the other gender. It is both the desired but also the unwanted which is partly because of its inaccessibility.

Ironical enough, such a perspective indeed proves the strength of women who manage to survive in these conditions, not the weakness of them. Kristeva's approach to the theory supports the idea that femininity does not have to represent women only. It can show itself in the style used in a literary work or in ways of behaviour towards the humankind in societies. Her use of the theory based on Freud's and Lacan's doctrines once again keynotes the substantial relationship between literature and psychoanalysis whose primary point of origin is the pleasure principle according to Freud and that comprises all sets of human behaviour. People get pleasure from reading works of literature as they can identify with them and their repressed desires find forms through them. As an addition to that, guaranteeing them the comfort they are looking for regarding the predictability and the solvability of the events makes them feel even more satisfied. For these reasons, via literature and the inclusion of the semiotic in it, a long term change can be achieved in patriarchal societies, which will have promising effects for the future generations, as well. It leads people to moderately question the fixed values and ideologies that mainly work on the advantage of the male while psychoanalysis attempts to find out the sources of people's pleasures or how they can be provided with consultation as to how to get rid of severe sufferings and turn to happiness. It also conducts research on deeper comprehension of the pleasure obtained from literary works or irritation from some others. Furthermore, in ideology, literature and psychoanalysis trio, why certain authors make insistent decisions on the use of some words or phrases can be enlightened. This also provides a "political horizon" to the practice of literary theory as the reader will raise questions on social structures and institutions linked to that preferred style and discourse. (Kristeva, 2002, p. 30) Another motive behind the quest for pleasure or dislike is to understand how far the society is able to abide them and how individuals are able to direct their repressed desires that are meant for the forbidden to some other less valuable people or objects.

Described as "prolific, rigorous, difficult and occasionally outrageous" (Becker-Leckrone, 2005, p. 5), Kristeva dedicates herself for this search to reach its purpose and

for her theory to be understood properly, which can be administered through plural interdisciplinary studies. Dwelling on Roland Barthes and his well-known essay 'From Work to Text', she elaborates on the term plurality, which does not basically argue that a text has various meanings; rather it "accomplishes the very plural of meaning: an irreducible (and not merely an acceptable) plural" (p. 13) It encapsulates the inclusion and the interaction of the reader with the writer, with the text itself and with the other works of literature, as well stressing the intertextual characteristic of the application of the theory and of the reading experience one more time. When come together, all these features and the significant point of her theory indicates that it is a process instead of being a destination. This process is a heterogeneous one that combines the efforts of both the reader and the author as "the writing subject" that is "shaped jointly by the forces of history, ideology, the unconscious and the body." (p. 13) Kristeva herself communicates with other theorists and with their theories instead of inventing a brand new one in that including the unconscious as an indispensable part in her own interpretation of psychoanalysis confirms that. In that view, Shoshana Felman's definition of the evaluation of a literary text with a psychoanalytical base in her *Literature and Psychoanalysis: The Question of Reading: Otherwise* illustrates Kristeva's approach to the topic, which is:

(...) to act as a go-between, to generate implications between literature and psychoanalysis - to explore, bring to light and articulate the various (indirect) ways in which the two domains do indeed implicate each other, each one finding itself enlightened, informed, but also affected, displaced, by the other. (Felman, 1982, pp. 8-9)

This articulation, in her own account of the theory, impels Kristeva to draw extra attention to the condition of the female speaking subject, in particular. If the literary text is the object that she influences or is influenced from, there needs to be the subject that does the action. Although her philosophy requires her to concentrate on the human subject at first, Kristeva's main focus is the female subject regarding the relationship between the semiotic and the symbolic as well as the patriarchal conditions discussed above. Instead of the forced object position on women who are victimised and are held responsible for certain misfortunes that are nothing to do with them, Kristeva deems women worthy of the subject position, which she examines closely in her renown work *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*.

Kristeva's fresh start to the theory in terms of the subject indicates her role in straining the limits of psychoanalysis to reward it with new aspects and "reassuring

intellectual grounds” for her “very least reassuring and most notoriously difficult concept: abjection”. (Becker-Leckrone, 2005, p. 20) To Kristeva, in spite of being controversial and hard to fathom for some, abjection places the subject in such a place and lets her create such a discourse that it lets the subject to deliver what is repressed for long and is unspeakable. It is literature that makes it possible and Kristeva clearly states that by labelling literature as “the privileged signifier” of subjectivity since “it represents the ultimate coding of our crises, of our most intimate and most serious apocalypses”. (Kristeva, 1982, p. 208) As the definition suggests, this representation involves the contrasting features of human subjectivity within itself and Kristeva “puts no faith in the unified, autonomous, sovereign, rational, conscious subject who strives onward and upward toward idealist perfection.” (Becker-Leckrone, 2005, p. 23) She takes quite a realistic approach as she knows that the ideal world is the kind of world that is hopelessly stuck in the imaginary. She accepts the divided form of subjectivity and would like to work on it to make it reach its most useful and desired version possible in its own dynamics. She resembles the subject formation to the theatre of cruelty where extreme joy, contentment and charm coexist with crime, fear and violence, which also stands much parallel to Kristeva’s primary description of abjection. For her, abjection as she explains at the very beginning of *Powers of Horror* is:

one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable. It lies there, quite close, but it cannot be assimilated. It beseeches, worries, and fascinates desire, which, nevertheless, does not let itself be seduced. (Kristeva, 1982, p. 1)

It remains on the margins while making the subject feel the utmost emotions with its most evident quality in terms of the object that causes these feelings, which is “being opposed to I”. (p. 1) It leads the subject towards a place “where meaning collapses” (p. 2) No matter how far it keeps its existence outside the subject and the society, abject keeps “challenging its master”. (p. 2) To put in a broader way, abjection is:

“something” that I do not recognize as a thing. A weight of meaninglessness, about which there is nothing insignificant, and which crushes me. On the edge of non-existence and hallucination, of a reality that, if I acknowledge it, annihilates me. There, abject and abjection are my safe-guards. The primers of my culture. (p. 2)

It is not only inside but also outside of the subject and it both belongs to the culture in which it is being represented and feels alienated there at the same time. It provides safe grounds for the owner of the feeling but makes him/her feel bereft

simultaneously, which makes itself the poison and the antidote for the subject. That is why, abject is indeed neither the subject nor the object in the conventional sense.

According to Kristeva, anything may be abject and cause such feelings to arise inside a person such as bodily fluids, defilement, any kind of waste and the corpse “that is the most sickening of wastes”. (p. 3) It is because corpse is the biggest threat for the ones who surround it. It is identified with the concept of death, but its being physically available in the mortal world with its nasty form generates horror. It stands in the border of borders and is probably the form of human flesh that gets closest to the borderline between life and death, the mortal world and the outside world. It includes the binary oppositions within itself, but they are not in abstract forms as it is the case for other abject formations. Kristeva further portrays it in this way: “It is no longer I who expel, “I” is expelled” and the corpse is “death infecting life.” (p. 4) The subject loses its autonomous position and the control over the body vanishes completely. Indeed, it gains an ambiguous state, which is identified with the abject itself. However, this does not mean that abjection only occurs on condition of uncleanness in the physical sense. Not only the rotten body or dirty body fluids but also rotten characteristics or a dirty mind can bring about an abject feeling such as “the traitor, the liar, the criminal with a good conscience, the shameless rapist, the killer who claims he is a savior (...)” (p. 4) In addition, any kind of crime that points out the delicacy and the breakability of law can be considered in the borders of the abject. These examples all show that abjection is mainly “what disturbs the identity, system, order. What does not respect the borders, positions, rules.” (p. 4) Moreover, it does not all the time make its identity easily distinguishable; instead, it is capable of veiling itself in unexpected forms; for instance, it is “a hatred that smiles, (...) a debtor that sells you up, a friend who stabs you.” (p. 4) This makes abject different from uncanniness in most situations as it can get more aggressive and brutal than that. In abjection, sometimes not even a single person or thing is acquainted with you since it is disguised so successfully that you do not have any clues.

Kristeva asserts that there are people who are not driven by desire or the pleasure principle, but by exclusion, which is in connection to abject. Even if they move forward by the effect of desire to some extent, that would probably be the kind of desire that does not depend on sexual or guilty pleasure but gets its stimulating force from extreme or

unusual types of pleasure as seen in the examples above. In such people's minds or in the minds of people who have some fears or a phobia,

the "unconscious" contents remain ... excluded but in strange fashion: not radically enough to allow for a secure differentiation between subject and object, and yet clearly enough for a defensive *position* to be established—one that implies a refusal but also a sublimating elaboration. As if the fundamental opposition were between I and Other, or in more archaic fashion, between Inside and Outside. As if such an opposition subsumed the one between Conscious and Unconscious, elaborated on the basis of neuroses. (p. 7)

These characters are perceived as the ones with borderline statuses. This defensive position resulting from the difficulty of differentiation between subject and object indeed provides them certain freedom and the priority to express the traditionally disapproved content on the expense of being abjected in society. They "stray" instead of acquiring what they need, desire, long for or refuse. (p. 8) For they usually prefer "a sublimating discourse" due to the inability to make conscious and unconscious content distinct, they are regarded as "aesthetic" or "mythical" etc. (p. 7) The Law of the Father finds it inappropriate for the blessed symbolic and obliges such people – unsurprisingly the female mostly – to exist on the edges.

Having specific features and qualities such as the discourse are not the only reasons why women are treated as abject beings in the social order. As mentioned before, body liquids as well as filth and defilement are among the reasons of abject and unfortunately, in the category of body fluids, menstrual blood has a separate place. While some common liquids such as sweat and urine or the ones that are peculiar to the male such as sperm and semen are not subjected to intense disgust, the female or maternal liquids such as menstrual blood or breastmilk are associated with defilement and polluting features. One might think that the motive behind this classification is these liquids are produced within the body. Interestingly enough; however, only the female body liquids are defined as disgusting whereas the common or the male ones are believed to be excrements. To Kristeva, normally "excrement and its equivalents (decay, infection, disease, corpse, etc.) stand for the danger to identity that comes from without." (p. 71) It is evident that the male is bestowed with favour in this area, too and their body liquids are exceptions. As for menstrual blood; on the other hand, it creates the fear of assimilation for the male and is regarded as a threat to the physical integrity of them and it "stands for the danger issuing from within the identity (social or sexual)" as well as posing a threat for the power relationship between the two sexes. (p. 71) From the male gaze, anything maternal or feminine can potentially be dangerous and can shelter evil

qualities that are to be dominated. That is why, along with being polluting, breast milk is connected to “food loathing” which is another abject quality with one of “the most archaic and elementary” (p. 2) forms of it. This puts emphasis on the belief that abjection starts as early as possible during the baby’s interaction with the mother, which is why the semiotic is also equated to abject. For Kristeva; however, semiotic actually stands for the semiotic “*chora*” (p. 14), which is usually used interchangeably with the mother’s womb and maintains the connection between the child and the mother forever as a representative of the mother’s body. It is a kind of border between inside of the mother and the outside world; that’s why, Kristeva asserts that the baby’s introduction to the world takes place through the semiotic *chora* before the symbolic state of Lacan. No matter how much the mother feels abject with the baby’s rejection of the milk or the embrace, the *chora* keeps the two always bonded since it symbolises both the desire for the mother, the affection obtained from her and the appreciation of her for uniting him/her with the outside world. This incident is summarised by Kristeva as such: “Toward the mother there is convergence not only of survival needs but of the first mimetic yearnings. She is the other subject, an object that guarantees my being as subject. The mother is my first object both desiring and signifiable.” (p. 32)

Despite all these attempts of the patriarchal order to exclude and banish women from contributing actively to the maintenance, prosperity and well-being of the society through abjection and othering strategies, the writer, particularly of contemporary literature, receives *the abject* with open arms. The author “fascinated by the abject, imagines its logic, projects himself into it, introjects it, and as a consequence perverts the language –style and content.” (p. 16)

In the following chapters, these practises will be examined in Iris Murdoch’s *Nuns and Soldiers* (1980), Anne Rice’s *The Queen of the Damned* (1988) and Elif Shafak’s *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006) within the scopes of Julia Kristeva’s *abject*, her psychoanalysis and contemporary fiction.

3. NUNS AND SOLDIERS

3.1. Iris Murdoch and Her Philosophy

Iris Murdoch was born into an Irish family with English roots on 15th July 1919 in Dublin, Ireland. Upon the moving of the family to England in her early childhood, she completed her education there and studied philosophy in Oxford College where she was awarded a scholarship. Following her graduation in 1938, which coincides with the period of World War II, she began working in the British Treasury for civil service. After the war is over, she maintained her service for the government and was transferred to United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration in Belgium and Austria where she worked closely with migrants in 1944 and onwards. Her experience in the civil service and engagement with migrant communities found their reflections in her early works such as *The Flight from the Enchanter*, *The Time of the Angels* and later in *Nuns and Soldiers*. The time she spent in various European countries during her service also gave her the opportunity to be introduced to prominent philosophers and writers such as Sartre and Wittgenstein. This led her to expand on her degree in philosophy and she decided to continue her education in the USA, where she won another scholarship in 1964; however, because of her former communist party membership and views, she was not accepted to visit the country. (Barlık, 2018, p. 283) Therefore, she stayed in England where she advanced on her philosophy degree at Cambridge University and returned to Oxford as a philosophy lecturer in 1984, which she kept practising till her sixties. She published her first novel *Under the Net* in 1954 and was awarded with the Booker Prize with her famous novel *The Sea, the Sea* in 1978. In her late years of lifetime, she suffered from Alzheimer's disease and passed away in 1999 as "one of the most gifted and prolific novelists of the twentieth century", who "occupies a distinctive place in the field of contemporary moral inquiry". (Antonaccio and Scweiker, 1996, pp. xi-xii)

Murdoch, who is reputably known for her moral philosophy, initially held passion for existentialism, which she replaced later with her own understanding of ethical and aesthetic structure. The main reason behind this shift resulted from her realisation of the dual attitude she developed towards it, which means she celebrated it, but criticised it simultaneously. (Gasimova, 2019, p. 46) She had mainly been

recognised as a philosopher due to her inclusion of existentialist ideas early in her novels written during 1950s. They were not only philosophical but also psychological in the sense that they introduced the conflicts people had regarding the meaning of life in the first place and related them to the plot of the novel. She associated the concerns caused by this questioning in life with the more common daily issues of humans, so the philosophy was absorbed in her novels and made the plots revolve around that original existentialist question. When the characters' struggles were involved, psychology inevitably became a companion of her novels to philosophy. Thus, she was highly influenced and inspired by Russian novelists who were into human psychology especially by Dostoyevsky. She had a special interest and administration for the 19th century fiction and enjoyed the works of Joyce, Dickens and Shakespeare in particular.

Later, early in the 60s, she made a statement that literature had already executed some of the duties and functions of which philosophy was previously in charge. It is where Murdoch experienced a turning point and decided to change her direction towards the more creative, neutral and objective side of literature. She put forward that the novel displays itself in experimental ways as a literary production. In line with philosophy's norms, literature offers a base for controversial and hypothetical ideas and leaves space for sophisticated arguments; however, on the contrary to philosophy, writers of novels do not have to prove them. They present their views - let them be in philosophy, psychology, art etc., but whether to take them in is absolutely under the command of the reader. Indeed, instead of the more competitive world of philosophy, it was a safer and more independent ground for Murdoch to perform because in her novels, "with great sympathy, understanding, compassion and forgiveness, the writer refers to the base, simplistic, everyday forms of existence of the great and the sublime, to the perishable, which is capable of absorbing eternity for a short moment, and penetrating it." (p. 50) As seen, she does not give up on philosophy completely, rather she implemented it in her fiction. What she gave up was putting it in the centre of her novels to allow the main characters have their challenges around and dominate the whole plot. She let herself flow in the beauty of literature and focused more on the artistic satisfaction by taking philosophy into the background to create a more comfortable and free environment she needed to express herself without feeling the urge and pressure to convince the reader.

With these in mind, Murdoch turned her face to Platonism from existentialism. She put significant effort to comprehend Plato, his views of art and disagreed with him

where she felt necessary with her artistic identity as an author, not as a philosopher solely. Like many of her contemporaries as well as the preceding artists, Murdoch would like to settle accounts with Plato because of his arguments with regard to dismissing art and the artist in his respected work *The Republic*. Although this may seem like a refutation or proving of herself against Plato, Murdoch did this for the sake of obtaining a full understanding of him and of making certain ongoing misunderstandings and prejudices clear about this famous philosopher. She believed that if she could come to terms with Plato and his ideas and make them settle on a logical and reasonable basis, she could eventually produce her own philosophy that took advantage of Plato's views, which made sense to her, combine them with hers and adapt the ones that she was not in favour of. That is why, her philosophy might be called a midway and in that way, by creating logical explanations to Plato and offering an alternative to some of his ideas, she paved the way for herself to be taken more seriously by both the literal and philosophical communities.

After directing herself to Platonism and defined her aims, first and foremost, Murdoch tried to clarify that Plato was not against all kinds of art and artists in his republic. What he was not fond of was the type of art that ignored and eliminated moral values in society. She saw the disintegrating communication between individuals and the system of thought and detected values that deteriorated as a result of this ignorance of moral philosophy. Triggered by these thoughts, she conducted research on moral philosophy and suggested that any society needed moral philosophy to benefit from it. Therefore, she placed the idea of 'goodness' as the core value of her moral philosophy and attached it in her later works from then on, which she supported was the key for the development of any society for the better when combined with art. Together, these two concepts – art and philosophy – could perform at the ultimate level and Plato's views were interpreted from a 20th century eye with a different perspective and mind-set. She neither turned a blind eye to Platonism overall nor to his ideas in *The Republic* that offended many artists of the time. This approach even shows alone what Murdoch was searching for and trying to achieve in her philosophy: flexibility and embracing. Overwhelmed by the strictness of the concepts of either black or white, she constructed her philosophy on the concept of goodness and seeing the good in everything.

In her acclaimed work *Fire and the Sun*, Murdoch presents her hypotheses and responses against Plato, positioning the book as an antithesis to Plato's allegory of the

cave. Murdoch agrees with Plato that people in darkness see only reflections of reality, but once exposed to the Sun, they perceive the true reality, which she argues is accessible through the appreciation of art and literature. However, she diverges from Plato, who condemned certain genres of literature like lyric poetry for not contributing to moral values and society, favouring only epic poetry for its patriotic and ethical influence. Plato's critical views extended to other art forms such as theatre and music, which he believed could mislead and corrupt. In contrast, Murdoch contends that art, when valued appropriately, can positively transform the world by promoting goodness in a secular and post-Christian context. She believes art can replace science, philosophy, and religion in guiding individuals toward truth and satisfaction. Murdoch's moral philosophy emphasizes establishing and upholding moral values without reliance on religious beliefs, viewing humans as changeable beings whose destiny can be examined but not fully resolved, and aiming to promote moral principles in a world where God is considered non-existent.

According to Murdoch, individuals' failure in relationships is connected to their moral failures. She believes that the reason lying behind the lack of communication and the alienation of the modern human is the fact that the people with whom an individual shares his/her life are seen as the extension of his/her personal world, which makes Murdoch agree with Freud's concept of ego. No matter how much she acknowledges and respects Freud's psychoanalytical theory, Murdoch thinks the profile he created for human beings is rather pessimistic; as for Freud, psyche is semi-mechanical, which means it is difficult to control, busy with fantasies and a stable source of selfishness. While his focus is mainly on the survival of human beings, making them functional and maintaining their performance, moral philosophers like Murdoch paid more attention to the well-being of the human. (Barlık, 2018, p. 284) Hence, she dwelled on illustrating the modern society in her work with a realist perspective harmonised with existentialism and her own humanist philosophy. As a result, the depicted picture in the majority of her work can appear in this way: Modern humans, witnessing the defeat of religious dogmas and the concepts created by society and their own selfish nature, become alienated not only from society but also from themselves as they look for solutions in artificial values created by themselves. Wasting time in a world of illusions with fruitless relationships that are short of genuine love, human beings may grow physically, but cannot mature spiritually, which causes them to end up as abject characters in between. This deficiency

makes individuals become distant towards their existential values, the society they live in, and themselves, leading to estrangement, alienation and abjection, whose resolution could be her 'human religion' and proper communication.

Iris Murdoch's philosophy; instead of appointing certain rules or criteria to moral codes and behaviour, is based on a peculiar and "naturalistic moral psychology" (Herman, 2001, p. 554), which describes "the nature of moral experience as presented to the subject or subjects whose experience it is." (Denham, 2001, p. 605) Even in her early philosophical writings before being engaged with novels, she offered:

(...) no settled formulas for living and acting well, no general principles for determining the moral standing of one's own and others' actions, no well-defined criteria for distinguishing good from evil, right from wrong. It is simply not possible to draw from Murdoch's theoretical texts any fixed rules for judgment and conduct: she offers the reader no algorithms by means of which he can decide the truth-values of his moral beliefs or the propriety of his individual actions. (p. 604)

It is mainly because, in her opinion, moral comprehension and appreciation are about a continuous process of development, involving the effort to perceive via objective attention. To her, moral philosophy does not necessarily have to be experimental, which is a characteristic becoming more visible when associated with psychology. In that sense, Murdoch prefers to be more descriptive rather than being prescriptive since descriptions are already subjective, chances of which to be objective are highly low, so she does not add up to their existing subjective states. Her approach is also believed to be a "philosophical moral psychology". (p. 605) Alternatively, she is thought to be closely connected to "meta-ethics", which is previously called "the metaphysics of morals" meaning "an enquiry into the epistemic credentials of moral claims and the ontological standing of moral states and affairs." (p. 605) Therefore, hers is a philosophy which is a combination of existentialism, moral phenomenology, naturalism, psychology and sociology. Among them, "love, action, speculation, and the role of art in expressing the results of speculation" are the components that refer to the sociological aspect of Murdoch's philosophy and make it a social theory at the same time. (Church, 1980, p. 160)

Similarly, in her novels, Murdoch would not prefer to reflect explicit subjectivity or didacticism or the promotion of theories of philosophy. She likes to write in a leading manner in which she presents detailed and imaginative narrations and offers an implicit way up for individual moral experiences decorated with her philosophical approach,

which is overall one of the main reasons why she is a radical writer of her time as someone who takes the subjective nature of philosophy to the background. She tries to create a world in her novels where reality is intertwined with values; however, this world is not an idealised perfect world as of Kant's. The important point for her is one should not use the concepts of facts and values interchangeably since facts have their independent and scientifically assessable existence while values are concepts created by humans and have non-assessable characteristics. They are based on one's personal choices, so they in a way reflect the idea that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. By using these concepts in a supportive manner for each other, she provides her form of subjectivity. That is why, "the novel is, as it were, tailor-made for the recording of human subjectivity, and in this respect it is also a form well suited to recording the detail of moral experience." (Denham, 2001, p. 620) Moreover, the form of the novel provides an opportunity to somehow assess the non-assessable values in that though general and fixed rules of mere theories can have a misdirecting feature when it comes to ethics, in the novel, one may have the convenience of considering the context and analyse the details of one particular case depending on it, which is fairer in terms of ethics. Such an approach is in accordance with her coping with the condition of women, as well since generalisation of women and trying to make them fit into norms and coded behaviour is what Murdoch objects to in her writing, so her selected form and mind-set match in that sense. With such display of unique, multiple and varying characters as well as different time and place settings, the novel also gives the opportunity for the reader to be involved in all these in a "quasi-experiential way". (p. 622) Murdoch asserts in her well-known interview with Bryan Magee in 1977:

Philosophy and literature are both truth-seeking and truth-revealing activities. They are cognitive activities, explanations. Literature, like other arts, involves exploration, clarification, discrimination, organised vision. Of course good literature does not look like 'analysis' because what the imagination produces is sensuous, fused, reified, mysterious, ambiguous and particular. Art is cognition in another mode." (Murdoch, 1998, p. 11)

As she explains above, literature is open to commentary as it is the case in the other forms of art. It is not mechanical like an analysis and identification of the reader with the characters or the events that are described is possible. Every time a text is read, the commentary of the reader can change or be extended, which is an indispensable part of contemporary literature. Additionally, with the revelation of multi-layered characters and multiple narrators, the reader has a chance to broaden his/her world view, which makes him/her gain a more objective perspective, so art takes the reader to a new level

or a new version of the individual that is beyond the restrictions and limitations of social norms. It may then result in self-exploration and character development, which shows the benefits of art, specifically the novel. The ambiguity and mysterious form of literature especially in fiction is closely related to Kristeva's theory of abject since these aspects shed a light on the intricacy and unpredictability of abject characters as well as human nature itself, which makes Murdoch a suitable fit for the study at hand.

Murdoch elaborates on this view in another interview by stating that the key to her fiction "lies in some kind of discovery about the reality" (Murdoch and Sagare, 2001, p. 698) because novels are in a way like a journey that depart from appearance and arrive at reality, which proves her contemporariness and being an innovative author. By stressing on that, she removes the strict boundaries between binaries such as appearance vs reality. Her motives and understanding of qualified piece of work in terms of the novel are put forward first-hand, which in fact summarises her goal and vision as a writer:

(...) one recognizes the great novel by many different features about it: that it is a well made story, that it has lively characters, that it has an interesting point of view, is beautifully written, and so on. I think the fundamental thing which a great novel can't be without is a kind of moral vision, an ability of the writer to judge justly his own general attitude to his society and attitude to his characters. This is what must be deep, must be just, and must be compassionate. The presence of these virtues, the ability to see thing in perspective also implies an ability to express what is funny in the right sort of way. These are things which great novelists do, though of course, when you look at the great novelists, very often they seem in terms of style and attitude very different from each other, but I think they have this sort of great humanity in common. (p. 697)

Her morals, as one of those great novelists, are grounded on humanity and the sovereignty of the good. However, she also makes it clear that it is challenging to decide on the moral of a novel meaning that there is usually more than one because there exists a moral atmosphere with a moral construction. (p. 703) The sovereignty of the good does not bear upon the perfectly shaped moral vision like those of angels; rather, it finds its connotations in the ability of loving and embracing the imperfect with all its natural flaws in the best and purest way possible. It is the effort that she pays tribute to in loving something or somebody as perfectly as one could. The ability to transfer love to the object of love through good intentions makes one as just and unselfish as possible, which is the key opening the door of being a better person. In other words, true love calls true humanity. She explains it in detail as such:

Of course Good is sovereign over Love, as it is the sovereign over other concepts, because Love can name something bad. But is there not nevertheless something about the conception

of a refined love which is practically identical with goodness? (...) Good is the magnetic centre towards which love naturally moves. False love moves to false good. False love embraces false death. When true good is loved, even impurely or by accident, the quality of the love is automatically refined (...). Love is the tension between the imperfect soul and the magnetic perfection which is conceived of as lying beyond it. (...) And when we try perfectly to love what is imperfect our love goes to love its object *via* the Good to be thus purified and made unselfish and just. (Murdoch, 1998, p. 384)

According to Murdoch, human love serves as the most compelling proof of a higher principle of goodness. However, she argues that goodness and love should not be directly equated. This distinction arises not only because love often involves a degree of self-assertion but also because it represents the tension between our flawed human nature and the ideal of perfection. She also emphasizes that true goodness is tied to genuine experiences of death, chance, and impermanence. These elements highlight the depth and reality of moral life. Although action remains a crucial driver and motivator within our internal moral landscape, having insight and purity of heart has priority and can even be more significant than taking action at times. As seen, Murdoch attributes utmost meaning to the idea of 'good', which is almost a God-like concept on her side and is superior to any other concepts in life. She holds the opinion that in modern societies, the main reason why love does not rule anymore and people are devoid of it, is injustice, battles and hunger placed by human hand, which makes pre-modern societies even luckier than the peoples of the 20th century and ahead.

In spite of the fact that Murdoch is a non-believer of the concept and existence of God in the traditional sense, she values certain aspects regarding the core teachings of monotheism, which are about goodness, morals and humanity. The difference is the approach she adopts to. For instance, though she cares for morals in her own understanding, she denies that theism equates to and decides on moral values in general. Another example would be her rejection of the idea that humans are the agents who implement these values and are in control of their proper adaptation. Contrary to this approach, Murdoch includes two important elements in her moral philosophy: First, even if God is considered non-existent as a symbol, the concept of 'good,' which represents God and is the source of absolute moral values in human life, should be upheld. The second element is ensuring the consciousness that provides a central set of values in which people coexist in a moral quest without applying enforcements on one another. (Antonaccio, 2012, p. 106) In fact, this explains why Murdoch gives so much importance to the letter 'o', which can totally change the whole meaning as in 'God' and

‘good’. This is also the case, as she asserts, in the word ‘dog’, which could be read as ‘god’ from the opposite way around and she enjoyed using as a common symbol in her novels.

These ideas of hers and her philosophy played an important role in determining the themes of her novels. Even though she believes that an artist does not have an obligation for the sake of society, but for the art itself, she has epiphany and later on thinks that novelists have that kind of obligation for the society to some extent. In her opinion, subjective good is what one does for oneself while objective good is what one does for the society. This shows her understanding of human nature, so she sacrificed some novelistic elements for the sake of her philosophy to take the ideas of goodness and human religion to the front lines. (Rabinovitz, 1970, p. 28) Her novels are charged with social ideas and philosophical elements because she supposes that the novel is her arena through which she can pass her ideas to the reader. As someone who suffered under the oppression of the British Empire and who thought that importance is only given to power holders and invaders not to the invaded just like the majority of Irish writers, she desired to take action so as to make a change. Therefore, suffering and jealousy, search for identity and happiness, personal freedom and acceptance of failure are some of the central themes in her novels. Naturally, she touches on the conditions of women in modern societies when it comes to the issues of suffering and personal freedom, which makes some of her novels such as *Nuns and Soldiers* gain feminist characteristics and style. Related to that, she says in her interview with Sagare:

Responsibility is an act of freedom. You are responsible for yourself, for your actions, and towards other people. The idea of the free human individual hasn’t existed all that long, and there are countries today in which people, especially women, are virtually slaves. This represents a view of human nature which I think is wrong, morally wrong, and which one hopes will gradually disappear. (...) Moral values have to find their way and their definitions amidst the confusions and developments of a free society. (Murdoch and Sagare, 2001, p. 710)

While some of her works, crafted with colourful characters and complex plots, are read in the flavour of emotional romance and romantic dilemmas, others handle the artistic awakening and moral values (Todd, 1984, p. 20), for which some readers are looking as indicated above. Thus, her philosophy is closely linked to Kristeva’s abject since Murdoch was against abjection in general as a concept that puts the wellness of human beings to the background and abjection of women in particular that contrasts with her feminism-fed ideas.

In line with Bakhtin, Iris Murdoch employs a strategy that gives characters their own voices, which is in connection with the theme of personal freedom as well as feminism and also means these voices need to be independent and free of the author's ideology directly. (Avara, 2008, p. 1) To him, a novelist very often finds various ways of transmitting different forms of speech conveyed by a number of characters, which is called "*heteroglossia* – having many written or spoken voices" (p. 4), usually observed in polyphonic novels where "several different voices or points of view interact on more or less equal terms." (p. 4) The fact that such forms of speech are presented to the reader through characters coming from different backgrounds and world views in an atmosphere where a kind of social gathering takes place serving as a uniting power and resembling to a cheerful carnival is called *carnavalesque* coined by Bakhtin again. (p. 4) He believes that "this new kind of novel is no longer a direct expression of the author's truth but an active creation of the truth in the consciousness of the author, the characters, and the reader, in which all participate as equals." (p. 5) As a result, in a polyphonic novel, the author does not appear with his/her real identity as a person and avoids providing explicit ideology; rather, s/he appears as a creator implying a message and providing certain philosophical, ideological or moral views in an implicit way so that the reader feels free to agree or disagree and joins in the interpretation of the novel equally along with the writer, characters and other readers, which is one of the factors in what makes an author international like Iris Murdoch. In this way, the characters in the novel also have a dynamic format that makes them feel committed to questioning and be questioned in their self-exploration and character building as well as making them become more liable to take willing action. To put it another way, following Bakhtin and his polyphonic novels, Murdoch addresses to display "free and unfinalized characters" (p. 21) in the journey of her novels, which works for providing heterogeneity and multiplicity via inner or outer dialogues.

Murdoch's attempt to stand away from her characters as a strategy is called 'unselfing' and it also refers to a feature that can be found especially in some of her female characters. It is used in order to "perceive the world around us more accurately" and "to transform our consciousness so that it revolves less around ourselves." (Hämäläinen, 2015, p. 753) Though this method of unselfing requires the writer to stand away from the characters personally and it might sound as if it were a negative concept, in fact, it does not instruct one to be situated away from social and structural issues.

Instead of distancing oneself and shifting away from these, for a writer, indeed, it is a shift towards a deeper perception of the self, which may turn out to have positive outcomes in the end. (Blum, 2012, pp. 313-314) Overall, it is “a kind of work that the individual person does in order to see what is in front of him (people, art, nature) in a more truthful light. It is intimately connected to Murdoch’s special brand of realism, the moral/epistemic task of trying to see the world aright.” (Hämäläinen, 2015, p. 753)

In addition to the use of unselfing, Murdoch puts another technique into practice in her narration as a contemporary writer, which is subversion. Thanks to the dialogues providing differing perspectives, the reader gets to know the dominant and submissive ideologies of societies and is introduced with social norms. During communication, unity and disunity continuously interact and clash with each other because such interaction involves languages that oppose and contradict each other—one representing the dominant ideology, and the other supporting and promoting subversion. Thus, through dialogues and free indirect discourse, Murdoch finds the opportunity to reverse and subvert some of the ongoing, but non-serving social norms as well as binary oppositions with the aim of raising awareness and making a change. While doing so, she enters in a loop meaning she consults to repetition so that such possible changes in world views and practices are permanent and become effective in the long run. In this way, actually, the message continues appearing like a flashlight before the reader’s eyes until it is fully grasped and the lesson is learnt thoroughly. It is called as a “loophole” by Bakhtin and “it peers importunately into the other person’s eyes, demanding a sincere refutation” (Bakhtin, 1973, p. 196) To be able to break the pattern, one needs to find his/her way out of the loop by producing logical and reasonable counter arguments that are surrounded with Murdoch’s philosophy – human religion in this case and support the intended change.

Last but not least, Murdoch’s inclusion of supernatural and/or gothic elements can be counted among the techniques she favours in constructing her novels. Despite the fact that she takes pleasure in attaching such elements to her narration, her character descriptions are not immersed in the gothic. Conversely, she usually prefers common characters from everyday life mirroring real life personas and incidents, which increases the level of persuasion. However, this situation works two-sided in that when combined with reality, the level of accountability and curiosity go up in a parallel way. She illustrates events that might take place between the real and the fantasy world whose

borders are removed and the lines distinguishing them are blurred, which is a portrait of abject condition. Likewise, her characters possibly go through abject situations or they are abjected when they are faced with gothic, fantastic or supernatural elements because exposure to such elements might bring about identity crisis or make the experience of search of true identity even more challenging since the characters' level of feeling on the brink of passing from real to imaginary or vice versa is increased automatically. This position of standing on the edge can also be related to belonging to different worlds on Earth; in other words, feeling of belongingness or non-belongingness to a nation, country or society, which will be exemplified later in the chapter with the portrayal of the Count. As someone, who holds distinctive identities coexisting together, namely British and Irish identities or feeling closer to different religious or philosophical approaches such as starting with atheism, turning to existentialism, Neo-Platonism and Hinduism, Iris Murdoch knows the experience of abject and how to reach a resolution, which is probably why the reflections of her own experience find their echoes in prospering and profound ways in her novels. She would like to present some of her abstract ideas regarding her philosophy explained above as a manifestation in her novels to defend women, which is the tie that bonds her to Kristeva's abject.

3.2. An Overview of *Nuns and Soldiers*

The story of *Nuns and Soldiers* written in 1980 unfolds in London, centred around a prominent and affluent family. At the heart of the novel is Gertrude, introduced as the main character who attracts the reader's attention from the very beginning. It is simply because her husband, Guy, who is described as the epitome of an ideal spouse, lies gravely ill dying of cancer. This tragic situation earns Gertrude the empathy, sympathy, and understanding of everyone around her.

Amidst this sorrow, Gertrude finds solace with the arrival of Anne Cavidge, an old school friend, who has recently left a convent after losing her faith and spending fifteen years there. Anne, aka the nun, moves in with the Openshaw family and becomes a significant source of support for both Guy and Gertrude. Anne's presence brings some comfort to Gertrude during this difficult time even though future still looks uncertain for both of the women.

Before passing away, Guy makes a poignant request to Gertrude, assuring her to live a fulfilling and joyful life. He even suggests that she should feel free to marry again, already sensing the Count's love for her. Not only Guy but also Gertrude is aware of the Count's affections for her; therefore, Guy offers her as a potential future partner in his deathbed for his dear wife, who is about to be widowed. Upon the anticipated death of Guy, Gertrude and Anne start charting their futures together. Anne feels hesitant about which path to take, while Gertrude, though equally uneasy, is left with a substantial inheritance and a strong desire to share it with Anne. Meanwhile, the Count waits patiently and honourably for the right moment to propose to Gertrude, respecting her mourning period.

Their life is disrupted by the unforeseen entry of Tim Reede, who is a young artist desperately in need of financial assistance. Tim requests a loan from Gertrude and he is tasked with maintaining the Openshaw holiday home in France so that he can get by without feeling highly indebted. His sudden appearance and tough financial situation introduce a new dynamic into the household. Tim's mission to maintain the holiday home soon leads Gertrude to follow him to France with the intention of selling the property. There, Gertrude and Tim develop feelings for each other. However, both are acutely aware of the sensitive timing, as it occurs shortly after Guy's death. Thus, they decide to keep their fresh romance as a secret for some time to avoid a scandal and out of respect for Guy's memory. Tim, compared to the accomplished and virtuous Guy, is portrayed as more ordinary and lacking a solid reputation for success, which indeed hints that he does not suit Gertrude very well.

No matter how much effort they put to hide their love, the truth eventually comes out. Facing numerous challenges and in spite of all the warnings of Gertrude's friends, the couple decide to marry. Their union brings happiness; however, Gertrude struggles with guilt for getting married again soon after Guy's death and for choosing someone who is less socially esteemed than Guy.

Unfortunately, Gertrude's doubts are doubled following the revelation of Tim's hidden past. He never disclosed his former lover, Daisy, to Gertrude, and rumours circulate that he married Gertrude for her money while sparing a mistress on the side. Although Tim insists that his love for Gertrude is genuine and his past relationship is already over, the rumours and lack of trust lead to the collapse of their marriage. Anne

and the Count once again step in to console Gertrude. Anne, in the meantime, has fallen in love with the Count and believes that he, who is still into Gertrude, should have a fair opportunity to win Gertrude's heart on one hand. The Count; on the other hand, feels a sense of duty to try to reconcile Tim and Gertrude. However, if their separation becomes permanent, he contemplates pursuing Gertrude himself.

In a twist of fate, Tim returns in a mysterious and unexpected manner as he did with his first appearance in the novel, causing the Count to lose his chance once more. This time, Anne feels free to pursue the Count, as he is now available. Sadly, before she can make any moves, Gertrude makes an agreement with the Count within Tim's knowledge and approval that the Count and Gertrude establish a close, but platonic relationship, which is pleasing enough for the Count.

In the end, Anne, having lost her chance with the Count, decides to move to America to work for a religious charity organisation. Gertrude grieves deeply after her dearest female friend, whom she always envisioned as an integral part of her life. The novel concludes with Anne reflecting on Daisy, who, like her, had to give up her love and leave the country, ending on a note of emotional introspection and longing.

3.3. Reconfiguring the Margins: Abjection and Identity in *Nuns and Soldiers*

The novel opens up with the scene when Guy is struggling with death and resulting from that, it continues how the household, the surroundings and characters undergo a change. Although it takes a start with the suffering of a male, in the course of the novel the main incidents revolve around female characters, their suffering and coming to resolutions in particular. Specifically, Anne and Gertrude are the topic of interest since the others are usually on the move around them. Murdoch performs a digressive style with such use of shifting characters. It means she keeps shifting from one character to another or from one event to another during her narration, which forms the basis of the technique of stream of consciousness. This also provides multi-voices through Bakhtin's polyphony as explained above earlier.

Among these voices, the focus will initially be on that of Anne's, who appears to be in a shattered form trying to bring her pieces back together. This reformulation is

not intended for the self to return to its old form; rather, it is placing the pieces that form the self in a different order or shape so that it serves to the upgrading of the individual for a more potent life. Anne, as a nun, is associated with purity and innocence while at the same time is seen as a misfit who has left the convent after spending fifteen years there. Therefore, her chosen profession actually becomes her identity that she puts on voluntarily, but now she feels being stuck in it and searches for her true identity. “Anne Cavidge is generally understood to be a peripheral character in Murdoch’s text, that is to say, she exists on the margins of the main action of the novel, although her role might be seen as a symbolic one which leads us to the core of the novel’s message.” (Guerin, 1992, p. 154) Although she is depicted as a misfit, her characterisation fits very well to Murdoch’s style and mission: Her development and dominance to manage the events of the novel around her are given in indirect ways just as the message she conveys through her actions. Her chosen profession and lifestyle might be uncomfortable for her at the beginning of the novel, but her chosen actions later on to fix this situation makes her gain comfort, which is not a smooth process, though.

Standing on the margins and her attempts to pass the borders that put limitations in front her make Anne an abject character. She describes her journey to the convict in the first place as “a flight to innocence” (Murdoch, 1981, p. 59) because she has grown up and been raised to be an intellectual. She got educated in Cambridge, had love affairs and her father always hoped to see her as a doctor, but was respectful and understanding of her choice to be a nun, which was based on the early losses in the family – first her mother, then her brother in a climbing accident and finally her father. Actually, from the start, she has been in exploration through experimentation to find out what may give her fulfilment and peace. She wanted to get her innocence back; however, this innocence does not necessarily refer to being chaste or avoiding affairs with the other sex. Instead, she basically referred to enjoy the simple things in life again as she did in the childhood before the tragedies in the family took place, so this innocence is actually the perception of the world from a child’s innocent eyes and uniting with the safety of God. After all, “it had seemed to her that life was and ought to be simple” (p. 59) back then. Furthermore,

Innocence was then the form under which God appeared to her. She wanted to be eternally possessed of a quiet mind, in a life of enclosed simplicity. She wanted to be independent of worldly thoughts, her own and those of others, to reach a certain level where she could float

free. She did not, at the start, think clearly of 'goodness' or 'holiness' as a visible goal. (p. 61)

Even though she found some amity in the borders of the convent for some time and took pleasure in her flight to innocence there with the aim of going back to the basics, she turned back to questioning again with the feeling of non-belongingness that started to grasp her inside. When Gertrude deduces that the convent must be like a prison, the lines narrating Anne go as follows: "Well, how hard, how ardently, she had tried to get *into* that prison; and that it was like a prison, there were cells, bars, high walls, locked doors. God had put her under house arrest, and with a glad and willing heart she identified herself as a prisoner." (p. 62) The issue is she did not imagine those simple things as the things in the convent, which actually put distances between her and God. Thus, she neither gave up on the idea of almightiness of God nor she labelled getting out of the convent as an escape as Gertrude imagined, but the methods and practice to show her dedication felt restricting for her. She is not a soul who is completely lack of worldly joys and as someone who eagerly read philosophers like Aristotle before, she believed in the power of thinking and questioning and that opposite things can coexist together without applying to the obligation of sacrifice. Her identification with a prisoner is a temporary one and after it fills its purpose, she goes on the search because she realised that the willing sacrifice of the nuns in the convent indeed took away from themselves, which is against her idea of the harmony of the oppositions. Despite the fact that she was convinced to be "in the wrong place" (p. 63), "the enclosure itself did not irk her, she was able to love its austere beehive safety, and to make for herself a vast space inside its narrowness, which space was God." (p. 63) It seems that she was able to fill in the distance created in the convent between her and God with her own ways. While she is in isolation, she does not let herself be isolated from God and she removes the border, the agent between Him and her, which is the convent itself. Therefore, hers is not only getting out of the borders in the metaphorical sense, she physically goes out of that supposedly comfort zone, which only brings her discomfort now. Here, Murdoch's use of oppositions and playing with the binaries that are treated as norms are clear and remarkable with the acts of Anne. The fact that she picks quite ordinary and daily characters, but makes them behave in revolutionary ways – a nun who has a past in which she experienced several worldly pleasures, who questions the teachings of a convent and the doctrines of the religion and ends up being courageous enough to spread her wings after a flight to innocence by leaving a place

that does not benefit her anymore to pursue her own way as a female – is one of the reasons why Murdoch is a distinguished contemporary feminist writer.

Upon completing her time in the convent, Anne changes direction and moves in with her old friend Gertrude. There she helps the chores and also becomes a sincere female companion to Gertrude, who is in a sort of the same situation as her – navigating to settle her mind and decide on the flow of her life. However, it does not take long for Anne to comprehend that it is actually about the self, not the place that brings peace to one and the direction she should take is to her inner self. She was “ambiguous, at large, and who knew what she would do with herself or what would become of her.” (p. 56) Her state of being ambiguous is a form of feeling abject, which refers to her constant identity search and trying to fit in. It also shows her condition of suffering, which is because her belief system is disoriented and mentally she is somewhere in between the convent and the worldly world. Her identity is not clear – is she a nun, a prisoner, just Anne or can she have them all at once? This leads her to alienation and even falling for the trap set by the society, which is sticking labels on herself by herself. She turns the arrows of her queries to herself and assumes that “perhaps a certain awkwardness would travel with her for the rest of her life.” (p. 56) Her identity has been obscured since she is regarded as some kind of oddity that is astray from the usual path, who is bound to be unsuccessful. She is only offered two options by the society: either to be a nun who is totally devoted and innocent or to be a corrupt, a pervert if she is out of order – there is no in-between. If one is somewhere in between as it is the case for Anne, that one has no choice but to be abjected and thrown on the edge. The struggle is even more challenging for Anne because hers is not a search for sexual identity or mere happiness. She does not exit the convent simply because she desires to feel her femininity or regain her sexuality. These are secondary for her as her abandoning is based on humanistic reasoning. Her human consciousness is so high that she takes a lot of variables into consideration. Nevertheless, Murdoch arranges the storyline of her novel in such a delicate way that in order to reach a resolution, Anne needs to go through a suffering period just as a nun does as a requirement of Roman Catholic church, which is purgatory – “the nuns must be purified before entering the kingdom of the new life. Redemption without suffering would appear to be impossible in this framework.” (Guerin, 1992, p. 159) Ironically, what she is looking for is looking for her and what she is in need of is actually within herself. In other words, she is already in harmony and all she has to

discover is she should adjust the balance. One part of a binary is not superior to the other and if one feels s/he has to take a side and feels an urge to prove one party's dominance to the other, s/he gets lost since it will probably result in failure, which is another important theme in the novel to be covered later.

Departing from that, Murdoch succeeds in altering the fixed connotations of certain concepts such as being innocent as illustrated above. It does not necessarily mean to be a chaste and does not have to be associated with nuns who are supposed to be asexual – even for Gertrude, Anne was framed as so. Women who are other than nuns, fall in love or seek the best for themselves through physical or spiritual journeys can be innocent, as well. The meaning can fluctuate and be extended just as the characters themselves. In the Openshaws, during her first days of adaptation, Anne thinks: “*I am here (...) and they are there.*” (Murdoch, 1981, p. 59) Soon, life teaches her there is indeed no sharp line between I and them or I and the others. Murdoch adds reality to contrasts and presents Anne as a conscious, aware and moral philosopher with religious inclinations who wants answers aligning with both God's and human beings' nature. She is not keen on to be accepted into a society coded with norms and patriarchy since she is already beyond that. She knows her sexual tendency, is in peace with it, and is indulged in philosophical interrogations as a nun, which makes her interesting enough as a character even if she were not included in any dramatic events. Her sole existence is attractive, feminist and radical enough and shows the strength of Murdoch's character construction. This at the same time displays her unique definition of freedom: “an ongoing appreciation of alterity, an abiding respect for the otherness of the other.” (Herman, 2001, p. 552) The main component of it seems to be the freedom of speech that is intertwined with the freedom of thought regardless of gender, which falls under the category of spiritual freedom. Murdoch previously describes her understanding of being free with her own words as such: “to be free is something like this: to exist sanely and without fear and to pursue what is real.” (Murdoch, 1966, p. 50) Then, she expands on that and mentions her concept of freedom in this way:

I think freedom and love are concepts which interconnect. What one means by “physical freedom” is another thing. I mean, one may be free “in one's soul” as it were, but may be imprisoned by circumstances, or literally imprisoned, unable to leave one's country or whatever, but that's another sense of freedom. Spiritual freedom is connected with the idea of love. To love is to respect and to attend and to be unselfish, to withdraw yourself and let other things exist, and this is also a state of freedom. The opposite of freedom in this sense would be being relentlessly driven by selfish urges or by cravings or being a drug addict or alcoholic: somebody who, while realizing that they didn't really want to be like this, have to

be like this. (...) The contrast is between a state of being enslaved to selfish urges or being more open and calmer, more able to understand what is surrounding one. This would be a different freedom which would also involve compassion and feelings of affection and of wanting to live for other people. But this is a difficult achievement. (Murdoch and Sagare, 2001, pp. 703-704)

As seen, Murdoch's concepts are all related to each other inseparably, which is what makes them united and stronger. These are important elements of her narration attached to the themes and characterisation. This detailed explanation depicts Anne's condition very clearly in the novel. Without being selfish, she attempts to situate herself as a lover and as a religious philosopher who is a former nun. She falls for the Count, but is also mature enough to withdraw and respect his love for Gertrude. As a result, while protecting her own freedom to love, be loved, and to question moral concepts, she lets other forms of freedom for other people become available. When it comes to search for answers and love, she eliminates borders between physical material love and spiritual love, which makes the concept of love abject.

During her dream, one day, Anne encounters Christ. Jesus visits her in a vision that begins in the form of a dream, but later gains reality to some extent for she recalls it so clearly "as one remembers real events, not as one remembers dreams." (Murdoch, 1981, p. 293) It is a significant moment in the novel that is described in detail through pages since it actually describes the beginning of Anne's illumination or it could also be referred as the salvation and reconciliation with the self. It is important in terms of the narration techniques Murdoch prefers considering the scene is mixed with the use of gothic that provides grotesque realism. Upon seeing statutes that then turn into angels in a beautifully decorated garden in her dream, Anne asks them if there is God, which they replied with affirmation. Then, they vanish and she senses that someone is chasing her and "she *knew* that the person following her was Jesus Christ." (p. 294) Next, she wakes up and summons on the dream that turned into a veridical vision and "then again she became aware, she *knew*, that there was somebody in the next room, somebody standing in her kitchen in the bright light of the early summer morning. And she knew that that person was Jesus." (pp. 294-295) Here the emphasis on the words 'knew' put by Murdoch indicates Anne's character and personality in which she attributes a lot of importance to the state of knowing and being sure of something. This is directly related to her philosophical aspect and connected to her being realistic as a person. The interpretation of the scene goes on as such:

Jesus was standing beside the table, with one hand resting upon it. (...) His hand was pale and bony, the skin rough as chapped. Then he said her name, 'Anne', (...) He was beardless, with wispy blond hair, not very long, and he was thin and of medium height, (...) Though the shape of the head seemed almost grotesque, the face was beautiful. It did not resemble any painting which Anne had ever seen. (...) Anne felt very afraid and yet filled with a thrilling passionate joyful feeling that passed through her like an electric current while making her absolutely still. (...) 'Sir –' Anne had never used this mode of address before in her life. Why do I not call him 'Lord', she wondered, or 'Master'? (p. 295)

She redefines Christ in a world where God no longer exists or is dead as a reaction to inhumanely actions of men and women. Instead, there is the figure of Christ in the form of a human being who has the ability to lead and direct the erring beings to the good. He appears to be a role model, an ideal human being that is described differently than the typical portrayals of Chris. It is essential because here indeed Anne also describes the ideal man in her mind as well as the ideal human being. This idealised look of Christ does not have a beard and shoulder-length brown hair unlike the common appearance of Christ. In this way, Anne abjects Jesus Christ and alienates him as a human who is no longer in the traditional form, so his saviour position changes form – it keeps its leadership and mentoring characteristic, but not as a superior and unreachable being; rather, as an equal. She even dares to call him 'Sir' instead of 'Lord' or 'Master', which supports this idea. The fact that the power of Christ is not degraded as a saviour is apparent when Anne narrates the feelings during the encounter as 'afraid', but 'thrilling, passionate and joyful' at the same time. Even his sole existence can give one such strong burst of contrasting emotions existing in collaboration and he manages to give Anne joy after such a long time. This proves that abject beings can be in saviour positions, assist people and keep the balance within the inner self of a person creating unity and harmony and between inside and outside – people's themselves and society as long as they are embraced, which is what Kristeva desired to achieve as well as Murdoch. Lastly, the scene can also be read as a criticism towards patriarchy dwelling on the physical appearance of Christ, which is away from being over-masculine, meaning that leaders or heroes do not have to be typical males all the time. Chiefly, in the scene, the use of oppositions, deconstructing fixed images seen as norms and reconstructing reality with a splash of grotesque illustrate how effective Murdoch's style is and how strong her pen can be.

The scene continues with Anne's questioning where Christ's wounds are, to which he replies she does not need to see them: "If there were wounds they have healed. If there was suffering it has gone and is nothing." (p. 296) Anne is brave enough to

bombard Jesus with her questions and goes on asking: “So is there salvation? (...) Sir, what shall I do to be saved” (p. 297) and he replies “Oh yes, (...) almost carelessly. You must do it all yourself, you know. (...) As for salvation, anything you can think about it as imaginary as my wounds. I am not a magician, I never was. You know what to do. Do right, refrain from wrong.” (p. 297) Upon this, he instructs her to wash in the sink and he intends to disappear. At that point, Anne feels saddened and falls on her knees and faints. When she wakes up, she finds the room empty; interestingly however, her hands are still damp, which is a reference to the reality-infused state of the dream. What is notable here is the message that Christ conveys: He basically tells Anne to be her own saviour and that she should not seek salvation by means of other people. Rather, she is supposed to reach it by looking into herself and the road taking her to the salvation she feels she is in need of passes from being a good and loving human being. This is also a way of dealing with abjection, which is not staying still and being a person of action. After coming to this realisation and letting go of her love for the Count, which would not bring her anything, but only false hopes, she takes action and follows the remedy of her soul to America. Her salvation lies in helping people while keeping the moral teachings of religion that focus on the value of human beings in mind. As a new woman, who does not accept being lost in misery and search, she questions, does not stray away from realism and religion and accordingly puts what will possibly be in good use of her into practice in a new world order – America. As a result, after a period of suffering and logical evaluation of things, this new woman takes herself to her own salvation through a Christ-like human figure in mind, which is also a new approach, without completely covering her ears to the sound of her heart. By working on building Anne’s character, Murdoch succeeds in building a new strong and independent image of a woman that started with Bertrand Russell as a contemporary writer with feminist sensitivity.

Another female voice that is worth listening to is the voice of Gertrude. Hers generally appears to be loving, caring, passionate and courageous, so she is not much different from Anne. Initially, she becomes visible as an idealised woman with a socially accepted, virtuous, honourable and wealthy husband that is as idealised as her in a settled household. However, her life becomes almost upside down with her husband Guy’s diagnosis of cancer and unfortunately, the view is not very hopeful for his future. At that moment, with the arrival of Anne, her life is cherished and is supported by another woman, which forms the basis of Gertrude’s function in the novel – to present female

friendship. Their companionship can also be called “the attraction of opposites” or a “complementary relationship” (Guerin, 1992, p. 155) since their primary world views were based on different foundations; however, this does not refrain them from remembering those good old days they shared together with a smile on their faces or from backing each other up now that they both feel in pain and defeated. They have a quick chat on the existence of women priests and Gertrude concludes: “Well, if there is anything going I think women should have it too if they want it.” (Murdoch, 1981, p. 55) This is a moment of women bewaring women and providing full support for their fellow creatures: If women would like to do something, they can do it. They unite against problems caused by society itself, family issues, or problems created as a consequence of unreasonable practice of patriarchy. Their coming back together and, though for different reasons, suffering show the universality of women suffering and by putting them on the same page as female characters from different backgrounds and beliefs – Gertrude is not as religious as Anne – Murdoch makes her reader aware of the pain the female goes through as a feminism motivated writer.

Although Gertrude seems to be more selfish when compared to Anne and neglects Anne’s sexuality as a nun or her desire to be independent at times, they somehow come to terms at the end of the day, provide consolation and empathise with each other especially after Anne’s leaving for America. The labyrinthine plots in Murdoch’s stories, the continuous flashbacks, and the predominantly mental interactions between the characters connect Anne and Gertrude more in *Nuns and Soldiers*. This duo roams the streets of London, providing each other with both mental and physical support while seeking a sense of salvation or direction in their lives. (Bove, 1991, p. 5) Besides, what makes Gertrude important in the course of the novel is her rejection of the ideal man defined by the dogmatic norms of the society. Instead of accepting the Count’s courtesy to marry him after Guy’s death, who is approved even by Guy himself and has a superior position, she claims her love for Tim, who is an immature artist seeking acceptance into social communities and is still struggling to settle his financial situation. Despite the reservations of her friends, Gertrude chooses to wed him, which is not a standard behaviour for a woman at the time. She revolts against the traditional as another new woman who is reconstructing herself and as she suggested earlier in her dialogue with Anne, she does what she wants and goes after it. This rebellion is significant because even on the deathbed, a male – Guy, attempts to arrange a female’s – Gertrude’s

future and suggests the Count as a suitor for Gertrude. This is the impact of a male dominated society – a male trying to control a female’s life even in his absence, from another world. She does not let herself be silenced and decides her future by herself though she is supposed to listen to Guy obediently, who is a polite, generous and wise man educated in Oxford. After the suffering and mourning over the loss of her husband, she finds her own salvation by following true love, which is a major step for her character development and identity formation.

The final female voice to touch upon could be that of Daisy’s in the novel although she takes up slight space in the storyline. She is independent, daring and again courageous like the other women, more than they are, though. “Daisy’s ideological word, its personal orientation and its dialogical appeal to its object stand out with its extraordinary vividness and clarity. Her voice is filled with dissatisfaction, rejection, non-acceptance and criticism.” (Avara, 2017, p. 470) She mainly uses her verbal acts till she eventually takes action to set off to America. She harbours contrasts within her self in that though she is a non-believer, she employs religious words as exclamations in her use of language. Actually, her name and her behaviour are the biggest contrast in her. As a delicate flower, a daisy is usually associated with fragility, femininity, kindness and sensitivity. However, her behaviour does not go in line with the connotations of her name and what it symbolises: “Daisy was indeed full of hates. She hated the bourgeoisie, the capitalist state, marriage, religion, God, materialism, the establishment, anybody with money, anybody who had been to university, all the political parties, and men, with the exception of Tim (...)” (Murdoch, 1981, p. 84) Not only her use of aggressive language and fierce emotions but also her style is unusual. When she and Tim first met years ago,

She was, then, a striking figure. She was very thin and boyish, with short very dark hair (...) She dressed outrageously (...) Her own opinions were of the anarchistic left variety, and when roused to controversy her dark brown eyes would become square with fury. She was a talented painter of whom much was expected. When, two years later, she took Tim for a lover he was extremely proud. He felt it was the beginning of a brilliant new era. (pp. 82-83)

As depicted, she has always been one of a kind and hosts a gothic style. The fact that she speaks up for herself though with extremities and is the chooser of Tim not chosen by him tell a lot about her being unique among the women of the time. She hosts abject in her tongue and on her looks, which has become a way of expression and defence mechanism for herself. In her identity formation, at the early ages, she holds on

to Tim as a saviour and safe spot, but then she starts abjecting him verbally: “Her language, always lurid, grew more foul, and she laughed at Tim’s shudders.” (p. 83) Her attraction makes her gain a place in social gatherings and dominance in her relationship, but when she abjects Tim cynically like an attack, who is “old-fashioned enough to object to the words ‘shit’ and ‘fuck’ occurring constantly in the mouth of the woman he loved” (p. 83), they become distant in time, Tim falls in love with Gertrude and then, she learns to accept failure and comes to understanding that her salvation is in being on the road and making a fresh start, not in the love of a man. Through Daisy, Murdoch points out that abject can work both ways. It can be an assistant to one, opens up new ways of thinking when it harms no one or restricts no one’s personal freedom, which, then, should be embraced for the sake, peace and well-being of the society as ‘the beginning of a brilliant new era’. Generally, it is the female who is abjected, but sometimes it can also be the female who practises it on the male to offend him as is the case of Daisy, which shows Murdoch’s not taking a concrete side between the two genders and not being an extremist, since for her, it is the humanity that has priority. Still, abject behaviour of Daisy indirectly leads her to salvation via isolation. While she humiliates and makes fun of Tim for being a failure as an artist, she learns to accept failure herself when she loses his love as a result of her using abjection as a weapon. Thus, she has to isolate herself by taking a solo journey to the land of opportunities as a matured character, as a new woman who has just learnt to manage the balance of her inner self and self-love, which will then be reflected positively on others.

By placing varying female characters with different voices and abject characteristics that are attributed with unusual types of actions of their time, Murdoch is able to present polyphony and makes her reader be acquainted with the coexistence of contrasts in harmony. Abject characters who are believed to be minorities, the marginalised or women exist and they have their own identities, which need to be respected and welcomed, as long as they are not misused or misdirected. Via taking action and communication, resolution can be reached for the universality of women suffering even if it is caused by differing reasons: let it be suffering of death, religion, alienation or love. All the female characters in the novel undergo a transformation, gaining self-awareness and searching for their identities. This process results in the emergence of the new women with new philosophies and motives within a new social

order, adding colour to the dull atmosphere of London through their journeys of action and exploration.

Although female characters, specifically Anne, stands in the core of attention in the novel, it is not only the female who experiences this kind of suffering and transformation. Male characters also go through a similar process. Among them, the Count, who covers more space in the narration, will provide appropriate examples in that sense. Like Anne, he appears to be a misfit, alienated and homeless – unhomely character, who acts in soldierly manners. He practises silent dedication regarding his deep love for Gertrude, which can also be called silent commitment. When he is nominated as a suitor for Gertrude by Guy, he never tries to question it and admits it immediately, so actually from the very beginning, he remains silent in that soldier-like manner. As a self-sacrificial and devoted person, he does not try to change Gertrude's direction whose interest has already been addressed to Tim though he knows that she is in the wrong way by going after someone who is the opposite of him. He suffers quietly that matches his selflessness, which is what creates the major contrast between him and Tim. This selflessness is not totally in the negative sense; rather, it refers to his exercise of altruism, which means the selfless concern for the well-being of others without having any expectations of reward, praise or recognition in return. However, this may be at the cost of the self, and acting in ways that primarily benefit others may beget at their own expense. That is why, when compared to him, Tim appears to be more selfish, who considers his finances and the possibility of his social acceptance prior to his love for Gertrude. Apparently, love becomes one of the main reasons of the Count's suffering. However, it becomes a tool towards his salvation, which is acceptance of failure – one of the central themes in the novel.

This theme is also in close connection with his search of identity and futile attempt to be recognised as an English person. The Count's abjection is set from the beginning: He is a man who is half Jewish, with Polish roots and trying to fit in to Englishness – a minority:

The Count passed his childhood in an ardent endeavour to be English, (...) The Count's name was Wojciech Szczepanski. ('That's a dog's breakfast of a name,' one of his schoolteachers had kindly remarked earlier on.) The English amongst whom he lived had to put up with his surname (which was not hard to pronounce once one knew how) but refused to tolerate the bizarre consonants of his Christian name. At school he was simply called 'Big', since he was even then remarkably tall. He was not unpopular, but made no friends. He was laughed at and regarded as rather picturesque. He was ashamed of his father's outlandish looks and funny

accent, (...) At college someone made a joke about all Polish exiles being Counts, and thus the Count became known as 'the Count' and addressed as 'Count'. Later it emerged that he had another harmless first name, Piotr, and some few people took to calling him 'Peter' or 'Pierre', but it was then too late to unstick the familiar nickname. The Count was in fact not displeased by his honorary title; it was a little English jest which bound him to his surroundings and gave him a shred of identity. (...) For all his efforts to be English he had a slight foreign accent. And he increasingly felt, in every cell of his being, an alien. Yet his Polishness was no refuge. It was a private nightmare. (p. 15)

He is obsessed with Englishness or to put in another way, with having a permanent identity that not only fits but also suits him. He is a character that has been abjected throughout his life by most of the people around him. Even though it is not hard to pronounce unlike its spelling, the English refuses to acknowledge his name which is the main part of a person's identity. The unfortunate aspect of this refusal is they do not even put any efforts to take him in. On the contrary, they try to make him adapt to their own preference with regard to his name, which is tragic for Wojciech. They always pick the easiest way for them and go even further to dare to make fun of his name and accent as well as his Polish roots, which are of great importance to him. It is almost a deliberate resistance not to use any of his real names Wojciech or Piotr and deny him a real identity that is tied to her Polish roots. He is the Count, Count, Big, Pierre, or Peter, but never Wojciech or Piotr, which drags him to depression and almost assimilation by increasing his suffering and alienation. He is the other, the abject being for them. However, the altruism effect in Count makes him be content with the 'little' nickname jest that is granted on him by a community that he finds superior. He even abjects himself by making his condition resemble to that of Poland's: "I am like Poland, my history is ought to be disaster. (...) I can expect nothing now but to be returned to the grey loneliness from which I came." (p. 47) The interpretation of his loneliness that is 'grey' depicts his confused soul and complicated state due to identity crisis. He is in between, neither black nor white just as he does not belong either to Poland or to England completely. Fortunately, later, he achieves his own salvation when he comes to realisation as a result of a realistic self-evaluation and evaluation of his personal history that his belongingness and true identity do not have to be supplied by the English or in that territory. He accepts himself as he is, as a Polish person, after he gives up forcing to find himself in a false English identity, so he sets out to Belfast, which is noticeable since he finds his balance, too by finally settling on a place that is neither Poland nor England. Reconciliation with his Polish identity is a step for him to change. Like Anne and Daisy, he finds his salvation by being on the move, travelling and taking action. After a period of suffering,

experiencing the abject and alienation from the world they are surrounded with, all the characters in the novel manage to feel satisfied in their exploration of identities.

Another point that needs to be highlighted in the novel is the symbolic meanings of 'nuns' and 'soldiers'. There are obviously real nuns and soldiers in the story, but the focus is indeed more on the idea and mentality behind these concepts which are mirrored in the attitudes of the characters. In addition to the Count's soldierly manners that have been explained above, Anne, a nun, shows a similar pattern in her actions. With her faith, commitment and selflessness especially during her days in the convent and in her aids to Gertrude although she is in love with the Count are some proofs for her soldierly manners. Also, she is a representation of female soldiers, yet in a different way. After her dream with Christ and seeing him in an ordinary appearance, she has changed the typical understanding of a nun who is believed to lead only a spiritual way of life. Nuns aka female soldiers like her have faith in Christ as a person not as a God-like supernatural being. After her dialogue with him, she has put forward one's requirement to depend on oneself, not on the supernatural or the spiritual. One should believe in his/her own Christ deep inside, so she has started her own activity and character and become the Christ, which rewards her with identity construction. When it comes to Gertrude and Tim, they, in a way, appear to be the same, which means they show both nun and soldier characteristics and manage to come together in the end. In spite of the warnings of Gertrude's friends saying that Tim is after her money, she did not listen to them and like a nun, sacrificed a better life she could have had with the Count. At the same; however, like a soldier, she fought for her life ignoring class distinction and financial worries. This time, by choosing Tim, she has become a nun again, in the new sense, since she has chosen pure love and religion of humanity as a new woman.

Speaking of Gertrude, symbolic names and human religion, a far-fetched reading of hers could be on her name and what it evokes: That Gertrude is also the name of Hamlet's mother makes Gertrude in *Nuns and Soldiers* gain a motherly characteristic that can be supported with her sacrificial acts, combating for her love, caring for Tim dearly and Tim's calling her "Queen" as well as his spending time in "Prince of Denmark Bar". (Arıkan, 2014, p. 406) When handled from that perspective, it could be asserted that Murdoch keeps the mother figure alive and prominent as well as the female figure in general in the novel while fatherly figures who act in accordance with patriarchy disappear. To illustrate it with an example, Guy appears to be an ideal father figure, who

has mainstream acceptance in society, educated and wealthy. More importantly, as Tim suggests, Guy has become “*loco parentis*” to him. (Murdoch, 1981, p. 81) It is a Latin phrase that means ‘in the place of a parent’ (Merriam-Webster, n.d.) and can be used both as a reference to the legal status of a parent or in the metaphorical sense. In a feminist reading, Murdoch makes Guy vanish early in the novel since as a mentally old-fashioned and traditionally oriented man, he has no place in the new world order she wants to establish. In the Kristevan psychoanalytical sense, Murdoch reconstructs Law of the Father and turns it into Law of the Mother or Rule of the Female just as she removes the Father-Son-Holy Spirit triangle with the death of God. The fact that Murdoch is inspired by William Shakespeare and that she herself mentions in one of her interviews with Jeffrey Meyers cited in David Gordon how much she admires Shakespeare and his style as a storyteller can be a concrete evidence to support this interpretation. She names him as “the absolutely prime example of how we ought to tell a story: invent characters and convey something dramatic which the same time has deep spiritual significance.” (Gordon, 1995, p. 2) Therefore, it would not be surprising to expect the character of Gertrude to be invented with such motives in Murdoch’s storytelling.

Another deep, but sensible commentary could be made on the format of the title in the Penguin publication of the novel (1981), which is the edition used for the analysis in the chapter. *NUnS AND SOLDIeRS* is how the title appears on the cover page, which attracts the reader’s attention with the underlined letters. The emphasis on ‘n’ recalls ‘Anne’ with the exact pronunciation and with the alliteration of the letter whereas the underlined ‘e’ can be interpreted as a reference to Gertrude, which hosts the assonance of the letter. Deliberately picked or not, such presentation of the title somehow gives the message that this book is a story of females and they are given importance.

To sum up, Iris Murdoch, in *Nuns and Soldiers* mainly concentrates on female characters whose voices need to be paid attention. Each character has their unique voice that should be heard and taken seriously. Usually they appear as characters on threshold and in between, which refers to the theory of abject. It is included in the plot as a theme in relation to alienation and also in the character construction that works hand in hand with identity search and formation. While Murdoch aims at creating the new woman image situated in a new world order which is freed from binding and limiting norms, she equips her characters with a new moral philosophy, which is the religion of humanity.

In that teaching, she prioritises humanity and pure love as a religion in which conventional, patriarchal and authoritarian God no longer exists in a supernatural form. Rather, there is a Christ figure that takes the shape of an ordinary human being, who instructs one to find the salvation within. Murdoch believes we are all humans before being anything else such as being a Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Polish etc. One's religious tendency or sect should be taken into background and his/her having self-confidence and doing good for the humanity not because of a class or category they belong to should be cherished and valued. That is why, Murdoch is internationally recognised as a writer and philosopher. She took this universal aspect from Shakespeare who dealt with human belief and character regardless of where, when or what. She desired people to take it as a doctrine instead of following the dogmatic doctrines of traditional approach of religion. She hoped this new belief system to be a kind of new religion; therefore, it is possible to see more themes and elements than novelistic elements in her works, which she sacrificed for the sake of her philosophy in the manner of a nun, in order to impel her characters and the reader "to rethink in the scope and nature of what patriarchal institutions define as real." (Herman, 2001, p. 555)

To Murdoch, such salvation can be achieved through providing peace with the self, accepting failure, maturing as a result of suffering and assessment based on realism, consolation and supporting one another. Most importantly, the key is taking action that leads one to find the true identity that s/he looks for. If breakdowns ever happen, the person should not give up, continue being open to change and look forward. Shifts in narration that employ polyphony, inclusion of contrasts and binaries and then reversing or deconstructing them by removing the boundaries or blurring the lines and finally reconstructing the connotations of some long-settled concepts are the techniques that Murdoch apply on her style and narration. Entirely, these elements unite around the same purpose and its proper functioning in the long term – to empower women. After all, according to Murdoch, "women will have become liberated when they are just to be found everywhere in society as writers, as politicians, as scientists, in business and so on. Also as priests!" (Murdoch and Sagare, 2001, p. 707)

4. THE QUEEN OF THE DAMNED

4.1. Vampires and the Contemporary Literature

Vampires are creatures that typically evoke the image of pale, nocturnal beings wandering at night looking for some fresh blood to suck from their victims' necks. The image also includes sharp canine teeth specially designed to work well in performing the act of biting. The definition is highly probably followed by the red and black colour imagery in that red connotes blood and black is associated with dark night and all the possible scary acts to be committed then. That is the colour that dominates a vampire's closet, as well. As the illustration goes, these are not very positive and favourable images for one's mind. Has it always been in this way or have there been any changes in the common representation of a vampire during the course of time? Answering these questions and examining the historical development of vampires in the literary sense would provide a good way to form a clear understanding of works produced in this genre.

The archetype of vampires dates back to ancient mythologies; however, their emergence in the literary world occurred in the southeast Europe, particularly in the Balkans in the eighteenth century through folkloric tales. (Inoue, 2011, p. 84) The characteristics of the vampires depicted in such works were as follows:

The folkloric vampires were not noble, sublime, and metaphysical, but popular, concrete, and physical. A typical folkloric vampire was a fat, rubicund, heavy-bearded country man who made a surprise visit to his widow. A vampire was thought to be an actual dead person and living corpse. (p. 84)

They were surrounded with so many negative and sinful characteristics that the victims of these vampires were believed to be deprived from God's mercy in afterlife. The horror attributed to them and the inclusion of the idea of a corpse in real life mostly derived from the fact that the century was the time of the plague, which caused intense fear in people's lives. It was also the time of the stillborn babies, so death was more connected to daily life and it was not surprising for people to produce such stories with the fear of death especially in oral culture. However, the century witnessed another drastic event apart from the plague, which was as impactful as that, but fortunately in the reverse sense: The Enlightenment. While the world was interpreted from aspects related to outside such as mythology, nature or God in pre-modern period, with the Enlightenment, the human mind came to realise the importance of Kantian independence

and subjectivity. (p. 86) This age and new perspective “promised a movement from the darkness of ignorance into the light of knowledge, destroying the exteriorized mythological faith. The old yoke based on the traditional worldview changed into a new yoke based on determinism and mechanism.” (p. 87) Thanks to the growing rational approaches to every day events and human life, the tendency to attribute religious and horrifying details to stories gradually decreased and by the end of the nineteenth century, owing to Freud’s discovery of the unconscious, modernised people experienced another shift, which was to interpret the world by “making the unconscious conscious” (p. 87). It widened the perceptions of people and they started to move the inside to outside. In other words, the interpretation of the outer world through inner mind came to the front and as Freud famously mentioned ‘the return of the repressed’, people could not hold their interest for the vampires in the background any longer. It was difficult for them to detach from vampire stories completely because these were not only fearful but also fascinating for human mind, which mainly resulted from the fact that they aroused irresistible curiosity and that some elements in it represented deeper meanings i.e. repressed sexual desires. According to Nina Auerbach, such admiration is felt towards vampires because “they promise escape from our dull lives and the pressure of our times, but they matter because when properly understood, they make us see that our lives are implicated in theirs and our times are inescapable.” (Auerbach, 1995, p. 7)

The evolution of a vampire has three distinct periods: in the first one, the appearance of a vampire did not include the young and handsome figure as it is mainly the case in today’s TV representations of vampires, in particular. The concentration was not on the vampire figure as a being or person, but on the feelings that he brings about such as mystery and horror. Additionally, some other feelings such as pain, extreme sadness or pity caused by tough handicaps accompanied the vampire figure that seldom welcomed any kinds of joy, charm or entertainment. (Lin and Tan, 2018, pp. 122-123) In the second period, that is before the 1970s, the representation of vampires was softened both in appearance and in manners. They became more attractive and started to develop feelings, which kept the focus more on the vampire as a being. However, the enthusiasm of biting and sucking one’s blood without a significant reason were still quite visible. It was not until 70s and onwards that particularly with the women novelists’ coming to the stage that the representation of a vampire obtained a more positive and revolutionary image. The vampire protagonist has become both alluring and clever with

emotional complexity. The idea of drinking one's blood and leaving him/her like an empty trunk, the act of destroying or severe passion have been linked to certain logical reasons, which makes the vampire appear as a game changer. Such vampires are called post-vampires – "(...) vampires that re-work traditional conceptions of the supernatural figure." (Haraway, 2008, p. 3) by some critics for these reasons.

The end of the 20th century was renown with people's gaining more consciousness regarding their surroundings and social order, which ended up with the questioning of some long settled taboos controlled by the patriarchal order. These taboos were almost always centralised around discussions concerning female sexuality, the power holders or gender issues, which had been used to maintain the male dominated order in society. Till then, such topics were treated as a kind of carefully bottled poison waiting to harm anyone who dares to get in contact with it. Thus, not only the common citizens but also authors and artists usually applied self-censorship on themselves. However, once the bottle was broken and the poison was scattered all around, people including writers did not keep silent any longer. Like a vampire's coming out of his coffin to haunt the night, they broke their capsules made of censorship and dared to speak what occupied their minds for so long haunting the literary world with gothic literature. What was thought to be a poison turned out to be their antidote. Among the gothic creatures that were subjected to such literature, vampires played a crucial role since they were one of us, but a complete outsider at the same time. They were basically the utmost symbols of blurring the lines as described by George E. Haggerty:

The vampire represents the return of the repressed in a culturally significant way: both inside culture and outside, both a charmingly honest man and a wickedly deceptive one, both the phallic aggressor and the always already penetrated one, the vampire represents everything that the culture desires and everything that it fears. (Haggerty, 1998, p. 9)

They are believed to be standing somewhere between consciousness and unconscious; thus, they relate to all human beings around the world and show characteristics that are adaptable to the conditions and the requirements of the age. These universal features make the vampire generation a suitable research interest to analyse under the theory of abject, which is also a universal condition whose effects are ongoing and observable though they change in intensity over the course of time.

The main challenge a vampire faces is based on his physical existence: having a body in the human form, which limits his actions, and exceeding the body's borders or the urge to transcend it. The vampire is nearly always in limbo between his human

identity that is tied to his past and the vampire identity that is his present. An existential crisis occurs there in trying to keep the balance between the two, which has a high potential to shape his future, too. Even though vampires, the recently produced ones in particular, have attempts to pay close attention to emotions embracing their past identities, they cannot get away from the appetite brought by their nature now no matter how hard they try. Furthermore, though they have gained a rather attractive and aesthetic figures when compared to their earlier forms, they cannot help using their human past, take advantage of it and exploit their victims through seduction at the end of the day, which causes a growing sense of guilt in them triggering their identity crises. They constantly move between these identities and transgress borders, which become almost invisible in time. This shows a very similar characteristic to the struggle of most people in real life who are lost and confused among their duties, responsibilities, titles and identities. It specifically contains the marginalized groups in society where the struggle is indeed experienced more acutely – namely the abject groups such as women, homosexuals, minorities etc. Therefore, the connection and the serious identification of people with vampires even resulted in a new term called “vampire religion” coined by Laderman and León to emerge (Laderman and León, 2003, p. 281).

Being in line with other available religions, vampire religion or vampirism is open to various interpretations by its disciples. While some of them prefer to put their focus on its relatively more superficial aspects, others are inclined to handle it from more complicated and sophisticated aspects. As explained by Max Chia-Hung Lin and Paul Juinn Bing Tan in their article entitled ‘Vampirism: A Secular, Visceral Religion’:

Vampirism, in a manner akin to other religions, promises the possibility of rising above mortality, attracting people with visions of a destiny that is beyond time and death, one that is unbounded by secular rules and superior to that experienced by mere humans. Nonetheless, depending on individuals’ spectra of comprehension, this destiny, that is, the achieving of immortality in vampirism, does not necessarily constitute the end of one’s search for a *raison d’être*. (Lin and Tan, 2018, p. 122)

The definition displays another reason for the popularity of vampires and being a fan of them like a so-called religion, which is the quest for immortality. The problem here lies beneath the surface resulting from the fact that it is a common fault of us as human beings to develop so much attachment to abstract concepts and to expect miraculous effects or changes in our lives. People; unfortunately, hope to find the purpose of their lives in outer concepts instead of turning to themselves and make their success in life rely on such concepts. At the end, when the excessive expectations are

not met and fail, they feel unsatisfied, disappointed or depressed. Interest in vampires would sound more reasonable if such an aim as achieving immortality is accepted humbly as ‘mission impossible’ and vampires are treated as life lessons or radical beings that would help to change the social issues that have been complained about thanks to what they go through. As an alternative, if they are to be approached more superficially, the fact that they are fictional characters serving the popular culture and means of entertainment to provide some good, quality and relaxing time would be a good idea to keep in mind. Otherwise, vampires’ blurring the lines may deviate from the intended aim and cause an adverse effect on human psyche.

When dealt with in that way, vampirism grants some merits; for example, vampires present a world view from the eyes of a vampire – another form of being; thus, they widen the human reader’s perspective. Seeing so many different human lives through the centuries they have been alive, vampires are experienced beings and can harmonise the visions they collected with their own intuitions, which usually make them gain multiple perspectives for relatively objective judgments towards events taking place around them. As an addition to that, they make utmost use of having a charisma and a kind of lifestyle above standards, which increase the followers of ‘vampire religion’ in number. Unlike the primitive forms of first vampires, the contemporary freshman vampire appears more sympathetic, tolerable, easy-going and identifiable to the reader; and “somewhat disturbingly (...) humans themselves contain some of the vampires’ monstrous characteristics. Thus, a human may be more able to grasp the struggles and pain of those immortals’ different perceptions, their thirst, and their hunger.” (p. 125) As seen, the connection formed with a vampire works in double ways. It could be mind-opening and insightful, but at the same time, in case of over-identification, it poses certain risks.

Along with these risks, association with a vampire holds some more demerits for a human being. Vampires are incentive-driven creatures and have difficulty in keeping their desires under control or act against their will at times. Moreover, their life span consists of the continuation of same patters: mingling with humans, victimising some of them by drinking their blood, or turning some into vampires, being resilient at getting old, maintaining their survival needs, and going back to the beginning once again. For the modern vampire, it also includes questionings and struggles to find the meaning of life or coming to terms with their human past, feelings and vampire future. It is a vicious

circle, “a repulsive no-way-out-ness and repetitiveness (...) a perpetual status-quo, a static existence.” (p. 128) Seeing the trapped vampire may lead to a claustrophobic impact on humans especially on the abject characters since it transfers the feeling of restriction and prohibition to them, which is exactly what they try to get rid of. Additionally, this never-ending circle is an unpleasant reminder of their being mortals, causing them to feel useless and distressed. (p. 128) In the end, like today’s social media (side) effect, people are left resentful because of the opportunities and privileges provided by a vampire life style that they can never have as human beings aka the most advanced form of existence on earth. Ironically enough, vampires also do not render an account of most of their actions and enjoy their freedom, which could be annoying in the sense that for centuries, humans have been fighting for it while another form of being in human appearance have been enjoying it in the meantime. For both parties, identifying with each other is a thin line, so it needs to be represented or crossed with greatest amount of care by authors.

The first successfully recognised vampire story in the literary world was *The Vampyre* by John Polidori written in 1819, which paved the way for the introduction of the reader to the most popular vampire of all times, *Dracula* by Bram Stoker. Prior to *Dracula*, the works produced in the gothic/horror fiction placing the vampires as the central characters focused on their terrific, dreadful and harming features. They were presented as rather primitive, rude and bloodthirsty creatures. The representation of vampires in initial Victorian works did not alter the attitude and kept the attention on the dangerous side of the vampires in that the amiable figure was there with all his magnetic appeal, but simultaneously, their monstrous and malevolent sides were quite apparent and even outweighed the handsome image. For this reason, the sympathy did not generally arise towards the vampire figure and the reader could not dive into the character or his feelings. The lack of identification blocked the possible Cathartic effect and the reader did not usually feel mercy or compassion for the vampire. It was at the end of the century with *Dracula* in 1897 that the vampire figure was attached feelings, which made the vampire come closer to humans. Overall; firstly, the vampire was kept away from interacting with human species. Then, it was represented as a noble being who was involved in relationships with human beings. Finally, it has been almost equated to humans as a being with emotions and feelings such as guilt, love and responsibility, which is the latest common representation in the current century.

It would be unacceptable and inappropriate if *Dracula*, which formulated the mould of contemporary vampires of today, is not mentioned a little in a piece of writing concerning vampires. As stated by Gregory Waller, all the other texts on vampirism are somehow productions of “an ongoing process of retelling and revisioning Stoker’s narrative” (Waller, 1986, p. 29) and this inevitably makes *Dracula* “the authoritative vampire text.” (Harse, 2003, p. 250) This is already obvious when taking the fact that Stoker’s text does not make references or allusions to any other texts preceding it while the successors of it cannot help referring to its name into consideration. These successors could be classified as secondary in the sense that they came out after *Dracula* as put forward by Gabriella Jönsson:

They are, in a modern reading, necessarily second to that archetypal looming figure of Count Dracula. It is nearly impossible to write about vampires without mentioning Dracula. “Everybody” knows Dracula. This does not imply that “everybody” has read the 1897 Bram Stoker novel. Dracula as an archetype has become so embedded in popular culture that he is comparable to Hamlet—to whom any gloomy, undecidedly suicidal young person is inevitably “second”. (Jönsson, 2006, pp. 33-34)

Even though there have been various representations of the Count in film industry and novels have been produced based on the standards formulated by *Dracula* so far, vampirism itself and Stoker’s original text have only recently become a matter of academic interest and been put under theoretical research. In that sense, again *Dracula* led the way for researchers to give a start to their analyses. Related to that, including a contemporary and an up-to-date vampire novel like *The Queen of the Damned* in this dissertation that has not undergone redundant research is also believed to be contributive for the area.

Although next generation writers may position themselves in a completely different place from that of *Dracula*, they arrange that position according to where the source text stands meaning they already accept its authority and criteria to some extent. Absurdly, such references by the recent texts can actually be made to show how remote their ideas are from those of *Dracula*, but by doing so, these writers have a chance to “reinvent the vampire myth in ways which question and revise the conventional and absolute authority” of Stoker’s work in vampire canon. (Harse, 2003, p. 251) Before the emergence of the Count, “vampires were ideally solitary and angst-ridden like the best of the Byronic heroes, searching for an intimacy that only close friendship with a human being could fulfil.” (Jönsson, 2006, p. 34) and they did not intend to move beyond their own territory in order to maintain their solo, stagnant and immobile statutes. Together

with Dracula; however, as well as the physical area he rules in – since he “wanted to expand his real estate to an unfamiliar place” (Inoue, 2011, pp. 85-86), the general vampire image is enlarged and progressed in areas of literature over decades, which once more proves the influence of Stoker’s text in the evolution of the vampire figure and identity in the world of literature.

This amount of growing interest and exposition to numerous authors’ works quite naturally brought diverse criticism to certain components of *Dracula*. The main ideas criticised in the text by the writers who came after it were about the text’s narrative strategies. Being an epistolary novel, *Dracula* presents its storyline to the reader in the form of diary entries consisting of each character’s view, but Dracula’s, which causes the Count’s voice to be silenced. He is in a preserved position and kept away from the sight of the majority of people; thus, he is easily labelled as ‘the other’, which is “an unambiguous animal threat who is also a governing patriarch in his own right.” (Jönsson, 2006, p. 34) According to Veronica Hollinger, this situation made the novel gain a conservative structure - “one that valorizes human reason and privileges human over “alien” life. The inhabitants of its narrative world are neatly divided into “us” and “them.”” (Hollinger, 1989, p. 149) She considers that this technique ignores the voice of the grotesque other and “keeps the outsider on the outside” (p. 149) It is, in fact, a common technique applied on novels in the same genre such as it is the case in Mary Shelly’s *Frankenstein* or Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, which are famously and continuously compared to Stoker’s *Dracula*. Christopher Craft calls such texts as ones having a foreseeable pattern, a “rhythm”: “Each of these texts invites or admits a monster, then entertains and is entertained by monstrosity for some extended duration, until in its closing pages it expels or repudiates the monster and all the disruption that he/she/ it brings.” (Craft, 1984, p. 107) To Doane and Hodges, this “tripartite structure” of Craft’s “both manages and enacts anxiety” with its peculiar pattern. (Doane and Hodges, 1990, p. 439) This conventional approach to the vampire found in earlier texts shows the flightiness of human nature: Welcome something, take it for granted, get bored and replace it.

Another criticism that *Dracula* received from the following generations is that the text falls prey to “the abyss of human impotentiality (...) viewed by the inability or unwillingness of the human subject to act”. (Polizzi, Draper and Anderson, 2014, p. 243) This, in turn, has an adverse effect on reader for they do not wish to see their own species

being dysfunctional, impotent or unable and it surely reduces the amazement they get from the text. (Lin and Tan, 2018, p. 124)

As explained above, Bram Stoker's prominent work *Dracula* has been studied by writers, reviewers, artists and critics worldwide with rising eagerness. So far, it has been handled in terms of "every theoretical lens imaginable, from psychoanalytic, to Marxist, to feminist, to queer, to postcolonial, and the continued persistence of scholarship about the novel points to its literary, cultural, and psychological significance." (Wright, 2014, p. 347) The latest contemporary representations of it; however, has not found a vast place for themselves in the literary world yet, especially the ones written by female novelists. Female contemporary writers such as Angela Carter and Anne Rice managed to deal with the archetypal representation of the typical vampire with their unique ways and reached a milestone with their reversing strategies, which is to be seen in detail below.

4.1.1. Anne Rice's Vampires

The image of a vampire and its being handled in literary works from various perspectives have undergone some changes over the period of time. While the focus was on the overly sexual depiction of the female vampire and concerns about it in the works of the Victorian era, it was shifted to the illustration of the male desire as well as the female's and the homosexual themes has come to the front recently in the works of the contemporary literature. With that, there has come the psychoanalytic readings of the vampire literature in a rising pattern and desire (male or female) has become a central topic that has never lost its popularity. Vampiric behaviour and desire propose regression to Lacanian Imaginary or Kleinian oral stage. It is not any different in terms of the Freudian reading, either. The need of an individual, specifically of a female, to feel completed and whole stems from social norms that make her feel incomplete. This feeling usually starts with the separation from the breast; and the feeling of incompleteness, which is triggered with the idea of lack of a penis, may result in being stuck in the oral stage and in vampirism it is attempted to be compensated by sucking, not from the breast but the blood. In Kristeva, this feeling of incompleteness and being othered is described as abjection when the baby steps into individualism after being separated from the mother's womb. When it comes to vampires, "the vampire is entirely

dependent: s/he can only exist in relation to the vampire victim/host; the overwhelming desire is for oneness, figured in the fleeting act of incorporation of the other.” (Sceats, 2001, p. 108) Such readings have put the attacker, abuser and exploiter features of the vampire in the background and vampirism has also been viewed as a “vivid metaphor for damaged subjectivity and dysfunctional relationships.” (p. 110) The idea of the return of the repressed come out with desire, sexuality and human characteristics in the vampire individual; and vampirism is treated as a threat to social order, which mirrors the situation of women in the world of mortals and connects Rice’s vampires to Kristeva’s abject in terms of being othered. Anne Rice is one of those few female authors of the contemporary fiction, who addresses the issue of desire from both male and female perspectives in the gothic genre with the inclusion of vampires.

George E. Haggerty argues in his article entitled ‘Anne Rice and the Queering of Culture’ that Rice’s vampire series and the male characters there “must be read as gay, and their relations can only be understood in terms of male-male desire.” (Haggerty, 1998, p. 5) By doing so, Rice and her vampire series wage war on conservative politics and navigate an edgy relationship with them. According to Haggerty:

Rice’s vampires express our culture’s secret desire for and secret fear of the gay man; the need to fly with him beyond the confines of heterosexual convention and bourgeois family to an exploration of unauthorized desires, and at the same time to taste his body and his blood; to see him bleed and watch him succumb to death-in-life. (p. 6)

The most apparent example of such male-male desire is in the relationship between Lestat and Louis in Rice’s chronicles. Lestat embodies a distinct form of masculinity that is dignified, exquisite, yet so powerful and obviously queer. He can appear and fit in every time and culture through the series such as as a rock star, an intellectual, a lover, an assistant/soldier (to Akasha) and eventually a kind of judge that differentiates between the good and evil at the end. While doing these, he does not hold himself back from spending enormous amount of money. He finances himself and resides in the most luxurious places around the world in different time settings, enjoys observing people and wandering in streets as well as indulging in artistic activities for which he has a unique taste. Besides, he does not age since he is a vampire and has quite a sharp wit. In that sense, he represents the character of a flâneur; thus, referred as Rice’s 20th century Dorian Gray by many critics. Haggerty says for Lestat:

The Dorian Gray of our nineties ... At the same time, ... Lestat is the passive, the bloodied, the castrated male. He represents the nineties’ hope—that masculinity can survive the emasculation that terminal straightness finally represents—as well as—fear that every man is

already castrated by desire. Lestat it queer, that is because heterosexist culture needs him as a reflection of its own dark secret. (p. 7)

When handled from that view, Rice and her illustration of the vampire are far ahead of her time. She hints by that castration that not only women but also men are sacrificed by culture. Because of the society's unrealistic and high expectations from them and for the sake of being accepted, some of the males ignore the curiosity and homosexual desire, so hinder their sexual identities. When repressed, it returns spilling over in fluid forms and this shows that Rice may support the idea that sexuality is culturally constructed as Butler argues. The queer vampire/person moves through culture like an undercurrent of mystery and desire depending on the conditions, challenging cultural complacency with their peculiar perspective. The vampire becomes a symbol of all that is needed and desired by the culture, but is rejected and feared by it at the same time, which is indeed the definition of abject by Kristeva.

The queer culture displayed through the desired and sexualized male body in the 20th century can challenge norms and support marginalized minorities, but Rice's homosexual vampire descriptions also highlight potential problems. She depicts vampires' culturally determined sexualities as artificial and unsatisfying, leading to abandonment and narcissism. Rice's vampires, belonging to high culture with aristocratic pleasures, are socially aware and taboo breakers, continually reinventing themselves. Like Dorian hiding his male desire due to cultural norms, Lestat adjusts his desires and appearance according to human rules. Overall, Rice's vampires may appear "abject to humanity, as the desires that are not repressed in the utopian world created by Rice are highly threatening (...)" (Carvalho, 2009, p. 174), which is illustrated with Akasha's case. At the end of the novel, Rice blinks to the reader indicating that redemption can be achieved through the acceptance of nature's and natural order's power over any creatures and reconciliation with it is essential. Characters like Lestat and Louis do not force but acknowledge their place in nature at the end of *The Queen of the Damned*. They peacefully lie down among trees, are amazed at the beautiful green of the UK, and find joy during their visit to David Talbot when the quarrel with Akasha is over. All these create a correlation between Rice and Coleridge making Rice a somehow romantic writer at the same time, which proves that Rice and her vampire illustrations are timeless, universal and fluid just like her characters.

Cordelia Sherman labels Rice's vampires in *The Women's Review of Books* where she reviews the last book of the vampire series *The Queen of the Damned* as "jaded, decadent, often self-hating and sometimes evil." (Sherman, 1989, p. 17) At the same time; however, they are equally romantic because of the reason described above, which is their humanistic and wholesome sides. They are the type of vampires that cannot be classified as mere killers or blood-suckers. Rather, they have emotions, aesthetic understandings and artistic liabilities, which is quite clear in the case of Lestat with his philosophical and intellectual remarks and his interest in music, for instance. In that way, as Sherman argues, Rice's vampires form a "sub-culture" (p. 17) with their regular gatherings in bars and theatres.

According to the common heterosexual culture of human beings, vampires and homosexuals are both appealing and outlawed, so Rice takes these concepts and presents them in combination where she "redefines the stereotypes" and speaks "the unspeakable". (p. 17) Thanks to this romanticised imagery and narration, the victims of Rice's vampires are not objectified, but treated with respect, which is what an abject character wishes to achieve. They at times resist their desire to take the victims' blood and lives as strongly as possible especially when they are curious about the victims' background and daily lives. They empathise with them and even after the deed, they give them a proper burial, which is depicted in the scene when Armand and Daniel are out at a bar, kill a couple and bury them afterwards. Armand even lectures Daniel about it as these vampires have their faith in morals, one's integrity, bonds and love. This shows they are not bloodthirsty, but responsible and sensible vampires, which proves that Rice aims to challenge the favoured image of the vampires and to reframe it. This paradox and mission of redefinition attribute a feminist aspect to the novel and "in exchanging the solitary Victorian predator for the clannish modern lover, Rice redefines the boundaries of Love and Family and Morality and Self." (p. 17) In contrast to these earlier writings, post-Anne Rice vampire fiction explores the benefits and aesthetics of vampire life. It portrays these beings not simply as amoral or instinct-driven creatures living without concern or guilt, but as reflective entities who recognize the artistic intricacies of the world unseen by human eyes. These vampires are surrounded with existential anxieties, bearing unattainable loves indefinitely or delving into the ambiguous nature of their vampiric abilities, regarding them as both an award and punishment. Binaries like these do not contrast in her work; rather, they appear together

complementing each other, so defining Rice's vampires and classifying them distinctly as good or bad is neither simple nor appropriate. She studies the pros and cons of vampirism together in that she examines both good and bad, naïve and cruel or mortal and immortal characteristics in her vampires. That is why, Rice "explores the potential (...) in her work insofar as she refuses binary divisions, and enables us to understand both the terror and disgust and the endless beautiful possibilities the vampire represent. Her vampires are not easily categorizable as good/bad or demonic/angelic." (Wisker, 2005, p. 228) Her binaries are not fixed; they are fluid and liquid, so one trait is not superior to the other and they do not have sharp edges harming one another. They are like a tie moving constantly and revealing themselves depending on the time and situation. They are adjustable and flexible, which makes Rice's binaries deconstructed, integral and reciprocal over each other and her vampires have a hybrid characterization. From Stoker's and Victorian literature's one-sided, limited and distant presentation of vampirism, with Rice, there occurs a tendency towards a milder and more tolerable representation showing the vampire character's double struggle and vision.

Another technique that makes Rice different from the Victorian vampire novels peculiarly from Stoker's famous *Dracula* is that she includes objectivity through various voices in her novel. In *Dracula*, the narration is provided in an epistolary way in that Dracula's voice only appears on sixty-two pages in an almost four hundred pages novel (Hollinger, 1989, p. 149) in an indirect way through letters. This method puts a certain distance between the reader and the characters barricading identification and as an inevitable outcome of this, the vampire, which is already introduced as monstrous, becomes even more unreachable and horrible. In other words, as Veronica Hollinger states, this technique results in "the exclusion of the voice of the monstrous Other from the novel; that is, it keeps the Outsider on the outside." (p. 149) The vampire is neither given an identity nor his voice is heard directly. Instead, he is silenced, and not given a remarkable chance to express his own self and point of view, which makes the reader biased. Rice breaks this method and reconstructs it by giving almost all essential vampire character an individual voice in every chapter in *The Queen of the Damned* so that the reader can feel independent and choose the voice that s/he sympathises the most amongst them all. This is riskier and requires more courage to open the ways in front of the reader and let them take their own lead than echoing the vampire as the monstrous other behind the walls of letters, journals or reports and presenting him one dimensional since

farfetched interpretations that are never initially intended in the construction of the novel or unnecessarily harsh criticism may appear. However, by doing so, Rice attracts attention, shows her bravery and calls for constructive reviews. Indeed, she pre-responds to some of the possible commentary or criticism by building the characters multi-dimensional, which also shows respect and care towards the reader implying that their point of views matter.

Although discussions on gender, body, and desire often end up in circular patterns when viewed through theoretical perspectives, fiction offers a holistic approach. While theorists often fall short, relying on abstractions and male theory, women's popular fiction avoids abstraction, multiplies differences, and arbitrates between theory and reality. (Kelso, 1997, p. 484) Rice's vampire fiction exemplifies this, blurring boundaries and offering a flexible, inclusive approach. By re-examining Stoker's *Dracula*, she challenges traditional dominance, representing outcast minorities and questioning absolute definitions in line with the theory of abject. In *The Queen of the Damned*, Rice explores the reliability of representation, with vampires constructing identities based on literary and cinematic models, ultimately questioning her own authority as an author and intertwining fiction with reality. Through her vampire characters, she challenges societal norms on gender roles and sexual orientations imposed by patriarchal systems. This approach characterizes her work as a form of contemporary gothic fiction crafted by female writers while she decorates her fiction with romantic and post-modern concepts.

4.2. An Overview of *The Queen of the Damned*

Rice's *Queen of the Damned* written in 1988 is the continuation of *Vampire Lestat* and the last novel in her vampire series. The novel takes its lead from where the second book *Vampire Lestat* ended, which is the scene when he prepares himself for his extraordinary rock concert. That is why, the last novel opens up with references to the concert and the rock star identity of Lestat with his ability to influence thousands of people. No matter how amusing it is as an idea to Lestat himself, it is as scary and threatening to some other vampires who decide to rebel and kill Lestat during his performance believing that what he intends to do is revealing their vampire identities explicitly to people and it is totally unacceptable. However, the concert does not take

place until the last chapters of the book as the reader is introduced with some other events in the vampire world and real world simultaneously, which makes the reader familiar with various perspectives. The narrator changes frequently and the reader needs to keep alert to follow the storyline and make his/her own judgment as a requirement of postmodern and contemporary literature. Though this may be regarded as a “weakness” (Smith, 1996, p. 48) and “uncontrolled use of point of view” (p. 48) leading to “false entrances” that refrain the reader from being fully involved in the novel, its positive impacts seem to outweigh such negative assumptions and do not interfere in the overall success of the novel and its compatibility with the genre. Because it is the third novel of the series, it would be too simplistic to expect an effortless and smooth reading. Owing to the fact that the characters are added up, they get more complicated and developed in time. Produced in the 20th century in the contemporary literature with postmodern elements and decorated with gothic and feminist touches, *The Queen of the Damned* is not a novel that belongs to the classic realist novels of the previous century. The reader desires to be challenged and take part in the struggle of Rice to change some ongoing beliefs and practices of their time. That is why, such challenges and the change in the narrator are in harmony with Rice’s narration techniques and can only increase the satisfaction of the majority of the reader who are familiar with the genre.

As the story unfolds, it is made clear that Lestat’s concert preparations helped Akasha wake up in her centuries of captivated sleep under Marius’ surveillance, who is another vampire belonging to the group of ancients aka the first vampires. She believes that all the evil in the world are at the hands of men and occur resulting from their actions. For this reason, she plans to kill 99% of the male population leaving that 1% only for women’s breeding and keeping the female population. She puts the blame on men for all the wars, rape, women’s suffering and riots in the world. While making her dream come true, she intends to take Lestat with her and appoint him as a kind of apprentice to her. She wants to teach every ancient vampire skill to him, which he normally is unable to do, so that she could amaze him and keep him in her side. She is the mother of Lestat just as she is to all the other vampires on Earth since they all were reborn from her roots because she is the very first vampire, which gives her the utmost physical and spiritual power such as being able to move objects telepathically, flying with high speed and being able to sense and hear the other vampires from very long distances. The relationship between Akasha and Lestat is not restricted to this mother-

son relationship, though. Since sucking blood has sexual connotations like devouring and being thirsty for blood is very similar to lust, the fact that they drink each other's blood is like an intercourse and is connected to incest, which is extremely abject.

Unaware of all these plans in Akasha's head, Lestat is drunk in love for the visualisation of his upcoming rock concert. Even the thought of it and attributing mortal traits to himself and being amongst human beings in the real world give Lestat huge satisfaction, excitement and comfort. While Lestat's whereabouts is set, the reader is introduced with two new characters in a more detailed way: Mekare and Maharet. These are twin sisters who lived in Palestine near the territories of Egypt and lived in peace in a cave with their mother. Inherited from their mother, these sisters have some spiritual powers the most outstanding of which is the ability to talk to both good and evil spirits. This ability is not restricted to talking merely, they are also able to direct them and get help from them when necessary. Informed about this, Akasha, who is then the chosen queen of Egypt by the king Enkil, orders the sisters to come and tell her subjects that nature approves the changes Akasha made in the funeral ceremonies in society because of her intolerance to previous Egyptian practices as someone coming from a different culture. In that sense, originally Akasha is indeed an outsider herself as 'the first blood abject' in the reign of the empire along with being the 'first blood' in the world of vampires.

The sisters are taken by force from their homeland at the exact moment when they manage their mother's funeral ceremony, which is sacred for them. Frustrated by this and due to the fact that what she wants from them does not reflect the truth, the sisters reject to follow the order of the queen and do not tell the peoples of Egypt that the spirits of nature let her change the funeral ceremonies. Upon this, the queen labels the sisters as witches and orders them to be raped by her head steward Khayman publicly. As a result of this act, one of the sisters Maharet gets pregnant and gives birth to a daughter called Miriam. Taking her revenge, the queen lets the sisters leave with Miriam and they go back to their own soils. They return their old lifestyle and try to adapt themselves to it by bringing the little one up with the help of the other villagers. However, these calm days do not last long because one of the evil spirits that is under the command of Mekare called Amel remains really unhappy with what had previously happened in Egypt. He does not give in to the fact that the sisters accept such an unfortunate fate, which is actually because they knew worse scenarios were awaiting for

them owing to their mother's foreseen dreams and nothing would change the queen's mind about them. Despite the warnings and commands of Mekare, Amel does not obey her and wants to show the queen his power, which is indeed a narcissistic act, not a thoughtful one regarding the sisters. He makes strong winds blow and scares Akasha and Enkil and with little itchy bites causes bloody scratches on their bodies. Following that, the queen blames the sisters for this and orders them to Egypt again through Khayman. Knowing that they have to take this dangerous journey, they leave the child with the villagers for her safety and they set off. When they arrive, the queen orders them to stop that attack, but they are unable to do so since Amel is disobedient. She does not believe in them and commands that Mekare's tongue will be cut and Maharet's eyes are to be blinded and they are to be kept in the dungeon since she is scared of killing them directly thinking the attack could go more severe.

At that time, seeing their rulers' situation and thinking that they are cursed because nature does not accept the changes Akasha made in the cultural ceremonies, the public decides to murder them. Escaping from them, Akasha and Enkil are trapped in a house and the attackers break the windows. Gaining more power, one of them manages to come close to Akasha and stabs her right in the chest. They also wound Enkil to death. Trying to return him to life, Akasha leans over Enkil cleaning the blood on him and accidentally discovers that when she touches and puts her mouth on the scars Amel caused, they start healing. Then, she takes the dagger off of her chest and finds out that she does not die as long as this excessive blood is cleaned and the bodies are emptied from the mortal blood. Suddenly feeling excessive thirst for blood, she starts sucking Enkil's blood and makes him drink hers. At that moment, when their bodies turn into empty trunks and their spirits leave them, burning with the desire of having what mortals have and be acknowledged by them, Amel enters in Akasha's spirit. With this description, the reader learns how the origins of vampires started and why Akasha is referred as the first blood and their mother. Being the first vampires, during the day when they cannot bear the sunlight, they hide in the cemetery and make Khayman serve them with their needs. Already losing the obedience of their subjects and realising that they cannot keep living in that way hiding from them, without his consent, Akasha turns Khayman into a vampire, as well to start her own race and community. Frustrated by this and making sure of the evil in them, Khayman, who is already affectionate of the sisters, goes to the dungeon one night and convinces the sisters to start their own war

against the queen since she is becoming unstoppable and keep killing people for blood. They know that only someone from her own race who is as powerful as her can cope with her, so Khayman turns them into vampires, too making the sisters some of the very first really vigorous vampires along with himself.

Then, Akasha orders the twin sisters to be put on separate rafts tied and sent to opposite directions: Mekare to the West, Maharet to the East. This becomes the last time the two sees each other for ages. Maharet dedicates her life to find her twin sister travelling all the way from East to West, but though she finds some traces of her, never succeeds in detecting her exact location. In the meantime, Mekare takes a revenge oath and focuses only on finding Akasha and destroying her. She increases her strength day by day and waits for the right time. There are very few details about her and the story is not told from Mekare's perspective any time leaving her mysterious all the way along and keeping the suspense for the reader as her arrival is always something to be expected as soon as the incidents start to reveal themselves one by one. The reader only becomes prepared for her presence in the last chapter where she barely talks, but takes action. Maharet; on the other hand, takes care of her now grown-up grand-daughter from distance, helps her out whenever she is in need and becomes a pen pal to her introducing herself as a distant maternal relative. Unfortunately, Miriam dies in a car crash while being pregnant to Jesse; that's why, she is a gift to Maharet and the only thing left from her daughter. Though the two do not meet in person for years, one day Maharet invites Jesse to one of her properties and there they connect even more strengthening their bond. Jesse notices how similar they are in physical appearance with their green eyes and long wavy ginger hair. When she enters a room in the house which is forbidden by Maharet to visit, she is shocked by the huge family tree and connections among the kins pinned on the wall. Maharet keeps the electronic data of all her ancestors and granddaughters both to find Mekare and not to lose track of her heritage. Not informed about this back then, Jesse gets a little suspicious about the mystery in the house including Maharet's appearance mostly in the evening and wearing sunglasses most of the time if she barely appears in daytime, but does not have any concrete evidence.

While the chapters are unfolded through various perspectives and the reader learns about background stories, Akasha who is now awoken from the years of frozen captivity thanks to Lestat's concert calls, kills Enkil and start to put her plan into practice. She immediately directs herself to Lestat's concert hall with the aim of

kidnapping Lestat from there and saving him from the assassination planned by a group of other vampires who are enraged by his inconsiderate and reckless actions. The concert starts and Lestat takes the stage; however, some chaos is created and Akasha burns the hall and puts a lot of assassinator vampires in flames while leaving with Lestat. Simultaneously, Jesse is also there surrendering to her curiosity and suspicion about vampires and wants to conduct her own research by attending the concert arranged by a vampire. Unfortunately; however, she is injured seriously there and is taken to hospital. She undergoes a series of surgeries, but the chances are very low for her. Devastated by this, Maharet understands that the only way to save Jesse's life is initiating her transition to become a vampire and she turns her into a vampire, as well. Now, the mysterious things become clear for Jesse and she also learns about the blood tie between her and Maharet, who has now become her mother at the same time.

Around that time, Akasha and Lestat visit some villages and cities to reduce the male population and save the world from hunger, high crime and violence all caused by male dominance according to Akasha's view. No matter how much Lestat tries to convince Akasha to stop saying that what she intends to do is neither sensible nor reasonable, she shuts her ears to him. Instead, she keeps teaching him some advanced techniques of the ancient vampires and prepares him for the lives he will take. She is patient with Lestat even though he gets aggressive towards her at times because she has love and a weakness for him, which prevents her from killing him. She does not kill the other ancient vampires such as Armand, Gabrielle or Marius, either since she does not want to make Lestat miserable. This love is mutual and Lestat has also a weak side for Akasha and admires her beauty and power; however, when she uses some threats and forces him to kill some innocent men for the first time for such a ridiculous aim, Lestat's love is mixed with fear and hatred. Even though he is a true vampire and has some extremities that results in his being othered by a group of vampires in the community, Lestat represents the humanely and realistic side in vampires and never gives up fighting against Akasha.

In the meantime, being already decreased in number, the remaining ancient vampires decide to meet and gather at Maharet's place to deal with this disastrous situation. Thanks to their sensitive and improved senses, they can feel the approaching threat clearly. They know that Akasha knows their location and is coming for them. With that in mind, they discuss how they can persuade Akasha to take a step back from her

decision or if the worst scenario happens, how to counter against her. During these roundtable discussions, Maharet tells the other vampires the story of hers and Mekare's. The others who have regularly been disturbed by some vague images of twin sisters mourning in front of a funeral for some time in their dreams have come to understanding and start hearing some echoes gradually coming closer to the house. Maharet grasps that this is the sound of Mekare's footsteps from the deep forest around the house. They start waiting impatiently, but it is Akasha, who arrives first at the house with all her magnificence and glory. Along with her, there stands Lestat with all his charm. He is obviously welcomed by them especially by Louis, who has been the most anxious about him all this time and is his lifelong company and admirer. The conversation starts and nervously they try to convince Akasha to give up while she tries to make them join her. Alternatively, they can choose to be killed by her. In turn, they say that human beings deserve one more chance as they get better every century, are more civilised and corruption is inevitable, but tolerable owing to the existence and increase of well-educated, dignified and conscientious people. It would not be fair to efface them because of a group of criminals who act in ill and immoral ways. Otherwise, they would not be any different from them and waiting for some more time is not an important issue for Akasha. Seeing one more time that Lestat also takes the opposing side, she gets really angry, resented and aggressive, which increases the tension in the room and makes the other vampires uneasy.

During a heated one to one discussion between Akasha and Maharet, all of a sudden Mekare enters the door covered in earth and focused entirely on Akasha with a straight face. Akasha, who is caught unawares by this entrance that is as marvellous as hers, is shocked. Mekare, who has collected all the strength in her body for centuries for this long awaited encounter, does not even see Maharet or give a reaction to her existence in the room. Their dialogue is a short one because Mekare is there determined to terminate Akasha, so it does not take long for them to get into physical contact. Though Akasha takes the lead of action, Mekare hits her back with a quick counter strike and Akasha finds herself crashed on the wall next to the windows. The others are terrified and hid at various places in the room witnessing history in the world of vampires. While Lestat is struggling with himself as to using the special powers Akasha previously taught him during his training to help her because after all, she saved his life at the concert, Mekare, in the blink of an eye, knocks Akasha off. Beheaded by Mekare, Akasha's body

lies on the floor near Lestat, who is frozen, but has chosen benevolence and humanity against her. The scene is like a reference to *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*: There she is, Mekare, with all her abject appearance in earth and bush united with nature, muted by Akasha years ago holds her head in her hands shouting victory against the Queen of the Damned. Unable to speak, tormented and isolated for years, this female character acts abject, looks abject, but saves humanity from another female, but disastrous character and makes the world turn back from the brink of a disaster. This shows Rice's aim as the writer clearly and acts as a response to some of the criticism she takes for being an extreme feminist: She does not approve of a positive discrimination for women and opts for humanity. In fact, all the soft-hearted and likeable characters in the novel are males: Lestat, Louise, Armand and Khayman, who always embrace what benefits the humanity and listen to their hearts at the end of the day. After this last scene, the ancient vampires in the room that day, who saw the end of an era in their history, move on to their lives, hold on to each other and decide to live together as a community showing that a balanced unity of males and females wins over the domination of one gender and brings peace and happiness.

4.3. Into Abject Realms: *The Queen of the Damned*

Anne Rice, in *The Queen of the Damned* continues her vampire mythology from where she stopped at the end of the previous book when the famous vampire Lestat's enemies were killed in an explosion, so she has a lot more to say about the details of the story, Lestat's new environment, the origins of the vampires and obviously about Akasha aka the Mother. While doing so, she focuses on the image of mothers, male and female vampires, desire, homosexual relationships and system criticism, which contain elements from postmodern contemporary fiction as well as her peculiar choices as the writer in narration. Since the relationship with the mother and the experiences that the minorities and marginalised characters in societies go through are depicted with vampirism in the book, it is in connection with Julia Kristeva's theory of abject; thus, selected examples will be discussed below in light of that.

In the novel, the vampire characters are associated with the abject; that is why, it would be appropriate to start with an extract where Rice makes the condition of her vampires quite clear and explicit from the very beginning as such: "Two hundred years

since he and Lestat had discussed these very things on an island in the Mediterranean – the dream of a godless and truly moral world where love of one’s fellow man would be the only dogma. *A world in which we do not belong.*” (Rice, 2014, p. 21) It is about Lestat’s feeling of non-belongingness to the world of humans, so he needs an urge to take action to get rid of that uncomfortable feeling which eats him inside. This failure of identification becomes even stronger since he does not truly belong to the world of vampires, either. Therefore, by turning himself into a rock star celebrity, he is involved in the mortal world where he tries to compensate for what he is missing and longs for accomplishment. This choice of profession is deliberate by Rice herself in that she states: “rock stars are symbolic outsiders” and they are “expected to be completely wild, completely unpredictable, and completely themselves, and they are rewarded for that.” (quoted in Carter, 1997, p. 27) With that depiction, Rice shows Lestat is special and interesting for her because he is the representative of both now and then – he fits in the communities of centuries ago and the millennials. It is also described by her in this way in the novel: “(...) the chemistry of old and new – how Lestat had used the distortions of media to disguise himself so perfectly as another mortal rock singer trying to appear a god.” (Rice, 2014, p. 26) Being a vampire in the look of a mortal gives Lestat the priority and reward to transcend borders and experience both cultures, which provides him the opportunity of observing the good and faulty features of both sides with an objective eye. While presenting him that way, Rice benefits from binary oppositions in her narration. In the quote above; for example, she displays appearance vs. reality in Lestat’s disguise and it may be deceiving. Also, with old vs. new in the same example, she stresses that as an abject character, Lestat is culturally engraved and is combined with the charms of both old and new times intellectually. This reinforces the idea that an individual surrounded with a lot of bias – a vampire in this case that is typically linked with blood and killing – can turn out to be opposite and be easily attributed with positive imagery. Indeed, these binary oppositions do not claim the superiority of one of them over the other, which is what Rice does not support. Like Lestat, a being can accommodate both of them inside and this is used to surprise and affect the reader in the novel. What Rice aims to manage is they can coexist in harmony. At first, Lestat is in constant battle with himself and feels lost often while forcing himself to take a side; however, later through the end of the novel, he reconciles with himself and his situation more and peace falls on him. Contrary to earlier Victorian era vampires, Rice’s vampires

are abject, which are feared but desired, naïve and intellectual, drink blood to survive, but are not bloodthirsty for fun and care about the world and humanity around. She shifts focus and attracts the attention more on the benefits and beauty of being a vampire. Rice portrays vampires not just as amoral creatures acting on instinct, but as thoughtful individuals who appreciate the hidden artistic aspects of the world, grapple with their existential worries and impossible romances indefinitely, and examine the dual nature of their vampiric powers as both a gift and a curse at times. (Carter, 1997, p. 27) This is a more aesthetic and moral struggle of vampires combining individualism, self-awareness and exploration; thus, as Kant argues such procedures require imagination and time and are not fixed as standards, which makes Rice not only an experimental but also a courageous writer.

Related to this, just like Lestat, Armand also questions humanity and human beings' actions surrounding them. They are not mere vampires that are controlled by their ids, but are intellectual and curious beings that listen to their superegos and are stuck in between joy of vampirism and the advantages of being mortals, which make them abject creatures. During one of his conversations with Daniel, who is a human journalist aspiring to be a vampire, Armand's thoughts are flown by Rice in this way:

The point was, Armand didn't know what men felt. He never had. Oh, of course he'd known the pleasures of the flesh, that was par for the course. Nobody then thought children were innocent of sensuous pleasures. But of true aggression he knew little. He killed because it was his nature as a vampire; and the blood was irresistible. But why did men find war irresistible? What was the desire to clash violently against the will of another with weapons? What was the physical need to destroy? (Rice, 2014, p. 93)

This is a scene after drinking two homeless men's blood and killing them. He purposefully chooses his victims among those who do not have a family or a lot of beloved ones behind. Despite this, Armand and other vampires from his clan care about their human victims and as he states, they do not randomly act around craving for blood. They have to do this to survive, but at the same time they put themselves in the place of human beings and try to understand what their justifications are for killing for pleasure when there are other options available unlike their own case. Rice's vampires have such scholarly conversations both with each other and with their human friends throughout the novel to empathise and to really conceive. They have these dual and dynamic understanding because once they were mortals, as well, which is one of the reasons why they do not fit in one side comfortably. Not only vampires but also Daniel would like to benefit from the other's knowledge. As Armand has been able to experience almost all

times and locations in the world, as an eager journalist and a smart human, Daniel wants to learn about what old times were like in different countries. After watching a historical film together, they start deep discussions and at one of those times, Daniel asks Armand what it had been really like in those days in Venice and what was wrong in the film they watched set in the eighteenth century. (p. 93) Here, Armand's response is interesting: "I cannot tell you those things because I have no experience of them. You see, I have so little ability to synthesize knowledge; I deal in the immediate with a cool intensity. What was it like in Paris? Ask me if it rained on the night of Saturday, June 5, 1793. Perhaps I could tell you that." (p. 93) They, in a way, screenshot moments and reflect them as what they are. This is indeed what makes them objective and rational beings; however, they are in need of learning more. They feel they are not capable of using their full capacity since they are not good at creating a cause and effect relationship between incidents or at linking them reasonably, which make them furious in their self-exploration journey. They have the ability to think and remember and care about the world, but cannot participate fully in it because they are different and are pushed back from the centre to lead an isolated life in their own community either alone or with those who share the same marginalised destiny. This is actually the definition of abject and matches with Rice's vampires that are postmodern and leading the way for the reader to think along with themselves. Through them, Rice even makes the system criticism. Armand continues:

'Behold, earthshaking inventions which are useless or obsolete within the same century – the steamboat, the railroads; yet do you know what these meant after six thousand years of galley slaves and men on horseback? And now the dance-hall girl buys a chemical to kill the seed of her lovers, and lives to be seventy-five in a room full of gadgets which cool the air and veritably eat the dust. And yet for all the costume movies and the paperback history thrown at you in every drugstore, the public has no accurate memory of anything; every social problem is observed in relation to "norms" which in fact never existed, people fancy themselves "deprived" of luxuries and peace and quiet which in fact were never common to any people anywhere at all.' (p. 94)

Rice uses her vampires not to entertain the reader or to make them feel pity for their condition. Vampires are means of reflection to mirror the 20th century society for the eyes of her reader. She shows the condition in front of her reader like an exhibition and leaves the rest to them. Rice attaches this abject status to her vampires since she intelligently wants to point out that it is such people in societies that are thrown on the edges like vampires, i.e. women that we need to listen to manage a change. The flame to ignore the norms in societies created artificially by people to block people that are not

like them comes from another different being – a vampire. Thanks to Armand's perspective and the information provided with his insightful discussion with Daniel, a unison is made possible between a marginal/abject being and a 'normal' human being. It ironically shows there is actually no normal and brings the question of what normal is, who decides on it and what norms make something normal. Even Daniel in this story who is seemingly one of the most normal humanbeings interviews with a vampire in the previous book of the series, continues in this one and wants to be turned into a vampire. Another human Jesse ends up living in a kind of monastery doing secret research for an organization investigating extra-terrestrial beings, meaning even every 'normal' person has some anomalies in them. What Rice does here is not writing vampire chronicles only for the sake of popular culture, but also to dive into some sociological issues of our postmodern societies, which has not slipped past the notice of careful reviewers, either upon the release of the book. Michael Rogers, in his review of the book points this out as such: "Don't let the title or the subject matter fool you; this is quality fiction written with care and intelligence. There are no false steps or wasted words in the multilayered plot, and the many characters each have a distinct voice." (Rogers, 1988, p. 102) Rice delicately places her novel in a place where it could fit in popular fiction, gothic vampire fiction, or postmodern and contemporary fiction. By doing so, she attributes vampires and vampire novels a higher status than before and make them to be taken into account more seriously, so the voices of abject characters could be heard widely. Also, by moving the borders of literary genres regarding vampire fiction, she deliberately shows that literary codes could be changed or reversed and the boundaries could be blurred, which could result in the benefit of the majority and in positive outcomes.

The parallelism between vampirism and the state of being abject is clearly stressed by Armand when he is convinced to make Daniel turn into one of his kind. When Daniel asks where Armand takes him to and where exactly they are, Armand's response summarises a vampire's condition as obviously as possible: "I told you. It's just a dream. But if you need a name, let me call it the gateway of life and death. I'll bring you with me through this gateway." (Rice, 2014, pp. 116-117)

Being a vampire is associated with being in-between of life and death; in other words, being in the body of a mortal as an immortal being, which causes contrasts and dilemmas in vampires' perception of the world and makes them unique as Rice's

philosopher-like creatures. When he enters in a crowd consisting of a mix of mortals and immortals, Daniel describes the difference between the mortals and immortals as such:

(...) in the moment of deliberately distorted vision, he saw *the others*. He saw the simple, inescapable difference between the living and the dead. Beings (...) concealed in the mortal forest, yet shining like the eyes of an owl in the light of the moon. (...) it wasn't merely the unearthly sheen to their faces or hands. It was the slow, lissome grace of their movements, as if they were more spirit than flesh. (p. 211)

Being fascinating yet 'the other' matches with the abject condition and Rice stresses upon that by italicizing the word itself. Also, by making them resemble to owls is metaphorical here since owls are known as the symbols of wisdom. They show 'grace' and their 'spirit' is more outstanding than their flesh. Here, the idea of what is concrete is more reliable and valuable is reversed by Rice and this flesh vs. spirit is made invalid. In her case, it is the spirit, mystery and intelligence of these creatures that should be valued and taken care of. They are in fact more intelligent and insightful than many of seemingly more tangible and dependable mortals. The attention and prejudice spent to comment on the appearance of a being needs to be directed to its mind and soul. Together, in various parts of the world, Armand and Daniel went to places such as:

museum openings, (...) adopted a young dancer, paying all his bills through school. (...) They went to night classes in literature, philosophy, art history, and politics. They studied biology, bought microscopes, collected specimens. They studied books in astronomy (...) They went to boxing matches, rock concerts, Broadway shows. (p. 98)

They care about the importance of education and dedicate themselves to develop in intellectuality and culture wishing to have a word in every field of art and science. These are activities even plenty of mortals are not interested in or not capable of doing. Rice shows that humanity has a lot to learn from abject beings in general and this can only be achieved if bias is left and open-mindedness is embraced.

When Daniel's transition is complete, he wakes up from a deep sleep and his narration of how he feels is striking:

San Francisco. He knew he was there before he even opened his eyes. And such a ghastly dream, he was glad to leave it – suffocating, blackness, and riding the rough and terrifying current of the sea! But the dream was fading. A dream without sight, and only the sound of water, the feel of the water! A dream of unspeakable fear. He'd been a woman in it, helpless, without a tongue to scream. (p. 119)

He describes what he has dreamt about, which may actually be called a nightmare. He sees himself as a woman in it of which he feels so relieved to get rid. Even for a vampire, being a woman is terrifying and is described as 'ghastly', 'helpless' and 'without a tongue'. These phrases are metaphorical in that they refer to women's

condition even at the current times when free speech is supposed to be possible, but unfortunately not at all times. Just like them, when he wants his voice to be heard, he is helpless. This is a situation that is abject even from the perspective of an already abjected being - a vampire and women who are already regarded as abject by male gaze are portrayed twice as abject by a vampire male gaze, which can be equated to segregation within segregation.

Another example that supports the fact that Rice uses vampirism as a means of attracting attention to reach a wider audience and that she is well aware of what she is doing is when Khayman mocks the appearance of people who are disguised as vampires in a gathering in Paris.:

In Paris, he went to 'vampire' movies, puzzling over what seemed true and what was false. Familiar all this, though much of it was silly. The Vampire Lestat has taken his garments from these old black and white films. Most of the 'creatures of the night' wore the same costume – the black cloak, the stiff white shirt, the fine black jacket with tails, the black pants.

Nonsense of course, yet it comforted him.

(...)

Maybe he himself should try this lovely costume; again, it would be a comfort. It would make him feel that he was part of something, even if the something didn't really exist.

(...)

Nevertheless it was fun for the moment to be 'somebody' and 'something'.

(...)

He acquired a wardrobe of vampire garments. He even bought a coffin, but he did not like to get inside. For one thing, it was not shaped like a person, this coffin, and it had no face on it, and no writings to guide the soul of the dead. Not proper. Rather like a box of jewellery, as he saw it. (pp. 130-131)

Her vampires are tools for Rice to convey her criticism of societies that follow herd psychology and avoid questioning the norms or embracing what is different. When he sees the cliché vampire costumes, Rice speaks through Khayman and calls them 'silly' and 'nonsense', which is a criticism of the traditional vampires. She would like to show that hers are not mainstream since they have dignities and are not here to scare and drink the blood of human beings dressed in some weird clothes. Her vampires have vision and aims inside that are neither idle beings nor are depicted to present a mere supernatural image to help people pass time while reading. People are dressed in vampire costumes trying to look like something else, but indeed there is a real vampire among them that is also disguised as a vampire, which is really ironic and is a postmodern

technique. Though it is nonsense, it comforts Khayman because he states that as Kristeva argues there is always comfort in the familiar, which is the reason why abject gives fear to the hearts of those who desire to exclude it. This extract once again shows the abject depiction of vampires that do not fit in. Khayman feels it is fun to be 'something' and he enjoys to feel a sense of belonging even for a short time and even if it is a fake one. However, as he also asserts, that 'something' actually does not exist. This fantasy world of vampires created by humans is not available in that way and the binary humans vs. vampires is very superficial and shallow. Rice does not reverse the binaries in her narration, she does something more useful, instead – she deconstructs them. By showing vampires do not exist in that classical way, she makes it clear that they cannot be in opposition to human beings; thus, a binary is not possible.

The end of the extract above shows although there is not a real category to be called 'vampire' in the sense humans believe, Khayman still forces himself to fit in and buys a coffin for himself to sleep in. Even if he does it mostly for fun, he resents that there is no face or writings on it meaning vampires are not given any identities. Rice shows the hypocrisy of human beings, who cheers for vampires in concerts and movies and emulate their style, but not even acknowledge them. Khayman feels treated like an object – 'a box of jewellery', which is only there to look fancy, nice and entertain, but is not attributed a meaning hinting the objectification of women that are another abject group in societies. This once again proves the vanity of a binary between humans and vampires, which is what Rice rejects to recognise. After all, what is considered as norms by people are so artificial and are not based on solid grounds that they are only made to look solid to lower and deter the other, but are made flexible and are treated trivial when it comes to the benefits of the dominant in majority. Vampires are grounded on leading meaningful lives in Rice's narration that are in need and search of recognition, identity and belongingness, which are used as powerful symbols and as an umbrella term by Rice to flash the challenge and double standards all abject characters go through in societies.

This situation also seems to be in connection with Jean Baudrillard's concept of hyper reality where it is quite hard to distinguish between what is real and representation. In this case, humans' creation of vampire fantasies almost overshadows the real and the simulation itself is a much more well-known form than the covered reality, of which people do not even desire to discover more since they are content and satisfied with the

phenomenon they produced for themselves that has been made an indispensable part of popular consumer culture both in media and literature.

The relationship between vampires and Kristeva's abject is also eminent in references to the disgust felt by vampires against the view of corpses and the smell of the dead. In Azim's empire, during the burning of bodies, the female vampire Pandora describes the scene as such: "And before her were the pyres, spitting, crackling, the dead bodies darkening as they lay heaped on the burning wood. The stench sickened her. ... The smell suffocated her; the cleansing mountain air could not reach her here." (p. 66) Even as a vampire, the image of a dead body and the smell of the burning men make her feel disgust, which is a paradox because as a vampire, biologically she is one of the reasons why human beings lose their lives. As seen, Rice makes use of postmodern narration techniques in her novel such as irony, contrast and paradox to increase the impact of her style. In addition to the example above, when Daniel cleans after killing two men for blood with Armand, he states: "So loathsome to touch the corpse like that." (p. 205) According to Kristeva, a corpse is the utmost form of abject because it represents the in-between state. The body is physically there on Earth; however, it does not contain a soul and is not alive. At that moment, the witness wishes not to see the body, either because as Kristeva argues, parts of our body which are perceived as natural, neutral or 'normal' become abject as soon as they leave our body such as blood or pieces of hair and cause loathing in the eye of the viewer. That is why, one probably wants a body to be buried immediately after the incident of death with the belief that if the physical evidence disappears out of sight, s/he will easily be able to accept death. Otherwise, the body lying there is a constant reminder of that limbo or purgatory state, which is unknown and unfamiliar causing fear.

This may also be associated with the idea that as long as someone loses his/her life, identity of the person is taken from him/her and the proverb is changed from 'she' or 'he' to 'it' referring to the body. The person immediately becomes a body or an object without an identity and wherever it is put except under the soil, it causes discomfort and unease. That is why, this non-belonging thing without an identity causes irritation even for a vampire even though it was the centre of desire when alive a moment ago. What is considered to be normal can be abnormal in seconds, which can be someone else's normal, so Rice indirectly conveys the message here that norms and binaries such as life vs. death or alive vs. dead only work to mislead us preventing us from embracing and

accepting each other as we are, which indirectly results in societies' falling behind in terms of development as it shifts focus with interference. In the course of the novel, she continues her criticism of the condition of human societies and her inability to understand why they are obsessed with violence, power or women, and she outspeaks for herself from wise Khayman's mouth: "'excess can be the very opposite of essence.'" (p. 220) That harm of irrational obsession is particularly given in the sections related to Akasha in the second half of the novel, which will also be exemplified in this section.

Another feature that brings Rice's vampires closer to Kristeva's abject is their having homosexual relationship. As same-sex relationships are typically out of the norms of societies, it is considered queer and what is queer is called abject. Such intimacy is observed between Armand and Daniel, who call one another "*secret lover*" (p. 95) and between Lestat and Louis mostly in the novel. To illustrate it with an example, during a performance "Lestat embraced his companion Louis, and they kissed on the mouth, as the mortal musicians put their arms around both of them." (p. 217) However, what Rice draws attention here is not how forbidden or secret this love is; rather, she concentrates on how true love connects two beings strongly and genuinely. Since blood exchange is associated with sexual act in the novel, it creates a bond between same or different sex vampires. Armand thinks for his relationship with Daniel: "The blood connected them, it had to – the precious tiny drinks of burning preternatural blood." (p. 86) It is outstanding for blood to be described as both 'precious' and 'preternatural'. Rice's intention is obvious here: What seems to be out of the borders of normal can be invaluable and significant at the same time. By using juxtaposition here, as a contemporary writer, Anne Rice one more time shows her master in the subject and narration. Highlighting the divergent characteristics of abject beings through combination of these alliterating and contrasting words together, she creates a noteworthy emphasis on their exceptional nature.

As seen so far in the examples above, Rice's novel *The Queen of the Damned* focuses on the male desire more and handles the theory of abject from a male perspective especially in the first half of the book. While one may assume to find mainly the sexual desires of a female in the second half, s/he may be surprised since although there is certain emphasis on it at times, the parts related to Akasha, who appears mostly in the second half, are usually concerned about the order of the society and corruption caused by mankind in it. Anne Rice once again makes her postmodern and contemporary skills

stand out when she puts forward the necessary questioning in social order through the lens of Akasha for her careful and curious reader. For those who prefer to enjoy the novel from a gothic vampire novel perspective, it still provides a pleasurable reading experience well-supported with high suspension and tension particularly through the end when the meeting of Akasha and the other vampires takes them to the climax. The selected extracts below will equip the chapter with some more abject examples regarding Akasha aka the Queen and the indirect social messages that are aimed at breaking non-serving norms and actions.

Akasha is a character whose abjection and transformation are depicted gradually in the course of the narration. Her transition to a vampire; in other words, her feeling of abject explicitly and strongly is described with her own words:

(...) I realized I was not in my wounded body, that I had already left it, that death had taken me and was drawing me upwards sharply as if through a great tunnel to where I would suffer no more!

(...)

But suddenly something took hold of me, took hold my invisible being! The tunnel was gone; I was caught in a great mesh like a fisherman's net.

(...)

When I tried to scream I was in my body again! I felt the agony of my wounds as if the knives were cutting me afresh. But this net, this great net, it still took a hold of me, and instead of being the endless thing it had been before, it was now contracted into a tighter weave like the weave of a great silk veil.

And all about me this thing – visible yet invisible – whirled as if it were wind, lifting me, casting me down, turning me about. (pp. 413-414)

Akasha's depiction starts with a profound sense of crossing of the boundaries because she is in the process of passing from life to death, which is where she faces the abject initially not only with the experience of death but also exploring the transformation to a vampire step by step. Because death is regarded as a threshold that separates the known, which is life in this case, from the unknown, which is the death here, Akasha experiences the disruption of boundaries and unease. Moreover, she has this abject feeling in a doubled way since she passes from one unknown – death – to another, which is vampirism. Later, the tunnel imagery she provides backs this passing process up and leads her to a fishnet that makes her lose control completely. As it happens in abject individuals' lives, her life is controlled by an upper power above the person, which is the fishnet here. It veils the sense of belongingness since she is neither

in the mortal world nor in the immortal vampire world, which works for covering her vision and blurring the boundaries between her own self and the others and between life and death again. As a result, she faces the disturbing nature of abject. Just as she believes she is relieved from the wounds and is closer to the immortal world, she goes back to the wounded body and feels the pain physically and psychologically again causing contrast and discomfort. The juxtaposition of comfort and discomfort or suffering and relaxation accents the complicatedness of human nature. Finally, being visible but invisible and such whirling of emotions portray the chaotic feature of abject, which disorients and unsettles like a wind from one location to another as it is the case in this example, and Akasha ends up being distanced from familiar and comfortable borders, as a result.

It is also useful to check the description of Akasha made by other vampires to fully comprehend the impression she makes. They utter: “Can the world stop this thing if the world understands nothing of it? That it is immensely strong, yet certainly vulnerable; with the power to crush, yet skin and bone that can be pierced and cut? This thing can fly, and read minds, and make fire with its thoughts; yet can be burnt itself?” (p. 435) This is one of the parts where Akasha is mentioned with ‘it’ pronoun and referred as a ‘thing’. It is attributed both male and female characteristics such as being strong and vulnerable. In addition to that, it is equipped with human and vampire features such as possessing a human appearance and vampire skills, which are flying, reading minds and having a crushing power, at the same time. Also, it is one of a kind creature with its complexity in that the vampires are worried that the world does not understand its actions and its so-called justifications behind.

Indeed, Akasha has some concrete reasons to wish for the end of the world, which are based on violent and selfish actions of humans particularly of males; however, its abject image consisting of contrasts is so dominant that people as well as vampires even the ancient and experienced ones feel fear since it looks absolutely uncontrollable, which is another abject feature. She seems to hold a non-binary identity as she does not fit in easily to ‘she’ or ‘he’ and cannot reside peacefully in either mortal and immortal world as she is unwanted. However, it is actually not because of her uncommon appearance or desire to fix the problems of the mortal world. Rather, it is her extreme and unreasonable methods and actions to do so, which cause her abjection. While she favours one side, she completely demolishes the other without making right judgments. In other words,

she throws the baby out with the bath. The vampires around her does not find her odd or disapproves her due to her abject look. They challenge and judge her for her cruel and illogical desire to attempt the end the male population, which would be such an absurd, severe and highly probably useless solution for world problems. The dialogues of Akasha with the other vampires are on this issue for the most part in the novel and she is as if she were on court defending herself while the other vampires appear to be judges cornering her. This strengthens the idea that Rice actually cares and writes about social issues and conveys her criticism through Akasha. By putting forward the claims of both parties, she displays an objective view and leaves the rest to her reader.

Some examples of these mind-opening dialogues involving Akasha and other vampires mainly Lestat are as follows:

Stop the tears you shed for Baby Jenks, and for yourself. Think on the mortals you should weep for. Envision those who have suffered through the long dreary centuries – the victims of famine and deprivation and ceaseless violence. Victims of endless injustice and endless battling. How can then you weep for a race of monsters, who without guidance or purpose played the devil's gambit on every mortal they chanced to meet!" (p. 265)

These are the words of Akasha to Lestat, who is crying after those killed by her. Here she presents her humanistic side to the reader although she is still involved in the actions of killing and is a supporter of it. This shows that she is not completely cursed and evil and has some good motives at first for the sake of humanity. She starts with good drives and intentions, but later she loses control on the course of actions when she is poisoned by power. The ironic and contrasting thing here is that she abjects her own race by calling them 'monsters'. She appears to be standing on the side of humans and looks sympathetic to some extent with her being thoughtful of the victims of famine and violence; however, she intends to apply justice by violence again, which is killing ninety percent of the male population in the world. When she goes on saying, her empathy towards mortals continues to be felt by the reader as she puts: "Then as the years passed, I acquired a greater power – to leave my body invisibly and to go to the single mortal whose voice I listened to, to see then through that mortal's eyes. (...) I would suffer; I would hunger; I would know the pain." (p. 266) The attempt for identification with the mortals at first makes her story interesting and gripping as well as working for neutral and impartial narration by the writer. When such reasoning is provided, her preferred method to change the order of the world so drastically may even seem applicable to some reader.

Such possible identification with anti-heroes or monsters is observed in cases of sublime terror as in Lestat's or the reader's situation here since abject is in line with sublime. The difference is while abject has no boundaries and usually works for destruction of boundaries specifically the boundaries of the symbolic, which is apparently Akasha herself, whereas in the sublime experience the "collapse of boundaries and the terror linked to the encounter with the Other and with the unknown and the un-representable, brings about a re-negotiation of boundaries and an expansion of the self linked to the integration of the other." (Connolly, 2003, pp. 415-416), which suits the reader's self-negotiation and Lestat's encounter and attempts to negotiate with Akasha, who has become the Other even to him and whose limits are totally unknown. All in all, with the expansion of the identity towards the other via sympathy or empathy and with Rice's neat work of playing with abject and sublime, the vampire has gained the characteristic of being "introspective" (Inoue, 2011, p. 97) and "has arrived as an entity that speaks to the origin and root theme of the modern human." (p. 89)

At the end of the scene above, Akasha remembers the pain caused by Enkil aka the King, who made her remain frozen for centuries and increases the level of impact she possibly has on the reader. Despite defeating him in the end, she does not speak of Enkil badly and refers to him as "my poor beloved King, my companion in agony." (Rice, 2014, p. 267) She keeps on: "And I did not destroy him, not really. I took into myself what was left of him." (p. 267) She has his vision and power inside combined with hers, so she is consisted of pieces from both male and female conceptions. When she orders the termination of males, she commands: "All males save one in a hundred should be killed." (p. 312) By doing so, she believes the abused and injured will eventually be introduced to justice and peace on earth will come automatically together with plenty of food. She is aware that the world needs males to maintain breeding. She states that men only "dream of peace" while "women can realize that dream" (p. 378) The point is instead of accepting the complementary features of both male and female, she hysterically tries to prove one is superior to the other and stop one battle with another. Rice makes it clear here that breaking the norms or taboos is not always a positive operation whose outcomes might be negative and unforeseen. She finalises her plan of action with such utopic and miraculous description:

When the years have passed, (...) when my garden has bloomed through many summers and gone to sleep through many winters; when the old ways of rape and war are nothing but memory, and women watch the old films in mystification that such things could ever have

been done; when the ways of women are inculcated into every member of the population, naturally, as aggression is now inculcated, then perhaps the males can return. Slowly, their numbers can be increased. Children will be reared in an atmosphere where rape is unthinkable, where war is unimaginable. And then ... then ... there can be men. When the world is ready for them. (p. 380)

This part is the last time when the spark of sympathy could explicitly be felt for her since she still leaves the door open for men meaning she does not lose all her hope for the future of men and women completely. Also, no matter how hard it is to achieve such perfection, the new world order she imagines above is the utmost goal every society would want to reach. However, what she seems unable to understand is it is not the quantity, but the quality that matters. The decreased number of men or punishing them could only be a temporary solution unless mind-set is changed, and infected mentality could belong to women, as well, which paradoxically illustrates her case. Lestat takes on the role of reader in providing responses and his reaction to this scenario is “It won’t work. It can’t work.” (p. 380), which is fairly direct. Overall, he views this idea as a massacre, “madness, mass murder and against nature.” (p. 376) He provides insightful, reasonable and objective judgment: “There must be some other way! Ye gods, I’m a flawed thing, a weak thing, a thing no better than most of the men who’ve ever lived. I can’t argue for their lives now. I couldn’t defend my own. But Akasha, for the love of all things living, I’m begging you to turn away from this, this wholesome murder –” (p. 377) The fact that she claims to be performing these bloody actions for good purposes does not mean that she does not commit murder and crime.

Upon this, Akasha loses her control and temper since she now becomes more sure that Lestat, whom she loves passionately, is not going to take her side. It also becomes clear that her love is indeed mixed with manipulation since she mainly wants to use Lestat as a tool for her murderous actions. The soft language and the patient explanations to defend herself leaves its place to accusations towards him: “On a world full of suffering and death, you turned your back as millions of mortals do every night?” (p. 384) Together with the other vampires like Lestat, she is one of the causes of death of mortals in the world, so her words and actions contradict since she cannot think healthily because of being captured by ridiculous ambition. This is a way of creating excuses and covering up for her ill intention. As a victim of violence performed by a male from her race – Enkil, who kept her frozen for years, although she is supposed to know how it feels to be abjected and isolated, she plans to do the same on mortals in the name of saving them, which seems more to be a misdirected revenge. Similarly, she tries

to cool herself by acting in humiliating and abusive ways against her own race chiefly through Lestat and then the other vampires. She labels herself as the Queen of Justice and Queen of Heaven, but it is no one else, but she who gives such titles to her. With that, her anger turns into narcissism easily and she puts: "There is no life without death, (...) I am the way now, the way to the only hope of life without strife that there may ever be." (p. 405) By applying to mortal men what has been done to herself, which is making others dependent and asserting forced superiority, she entirely loses the aspects that could actually be right and defensible on her behalf and invalidates the title of being the representative of justice with her own hands. She goes on further: "I shall *make* the rhyme or reason, (...) I shall *make* the future; I shall define goodness; I shall define peace. And I don't call on mythic gods or goddesses or spirits to justify my actions, on abstract morality. I do not call on history either!" (p. 454) All these sentences starting with the stressed subject I and the italicised 'make' verbs show how concentrated she is only on herself and that she tries to compensate for the time she was oppressed by being the woman of action and by producing something. She is blinded by the idea of deification and sees herself as the ruler of earth and other worlds. In spite of the fact that being a woman of action is a praiseworthy trait of an independent woman, Rice once more makes it transparent that Akasha's methodology is problematic. She departs from her id before performing her actions and only follows her instincts that lead her to survival only. Her ego does not function properly and is unable to find the balance between her id and superego, which seems to be deactivated completely. She neglects the egos of other vampires and mortals, too since she totally ignores their needs and reasons as well as useful social rules that do not harm any parties, which shows her functionless superego.

Trying to break the social codes and norms or deconstructing binaries may not always be permanent and sustainable solutions to the challenges in the lives of beings. If these are done with right methods while taking care of benefits and rights of every part included, they could be revolutionary. However, Rice makes it clear enough here that what really matters is finding the balance and keeping it in social behaviour. No matter how marginal or on the edge one's appearance might seem, nobody has the right to judge or make him or her feel exposed to abjection. As long as their actions are directed for supportable and justifiable actions, appearance loses its importance and what is important becomes their character, right judgment, opinion and behaviour. One's

individuality should be acknowledged and respected and it is the accompanying mentality to appearance, which should be embraced. Forced behaviour and inflicting upon others what one would not wish to be inflicted upon oneself are unacceptable and futile types of behaviour that stand against the development of both mortal and immortal societies.

In conclusion, Maharet's words serve as a summary of Rice's vision and approach through the closure of the novel. She says to Akasha: "Don't *you* see? It is not man who is the enemy of the human species. It is the irrational; it is the spiritual when it is divorced from the material; from the lesson in one beating heart or one bleeding vein." (p. 463) The pain encircling the mortal world does not stem from belonging to human species or the physical actions of human race, which is only the visible part of the iceberg. It results from the mentality of beings that lead human beings to act in those ways, so demolishing them physically from the Earth cannot solve the issue. Maharet goes on saying that as flawed creatures, they know their sins, and limits while Akasha does not hers. (p. 463) Being abjected by seemingly superior others should not direct one to act in irrational ways in order to attract attention or waging war as a counter attack in the name of revenge from the innocent and the irrelevant communities can only provide momentary relief. Abject characters especially women who are pushed to lead their lives on the edges of the societal borders by hiding behind religion, norms, or traditions are made to suffer without putting forward plausible reason. It is indeed the same beings again who decide on such limitations and irrational reasons, which is not based on female/male binary. Akasha reminds the reader and the other vampires of all the women and children who were hurt and abjected by the male, but in this case it is ironically herself – another female who causes pain and terror that is built upon uncontrollable and non-rational ambition disguised in helping these mortals out. It was again Akasha herself, who ordered the rape, amputation of the tongue and blinding of the twins Mekare and Maharet, which are severe acts of violence. This evidently shows her rage results in a battle against women and by promoting violence, physical dominance and power, she contributes to the symbolic where she allegedly tries to rescue women from. Any kind of creature – a human, a vampire, a spirit, a man or a woman may cause suffering and perform violence as seen in the storyline of Rice's novel. Putting the blame on the other or abjecting the other is the easiest and smoothest way possible. Instead, Rice's novels whet an appetite to consume the mass culture and the

position of women in it mirrored by her vampires that aim at accomplishing “a radical self-sufficiency” and “an end of otherness”. (Doane and Hodges, 1990, p.436)

Last but not least, it could be convenient to say that Lestat appears to be a doppelgänger to Akasha in the novel as both like to be under the spotlight. When he is compulsorily made invisible and leave his body to advance his vampire skills to be made of use in the killing she intends, Lestat utters: “Being invisible, leaving my body, I hated it! I wasn’t going to do it again!” (Rice, 2014, p. 373). Just like Akasha, he enjoys being the centre of attention and leaving his footprints in the mortal world. He prefers doing this with rational and beneficial ways – giving concerts, entertaining humans while satisfying himself simultaneously and assisting students’ education, developing his intellectuality by dwelling on science and art. However, Akasha’s way is the opposite. She consults to killing, shedding blood irrationally, falling victim to her ambition and selfishness. Instead of arguing and clashing to prove their own ways, they need to see in each other what is missing in themselves; in other words, to complement one another and unite. Akasha is powerful, but irrational and dreamer while Lestat is weaker, but conscientious and rational. It is all about good intentions, a pure heart and rational reasoning when it comes to create change for the good in societies, not about gender. After all, in this story, it seems to be the way of Lestat – a male, which is fairer when compared to Akasha, who is a female, but both show the other gender’s mainstream characteristics at times because gender could also be performative and fluid according to Rice.

By doing so, Rice also responds to certain possible criticism regarding her being too extremist or essentialist especially when it comes to feminism. She seems to be writing with such matriarchal language in Akasha’s part; however, the message she wants to convey is one step away from ongoing gender studies. Akasha is a character built on the base of feminism outside, but she works for providing social criticism deep inside. At the end of the novel, Lestat’s making his definite choice between Akasha and the other vampires is another summary of Rice’s state of mind. He declares: “I can’t follow you, (...) We’re not angels, Akasha; we are not gods. To be human, that’s what most of us long for. It is the human which has become myth to us.” (p. 466) No one is thoroughly good or evil, but since Akasha’s definition of good is dubious, Rice has Akasha eliminated from the story by the other ancient vampires organized around true goodness, rationality and conscience while she keeps Lestat in the storyline till the very

end, which is another answer to her essentialism in feminism. She stands firmly against such a concept as “femi-nazi” (Smith, 1996, p. 78), which is eradicating men and denying the humanity of them while exercising control over the world, as Akasha embarks on. She is not an anti-feminist either, as she is in favour of equality and powerful women without being hostile towards men. Rather, destroying Akasha’s plan and exterminating her make Rice a feminist harmonised with humanism. By constructing Akasha – the Mother as a faulty character and an anti-hero, Rice implies her disapproval of gender roles inflicted on women and deconstructs the idealization of motherhood.

All in all, being a human is what vampires yearn for as Lestat states above, but in reality it is not ‘being human’ that is enviable. Every being admires what they do not possess within themselves; what is missing; what they lack of, which makes it even more desirable. Nevertheless, err is the human therein the wonder is not hidden in belonging to human species. It is being humanistic, the idea of being a human with a balanced set of mind and it is what is actually worthy of envy.

5. THE BASTARD OF ISTANBUL

5.1. Elif Shafak and *The Bastard of Istanbul*

In her 2006 novel, originally written in English and published in Türkiye and then translated into Turkish and published in the US, Elif Shafak presents the intertwined lives of two families framed with seemingly different and distant cultural values and backgrounds, which turn out to be a deceiving and superficial image from outside. Placing the main events specifically around the female members of these families – one of them Turkish Kazancı family and the other Armenian Tchakhmakhchian family – Shafak sheds a light to several other global topics such as multiculturalism and politics based on Turkish-Armenian relationships since the Ottoman Empire. Though these topics will also be touched on in the entire chapter, the main concern will be the condition of the female characters, their mental states, the treatment they receive and the reaction they show in return in patriarchal societies. In other words, how these women handle the current situation, what strategies they follow to survive against the *abject* label that is attached on them and the individual they become at the end of self-exploration journey will be focused on. To illustrate her points and to reverse the traditional writing techniques as well as the stereotypical female image, Shafak employs certain postmodern techniques such as following a non-linear storyline, deconstructing binaries, intertextuality, fragmented selves, multiple narrators and ambiguity as a contemporary female writer with a feminist view in her novel.

Born in Strasbourg, France in 1971, Shafak led a multicultural way of life herself. After the separation of her parents, she moved to Türkiye with her mother and completed her higher education in METU, Ankara on international relations where she also got her post-graduate degree in the same field. Then, she moved to Spain with her mother, who is a former diplomat, and had a chance to explore new cultures, languages and traditions. Later, she started living in the USA and became a faculty member in the University of Arizona and in Boston. Upon marrying, she again became a resident of Istanbul, but has her feet in the USA and the UK simultaneously. Describing herself as a “nomad” (Ermelino, 2006, p. 29), a “global soul” and a “world citizen” (Chira, 2015, p. 78), Shafak had the opportunity to observe various social practises and the statuses of women in different countries. Women, not only in the international sense but also in the national

and domestic sense inspired her and provided a vast base for her studies since she was mainly raised by her mother, who is “a westernized, rationalist person” and her grandmother who is “a very smart traditionalist, still believing in the power of fairy tales and old remedies.” (p. 77) She combined this asset with her first-hand experience as a female both in Türkiye and all across Europe and the USA.

In that sense, it would not be surprising to find out allusions of Shafak’s own life in her works scattered around in pieces intentionally or unintentionally. However, it is not that novels with autobiographical elements did not exist before Shafak in Turkish-American Literature. Selma Ekrem’s *Unveiled*, which is explicitly an autobiographical literary work, is accepted as the earliest female Turkish writer who wrote in English and addressed to the American reader. Having interestingly parallel features in her course of life to that of Shafak, Ekrem’s father was a diplomat and she was also surrounded with travel opportunities and educated people around her household and environment. Conceiving herself as “a cultural ambassador from Turkey” (Wallinger, 2016, p. 121), she interprets her individual experience “through an American lens.” (p. 125) Though she describes herself more Americanised and had the citizenship later on unlike Shafak, she also gave lectures on Near Eastern Studies as a lecturer in the USA and fought against the biased and superficial Turkish image in a far away continent as a sensible feminist writer back in the 1930s. Attempting to demolish both the cliché Oriental image that comes as a package with “silks and perfumes and tinkling music” (McCarthy, 2010, p. 267) by the East itself and “the blood-mongering, sable-brandishing Turkish warrior” (p. 270) by the Western prejudice, she reserved her place as “the first notable Turkish-American female writer” and regarded the autobiographical genre as “foundational in the formation of Turkish-American literature after the fall of Ottoman Empire” (Laschinger, 2016, p. 115). Sharing a similar world view to Elif Shafak, she represented a modern and westernised Turkish woman, but did not hold back from introducing the traditional Turkish culture. She compared the country’s “imperial past” (p. 115) with the present day’s modern America by working wisely on the two cultures.

No matter how revolutionary for the time and how valuable this start is, Ekrem’s work chiefly stayed in the boundaries of the autobiographical genre. Besides, she has been accepted as a Turkish-American writer or an American writer with a Turkish descent due to the citizenship she gained. Therefore, many of her works, like her contemporaries, have been categorised under migrant literature, as “ethnic-

bildungsroman[e]” (Walkowitz, 2006, p. 531) or as ethnic fiction that “relates the experience of first- or second-generation migrants caught in the attempt to delicately balance two cultural traditions on U.S. territory.” (p. 531) It is where Shafak primarily deviates from them since she has neither the citizenship nor was born in the USA into a Turkish family who migrated there generations ago. She does not represent the second or the third generation of such a family and is not a permanent resident of the country. To put in another way, she represents *the abject writer* whose experience is “comings and goings as well as circular mobility”. (Furlanetto, 2016, p. 182) She is still perceived as a Turkish writer writing in English as well as in her native language, but does not fit into any stable category. She is one of those unique authors who “established shared literary spaces and privileged connections between Turkey and America without drawing from the repertoire of tropes that characterize the American immigrant story.” (p. 182). The fact that her work generally has a Turkish setting, which is mostly Istanbul where she usually ends up personally, too, but also has American characters and a setting that is attached to the plot make her writing addressed to the American and the international market as well as the Turkish one. It is because America itself is a symbol of multiculturalism uniting states and nations and melting them in its pot. Therefore, Walkowitz argues that in literature we should not classify works according to the writer’s autobiography or to the place of origin. Instead, we should give priority to their potential to be classified in multiple categories or from “binational perspective” (Walkowitz, 2006, p. 532) As long as such “misfits” (p. 529) aka abject writers are somehow connected to the land of America and experience it even temporarily, they produce “permanently transnational or bicultural texts”. (Furlanetto, 2016, p. 183) For this reason, Shafak’s work is a fruitful source for the multicultural debates and studies in American Literature at the same time as transnationalism requires to be constantly re-defined with the arrival of fresh blood, which can be either from inside or outside, and in Shafak’s case, it is both. She positions Turkish American Literature in an essential place with her double sided experience providing an alternative gaze for further studies.

Simultaneously, Shafak’s part-time immigrant status becomes a rich source for the migrant literature because while there has been abundant research conducted on other ethnic groups with Islamic background in the USA so far, the Turkish side of the story is still “unknown, unrecognized and under-researched.” (Kaya, 2009, p. 295) In addition, the existing ones belong to a limited scope of genres namely travel writing or they are

simply translated works, which are relatively challenging to attribute academic interest. In that understanding, Türkiye forms an “exceptional case” in regard to its approach to religion when compared to its neighbouring Muslim countries as the notion of state precedes it unlike other Middle Eastern countries, which makes it a role model for their perception of democracy. (Mardin, 2007, n.p.) Türkiye’s being a secular country, ruled by democracy, but still following Islamic virtues as the dominant religion make the country a unique case and worth-studying on. In the early years of the Republic, after the fall of Ottoman Empire, with Atatürk’s reforms, “the Kemalists drew a neat line between the imperial experience and the nation state, constructing the Empire as an abject Other in need of being severed from the country’s Westernized, modern self – lest it should threaten its implementation.” (Furlanetto, 2016, p. 185) Shafak’s recalling of these abject connotations of Ottoman Empire in her works including *The Bastard of Istanbul* at hand as a writer, who denies any fixed literal classifications, and harmonising these with a transnational insight create a highly suitable match to examine under Kristevan perspective: a writer - neither native nor immigrant and a country - neither imperial nor Western in total with the integration of multicultural America. By so doing, Shafak does not only posit herself among the writers of canonised world literature together with Turkish and American literatures but also helps her mother-land recreate an image which is more multicultural and international as a result of reminding the imperial past when the Turkish, the Armenian, the Greek etc. lived together peacefully. The American touch works for the modern day westernised image and choosing the cosmopolite Istanbul that is an in-between city dividing Europe from Asia makes a great setting in reaching the intended aim.

Shafak explains the drive to set out for her novel in one of her interviews stating that she had the initial idea after a talk with an Armenian American feminist academic she met at a cocktail. Upon sending Shafak an email the following day, she demanded to know if she recognises the genocide as a Turk, which is a prerequisite for her to be able to keep the friendship. Shafak replied her question with a scene from one of Kurt Vonnegut’s books, who is an American writer. In the scene, a son asks his father, who had to escape from Türkiye during 1915 events, what he would like to hear from him/her if he happens to come across a Turk one day. The father states he probably wants to know if the Turks felt their absence after their leave. Stimulated by this, Shafak provided a similar sentimental answer: “After you left, our homeland became more barren. We

have become barren in many aspects – culturally, artistically, philosophically, socially and conscientiously.” Right after receiving the email, the Armenian academic came and they have become good friends since then. Shafak goes on saying that it is indeed enough for the 80% of the Armenians in the States to hear such basic sentences as “I share your grief” and “I feel your absence”. Then, she collected a lot of sources, attended conferences, entered in archives, took part in Turkish-Armenian networks, listened to the personal stories of some Armenian families who lived through 1915 and are still able to speak Turkish and paid close attention to the websites created with the aim of “raising consciousness” by the young Armenian before she finally began the writing process. (Aygündüz, 2006, n.p.) Even the background information of the novel supplied by Shafak herself shows that the seeds of *The Bastard of Istanbul* have been planted in multicultural soil.

5.2. An Overview of *The Bastard of Istanbul*

The novel starts with Zeliha, whose point of view is introduced with the reader first and who is one of the primary characters the story revolves around. She is about to visit a gynaecologist and have an abortion under rain in crowded Istanbul. However, on the operation table, she doesn't feel well and the doctor withdraws from performing the act. At that point, who the father of the baby is or whether she is married or not is unclear. She returns home which is the Kazancı household and she confesses what she intended to do earlier that day to her grandmother, her mother and her sisters with whom she lives together, who are referred as respectively: Petite-ma, Gülsüm, Banu, Cevriye and Feride. They comment on the news with rather traditional and patriarchal mind-sets, which makes it obvious that the baby is illegitimate and this is a house ruled by the Kazancı women. Later, it turns out that the four sisters actually have a brother called Mustafa, who lives in the USA because of a long believed family curse befallen on Kazancı men, which is they die early and all of a sudden generation after generation – the last one died before reaching the age of 42. With the hope of protecting this valuable young man from the curse, which unfortunately affected Gülsüm's husband Levent Kazancı, as well, the family sent Mustafa away as far as possible. He currently lives in Arizona and has not visited the family for 20 years seemingly because of the ill fate. There he marries an American woman Rose, who was previously married to an Armenian man Barsam

Tchakhmakhchian. Rose and Barsam had a daughter named Armanoush, who was born and raised in the USA and is therefore called Amy in short by Rose particularly after the divorce. She stays with her mom and Mustafa, which is a big problem for the Tchakhmakhchians - especially for the older generation namely her grandmother Shushan, who reside in San Francisco. The young girl goes back and forth between the two states, families and cultures.

As the story unfolds, the reader gets to know the story of Armanoush and Asya. Asya has been the seventh female member of the Kazancı family now as Zeliha's daughter, whose father is still a mystery to her and the rest of the family. This gives the chance to see Armanoush's and Asya's perspectives separately as young females in different cultures. Feeling exhausted of the commute between her mother's and father's side, their attempts to outweigh the other and of the unanswered questions regarding the family history, Armanoush decides to take a secret journey to Istanbul in order to find out Shushan's roots as an Armenian, who lived there for a long time till 1915. The place she chooses to accommodate is her step-father's *konak* – the Kazancı house where she is warmly welcomed and meets Asya and the two start to feel connected. Discovering that her daughter is in Istanbul, in Mustafa's house, Rose immediately plans her journey and of course takes her husband with her. This creates a rush in the family since Mustafa's arrival after 20 years is quite unexpected and meeting his American wife is even more exciting. Mustafa's favoured dishes are prepared and Gülsüm makes his utmost favourite: *ashure* (*aşure*), which is a type of dessert whose ingredients are chickpeas, beans, dried apricots, figs and pistachios in general, served in a bowl with cinnamon and pomegranate seeds on top as decoration, which all indeed compose the names of the chapters in the novel.

Although everyone is cherished upon their arrival, Zeliha, who is treated as the black sheep of the family due to her rebellious types of behaviour and clothing style, acts ignorant. The only interaction between the siblings is Zeliha's reminding Mustafa of his age that is 40 now hinting the possibly approaching death. Being already curious of Asya's biological father for years, Banu's desire to find him out accelerates in Mustafa's presence and she dares to uncover the truth via her two djinns – Mr. Bitter and Mrs. Sweet. She has a flashback thanks to Mr. Bitter and this time travel unravels the painful fact: that Asya was born out of incest. Learning about the deed, Banu, who is normally a very religious person, firmly decides on a plan and by putting potassium

cyanide in a bowl of *ashure*, visits her brother's room, who is about to go to sleep. She hands the *ashure* in Mustafa and before eating it, the latter asks his sister a question regarding whereabouts of Asya's father. Sensing that she knows the dreadful truth and that the dessert is indeed a matter of choice between life and death, he makes up his mind and eats it. Following the funeral of Mustafa, Zeliha tells Asya about the incident, which results in the feeling of wholeness and completion in the young woman's identity as well as a genuine unity with her mother after so many years.

The truth that is unleashed is not limited to the incest in the family in the novel. The arrival of Armanoush in Istanbul also sheds a light to her ancestors and family history. The dinner chats around the table and Banu's another travel in the past with Mr. Bitter lead to Shushan's background in Türkiye. It appears that during 1915 when Shushan Stamboulian's father was taken by the officials whom she never heard of again, she was deported from the country with her other family members. On the way, when she felt extremely tired and hungry, she left his brother's hand and lost him. A Turkish family that found her starving and sick took good care of her and when she recovered, they sent her to an orphanage in Istanbul where she became Shermin (Şermin) 626. There Rıza Selim Kazancı, who was an employee of Shushan's uncle Levon, saw her and fell in love with her. They wedded and Shermin 626 was now Shermin Kazancı. The couple had a son called Levent Kazancı named after Shushan's uncle. However, with the emergence of her brother Vervant, who migrated to the USA, Shermin Kazancı could not resist the dominance of her Armenian blood and fled to San Francisco with her brother leaving her husband and son behind. Returning to her roots, she got married again and had a new family in which she became Shushan Tchakhmakhchian this time and Armanoush is the youngest member as a grandchild.

Meantime in Istanbul, Rıza Selim marries Petite-Ma after Shermin. The two do not have a child of their own, but bring up Levent Kazancı together, who later bonds with Gülsüm and ends up with five children – Banu, Cevriye, Feride, Mustafa and Zeliha. Everything falls into its place and it is now clear that Asya and Armanoush are actually third generation cousins. Additionally, Zeliha and all the other siblings are Turkish-Armenian gathered in the Kazancı home in Istanbul. Overall, the unfortunate events and the death of Mustafa or his removal from the story make not only the Kazancı women but also the other female characters – namely Rose and Armanoush – even more connected and empowered in the universal base at the end of Shafak's *The Bastard of*

Istanbul. Such events are typically brought about by the abject experiences the female characters have during the course of the story. How these women handle them, whether they succeed in doing so and the techniques Shafak use to feature the *abject* will be discussed in detail below.

5.3. Unveiling the Abject: Navigating Identity and Social Boundaries in *The Bastard of Istanbul*

The female abject is presented in the plot through the narrations of Zeliha, Asya, Armanoush and Rose in the broad picture, but is not limited to them because the reader is also acquainted with the stories of Shushan, the other Kazancı sisters and their mother Gülsüm in an indirect way in *The Bastard of Istanbul*. As a contemporary female writer, this is obviously a conscious choice by Shafak since the voice of the female had commonly been represented by the male so far while the female writers were echoing the discourse of the male or reciting what had already been said in a language that did not even belong to them. (Güven Kılıçarslan, 2019, p. 1514) The male discourse was canonised and accepted as the norm in Türkiye as it was the case in the majority of the countries around the world, then. The inclusion of various viewpoints in literary works specifically the female ones enabled the writers to put the male dominated discourse aside gradually and had a chance to give priority to other aspects of the art of writing such as the content, the context and the female voice. Furthermore, they had the opportunity to work on their creativity while reflecting their true image transparently and sincerely to the reader. The attempt to change the settled literary traditions was a rough and long journey, but definitely not a boring one as it was an inward journey at the same time.

In addition to that, the involvement of feminism in the literary criticism proved that as well as the personal experience and the feelings of the writer, the social, historical and ideological elements that build the person are closely interrelated. For this reason, creation of an environment that offers free speech to the female and equally respected conditions as the male increase productivity and multivocality. Depriving the women from any of these rights and trying to dissolve any one the elements that she consists of result in adversity. When that is the case, it is quite natural for the drastic changes taking place in a society to have an impact on the literary community. In the late 90s, Turkish

society witnessed such a change at the end of a coup in 1980 and onwards and the escalating industrialisation influenced the life styles of many families, which meant a constant move from the rural areas to city centres. These encouraged individuals at every segment to take part in social life actively, of which women was a part and flamed the desire to make their opinions to be heard. That is why, according to Güven Kılıçarslan, “Turkish literature was surrounded by women writers in this period more than ever before and this term became, as the phrase goes “the age of women’s literature” for Turkish literature especially in novels.” (p. 1515) Women produced their literary works especially in the contemporary literature to which the novel in question here also belongs and have contributed to multidisciplinary and comparative studies.

In Shafak’s novel, the reader accompanies the women characters when they are on their way to form their chosen identities. This is not a notion that happens miraculously and speedily since they need to be fragmented and distanced from the centre first, have a metamorphosis after the traumatic experiences and then come back to the centre, which is the self and the eventual destination, in a completed and illuminated form. The journey is not linear; instead, it requires one to move back and forth, in a circle or in zigzags giving the feeling of walking in a maze. In order to find the right direction in it, the characters have to contact ‘the other’, which is the interaction between Asya and Armanoush, who are ‘the other’ to each other, or the interaction of Zeliha as ‘the other’ in the family with the rest of the sisters. Therefore, Shafak’s understanding of the idea of the maze is not a common one, which invites the characters to return to the starting point every time they fail and refuse to learn the lesson. It offers various ways out rather than offering only one. It seems for Shafak the key for the resolution of conflict that is the conflict between the abject and the mainstream characters is communication, which can be provided through balanced or re-set dynamics. She attributes a different strategy to her female characters to explore their own way of communication to solve the conflicts and finding the customised way out of the maze for themselves.

Among the Kazancı women, Zeliha would be a decent starting point as the novel also starts with her side of the story. She is the youngest of all the siblings and like the rest of them she has curly black hair, the colour of which she never changed unlike the other sisters. As for her eyes, they are “jade green, normally wide open, and filled with fiery intelligence, squinted into two lines of untainted indifference inherent only to three

groups of people: the hopelessly naïve, the hopelessly withdrawn, and the hopelessly full of hope.” (Shafak, 2015, p. 3) Even the description of her eyes from the earliest pages hints that she hosts a paradox within herself involving oppositions. She holds a charming aura that is distinguishable from a distance, which makes her a tempting target for the male gaze. Being taller than the average Turkish woman, whatever she wears attracts attention: “from donning miniskirts of glaring colors, tight-fitting blouses that played her ample breasts, satiny nylon stockings, and yes, those towering high heels.” (pp. 3-4) She manages to deter all the uncomfortable eyes that “stared at her body with hunger” (p. 3) and locked especially on her piercing that she is very proud of wearing because she pierced her nose on her own. When this marginal looking woman starts speaking, it does not make any difference in speech. The language she uses and the fearless expression on her face are other factors that separate her from the other typical women in this patriarchal society let alone her own sisters in the domestic order. She uses “such foul language so unreservedly, vociferously, and knowledgably; thus, whenever she started swearing, she kept going as if to compensate for all the rest.” (p. 4) As the description goes, she does not only stand strong for herself, but she has the power to represent all the other women out there at the same time. The image she displays outside is as courageous as a male, which indeed disturbs men as it is not what they are accustomed to and she is perceived as a threat to their manliness.

Zeliha is not a fan of emotions identified with her gender, either: “(...) among the things included in Zeliha’s chaotic universe, there might be dead birds, but certainly not tenderness and despondency.” (p. 7) Furthermore, she resists crying as “she promised herself she would never become one of those weepy women and that whenever she needed to shed tears, she would do it alone.” (p. 309) She is in need of hiding her soft spots and does not want anyone to take advantage of such sentimental moments. When it comes to what she does for a living, she runs a tattoo shop, so it is no surprise that her body is decorated with tattoos, as well. What is surprising is that this rebellious woman who has her economic freedom still resides in the family home that is full of other women who hold completely different world views from hers. When she has to cancel the abortion at the beginning of the book, on her way home, she drops by a store and buys some porcelain tea cups that are her weakness. This actually gives an idea regarding the fragility in herself and her vulnerable soul. She also buys the cinnamon that the sisters pre-ordered to put on a traditional Turkish dessert *sütlaç* and even after

such a painful experience, she goes back to Kazancı home, to her sisters instead of spending some time alone in isolation. All these background narrations are put carefully by Shafak to situate Zeliha in a place somewhere between the traditional and modern. She is in a state in between the two binaries and this raises the question whether she travels on these edges to find something that she desperately needs or whether she tries to cover some incidents as she covers her body with tattoos and hides her fragile self with an extremely feminine look assisted by a masculine attitude. As her story is improved and the childhood memories are released, the questions answer themselves. What Zeliha does is activating her defence mechanism against the traumas she had when she was young. To protect herself from further damage and injuries, she would like to appear tough, strong and independent outside.

Born as the fifth child into a family where the father hysterically prayed for a male child made her familiar with the feeling of a “lack” too early. After three girls in sequence, Levent Kazancı finally had a son Mustafa as his fourth child and his wish is fulfilled. However, when they are informed with the fifth pregnancy, it was already not something desired, but accepted with the hope that chances are it might also be a son. Zeliha’s arrival at the family as a daughter caused her to be surrounded with double segregation: The unwanted child and it is again a female one after being gifted with Mustafa. Since she cannot bear the surname and continue the lineage sharing the same fate as the older sisters, Zeliha was met as an “unwelcome visitor”, “an accidental prelude in their parents’ sex life” and felt like “an introduction” (p. 31). She was deprived of the fatherly love and motherly affection from the very beginning, which means she was not born in the way she acts at the moment. This masculine mask she wears is to compensate for what she lacks that is the male organ or the male gender in general. The issue is connected to Freud’s Oedipal complex. Normally, when the child is inclined to the mother after being rejected by the father who makes it clear that the female child cannot create a sexual bond with or produce a child together, the resolution is provided as the female child accepts the secondary position imposed upon her by the patriarchal rules. However, in Zeliha’s situation, Gülsüm denies giving the parental love for her daughters in the way they deserve and supports the ‘preface’ position they hold in the family unit. This is mainly because Gülsüm has not seen the love she is supposed to receive from her husband as Levent Kazancı was an abundant son by his mother who does not know how to give love, support or affection for his beloveds. For this reason,

there exists children who have struggles in getting over the Oedipus complex, which becomes an obstacle for them for the rest of their lives affecting the relationships they form with others. As an addition to Freud's definition, in Kristevan psychoanalysis, Zeliha and her sisters' condition refer to the imbalance in the family triangle. Unlike Lacan, whom she was inspired from and based her theory on, Kristeva does not put the father in the symbolic position where he is the decision maker in the patriarchal order with his 'rule of the father'; instead, he is the loyal supporter of the mother and leads the child to transfer from the semiotic to the symbolic in the smoothest way possible. "Without him the holy brat would probably have no sense of the sacred; a blank subject, (...) discomfited, (...) fortified by abjection, (...)" (Kristeva, 1982, p. 6) After all, "in the misfire of identification with the mother as well as with the father, how else are they to be maintained in the Other?" (p. 54) As a result, the person develops a defence mechanism resisting to being othered, ignored and neglected. Zeliha's strategy is to be visible with her style and physical appearance. She believes that if her voice is unheard both in and out of the family, she can make herself visible in some other ways so that people pay attention to what she says and care about her. The unity and standing by she expects to get from her mother disappoints her because Gülsüm, who "might have been Ivan the Terrible in another life" (Shafak, 2015, p. 23) has already become a product of the symbolic order. She constantly questions Zeliha regarding where or with whom she spends time till she comes home and criticizes her manners as well as her dressing style, which is her way of expressing herself in reality.

Failing to identify with any of the parents and to form intimate connections with them drive Zeliha to fill this gap with other interests to hold on to such as protesting against the general system of the society, which is the core of her unhappiness at home or on to her appearance and profession. She seeks the true identity that belongs to her and that she is willing to represent outside of the Kazanci borders. Since "the advent of one's own identity demands a law that mutilates, whereas *jouissance* demands an *abjection* from which identity becomes absent" (Kristeva, 1982, p. 54), she feels void and concludes that if the available authority does not love her and if she doesn't have anyone by her side particularly from her gender, she can be the authority itself. This thought gets stronger with the death of the father as she believes that the authority will also be absent with the absence of Levent Kazancı, who never refrained himself from using his belt on his children to maintain the discipline at home. When she visits his

grave, she intends to have a confrontation and ask several questions to her father that still entrap her mind: “Why did he always have to be so harsh and unloving towards his own flesh and blood?” (Shafak, 2015, p. 308) She also wanted to learn “if he had any idea how much his ghost still haunted them—to this day (...)” (p. 308) They still cautiously followed the rules pre-set in the house such as talking quietly not to disturb him with their existence.

What Zeliha did not take into consideration when she plans to become the authority figure is that authority is descended from father to son in patriarchy, so there is a leader of the house – Mustafa with whom she needs to challenge in order to dethrone. Only someone from the opposite gender could be her rival because the weeping women as she calls are not from her league. No one in the house, but Zeliha interrogates his brother, provokes and triggers him brutally. She calls him names such as being a “jerk” (p. 311), “stupid” (p. 314), “too spoiled” (p. 315) and “a precious phallus” (p. 315). Mustafa’s response was a memorised and coded one: “Now that Dad is dead, (...) I am in charge of this family.” (p. 315) While he accuses her of dressing like a whore and disgracing the family reputation (pp. 314-315), Zeliha states clearly: “Who the hell do you think you are? Father is dead and I am not gonna let you replace him like that.” (p. 314) The tension is high between the two and the tone of their argument is extremely severe and aggressive, which later results in the physical aggression – attempt to slap and then rape.

Zeliha’s challenging and questioning gender boundaries with her use of language is an important sign for her resistance against being abjected and a crucial step in achieving her own self because according to Kristeva, “subject is actualized when language is used.” (NejadMohammad, Soufiani, and Notash, 2017, p. 115) When language is not used to create a firm bond between the mother and the child, which indeed starts to be composed in *Chora* before enunciation referring to the semiotic and to the mother, one party or both of the parties are othered and healthy communication becomes almost impossible in the future as it is the case for Zeliha and Gülsüm. *Chora* is associated with “existence, (...) feelings (...) More specifically, it is within the mother-child relational space”. (p. 115) On condition that this connection is not provided initially, the subject is directed to use the language she has never got to use for her behalf towards the authority figures or institutions to dispute them. S/he perceives such concepts as the base of the disagreement between the inter relationships of the self with

the family and the society and one takes oneself into defence position against them or desires to defeat them announcing the subject's dominance as an independent self over the traditionally formulated notions in particularly patriarchal societies. That's why, in psychoanalysis, Kristeva urges to "pay close attention to the meaning of crises of the poets and writers and those of subject and structure." (p. 115) For her, *significance* means constant, extensive, absolute and endless variations of birth when the subject is in contact with institutions on the language basis proving that they can be challenged in many ways. (Kristeva, 1974, p. 15)

Zeliha does not boycott the gender boundaries merely through language or clothing. She also ejects the forced teachings of the symbolic order that are injected into her by giving birth to Asya, which is a form of "externalization of the internalized experience." (Öğüt Yazıcıoğlu, 2011, p. 67) In a way, her body turns into her voice and she uses it as a canvas to add some colour to her darkened past. She shows that no matter how much she is tried to be silenced, she matters in this world and even though her mouth is unable to do so at times, her body can speak for her behalf in absentia. For the sake of keeping her independent image at home, she may have stayed silent after her brother's act, but she has actually spoken and given her answer through her body by breeding Asya and as long as she exists, Zeliha's answer will always hit Mustafa. She may have enclosed herself after the piercing act, but her answer is pierced on her nose with a ring shouting that 'you may harm my body, but it doesn't hurt!'. She may have been impure in the eyes of the society, but it is not dirt – her tattoos find their tongue just like her fashion: 'What you see is not impurity, it is art. The experience might be pitch black, but my soul has still its colours and it shines!'. She tries to bury the past and focus on the present she builds for herself by herself. It is her form of clinging to life, dealing with the trauma and forming her identity as a separate self. "This paradoxical tendency to suppress the past through re-invocation of it" (p. 66) is her method of finding her way out in the maze, which increases her creativity as a brave female adult. She indeed instructs her formula when she introduces a special collection of tattoos that she has designed to get rid of the pain of ex-lovers. Identifying with the ex-pain caused by not a lover, but someone she used to know well, she describes the process when she performs her profession on one of her customers. She picks the form of animal that the ex-lover looks like the most and goes on narrating:

To strengthen vis-à-vis your antagonist you had to accept, welcome, and then transform it. The ex-love was interiorized—*injected into* the body, and yet at the same time exteriorized—left *outside* the skin. Once the ex-lover was located in this threshold between the inside and outside, and deftly transformed into an animal, the power structure between the dumped and the dumper changed. (Shafak, 2015, p. 73)

By putting Mustafa in the threshold, not belonging to anywhere and in an ambiguous position, she abjects and excludes him from her life or; in other words, externalizes him just as he has done the same to her for years together with the parents and the patriarchal view of the society. She kills him in her mind, which is a form of “amnesia” (Ermelino, 2006, p. 29), as Shafak calls, by turning a blind eye to his existence, dumping and devaluing him. Ironically enough, when Mustafa is dead at the end of the novel, being washed and clothed in white cerement, he appears to be pure and innocent outside; however, it was his mind, soul and inside that were impure. With that image, as her character does, Shafak also blurs the lines regarding Zeliha’s past and family background first, then presents the deeply rooted traditional views and the perception of Zeliha in community with the use of binaries such as man vs woman (male vs female), traditional vs modern and appearance vs reality. Then, when the story is stretched out, she deconstructs these binaries with Zeliha’s challenge of the gender codes and finally, she re-formulates or re-constructs them as a contemporary female author. Contrary to the male who makes the decision and criticism, the female writer attempts to understand and make the reader empathise with her characters by mirroring the gap between what is really happening and what is needed to be happening ideally. (Süt Güngör, 2015, p. 68) This shows that even though Zeliha faces such harsh criticism and gets aggressive as an outcome to protect herself intuitively, what she really wants is to be understood and tolerated.

If what is already existing in society either in human form or as incidents is disregarded on purpose and scolded, it is not avoided or got rid of completely. In fact, it comes back in a stronger and more resilient form. This is an action and reaction situation and what is suppressed may appear suddenly and impulsively in life. When such women as Zeliha is perceived as deal-breakers in societies, they are categorised as ‘the other’ and easily announced as ‘the enemy’ because of the fact that they are ‘nothing’, so can be ‘everything’, which is creepy and threatening. (Özçalık, 2008, p. 1) One of the most distinguishing features of the other is its ability to break the order, so putting the blame on that group for the disorder in society becomes an attractive act of psychological violence since it relieves the burden of conscience and becomes a unifying force for the

majority. It is a known fact that the existence of an outside enemy works well in mingling the dominant group and make them hold onto each other even more, which is the defence mechanism of the society this time. (Schnapper, 2005, p. 137) The typical individual, preferably a male one, of a patriarchal society takes people who match with the prejudice in his mind and spares them while he others and isolates the ones that do not. (p. 134) This labelling and categorising make the unknown known and safer for them to keep the order in community, lead the daily life and learn about the 'objects' and experiences. (p. 154), which is how these values pass from generation to generation and how the male child is welcomed in the symbolic. However, according to Kristeva, the other resides inside us, not outside us and when we accept the other aka the stranger in us, we become acquainted not only with our own self but also with various selves, which lies at the base of multiculturalism and universality.

In short, the isolation of the self is useful in terms of achieving self-exploration and individuality on the personal level; however, when it occurs on the societal level imposed on the self by an outer force, it drives the individual into alienation and a fragmented self because it is accompanied by prejudice and generalisation of the masses, which makes it very difficult for the notorious person to be reintegrated into society after such a devaluation process. (Özçelik, 2008, p. 1) Referring to minorities on the edges by using holistic or generalising vocabulary reduces them into prototypes that do not possess any qualities. The peculiar nuances and irregularities, which make them who they are, are completely denied and exceptions are rejected. In the eyes of the patriarchy, the other is homogenous – a vast, dry and infertile soil without any flowers on - a desert. Imagining or acknowledging the possibility of heterogeneity would be an oasis.

Zeliha's heterogeneity as the abjected other is presented through the multiple identities she has, which make her feel fragmented commuting between them at times. First and foremost, she is a female, a woman, but she is also a mother who has never been called so until now. That is why, she is Auntie Zeliha for her daughter Asya. At the same time, she is a daughter herself to her parents and a sister to her siblings. Simultaneously, she is a desire for Mustafa, but a lover for Aram. A rebel in the family, an outcast tattoo maker – the other in society. As a representative of the more juvenile era when compared to the other women around her, she differentiates herself from the other sisters specifically through these multiple and ambiguous identities that come to being as a result of her interaction with the world at different levels. She spends the most

time outside or among the sisters, so involves in various forms of communication with several layers of the society, which all make her gain more experience and produce identities. She is the proof that identity either in terms of gender or of social relations, is “neither fixed nor singular” and shows a “constantly changing relational multiplicity” (Brah, 1996, p. 123) She diverges from the collective attitude and the criteria of social institutions that aim at putting her in fixed structures and drawing a sharp line between the so-called safe zones and the characters they classify as abject. She places a piece of herself in every one of her identity and takes part in numerous arenas. Even in one individual, there may be so many differences and aspects that belong to the same person, so the varieties in a society are also a part of it, which makes a harmony of the opposites and a multicultural atmosphere. It demonstrates that the other is indeed not a complete stranger because in the end it connects to the same root and whole.

Being in line with that view, Asya, who comes from the same root as Zeliha, cannot differ from her in dramatic ways and ends up coming to terms with her. No matter how much she tries to diverge from Zeliha’s way in the maze of life, her path crosses with that of her mother and in the end, she reconciles with her. Following her mother’s fate, Asya starts life behind her peers because of the social codes and the dilemma within her own self. Being the ‘bastard’ of Istanbul, she is a bastard at home in the first place. Her abjection also starts in domestic borders although she is not aware of that in her childhood. Though her father is unknown to everyone in the household, the title she holds in the guidebook of society is known very well. However, it is only the representative of the traditional – Gülsüm, who utters the word ‘bastard’ in the novel. Upon a moment of frowning against Asya’s spoiled manners, Gülsüm cannot hold her tongue and calls her such (Shafak, 2015, p. 61). Despite that, Asya’s realisation of the meaning of the word arrives a year later:

Asya didn’t learn the meaning of the word until one year later, sometime so close to her ninth birthday, when she was called a bastard by a kid at school. Then, at the age of then, she discovered that unlike all the other girls in her classroom, she had no male role model in her household. It would take her another three years to comprehend that this could have a lasting effect on her personality. On her fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth birthdays, she uncovered respectively three other truths about her life: the other families weren’t like hers and some families could be *normal*; that in her ancestry there were too many women and too many secrets about men who disappeared too early and too peculiarly; and that no matter how hard she strived, she was never going to be a beautiful woman. (p. 62)

Again the absence of the father figure makes its impact visible on a young girl’s life. Unlike Zeliha’s case, the father figure is not only mentally but also physically absent

this time and unlike her mother, she has not even had a chance to face Oedipus complex that she could challenge and overcome to step into a healthy female adult life. She does not have to see her mother as a rival to access the father's love since there is actually no 'mother' figure, either. Zeliha is physically there in the role of the mother, but in Asya's mentality, she is Auntie Zeliha, so it is quite natural for her to pass through a similar experience to her mother's. The semiotic connection that is created in the womb is cut when she keeps the communication at minimum with her mother let alone calling her as 'mother'. Moreover, the semiotic is not united with the father's balancing power; instead, she is united with the destructive power of the symbolic that is coded archetypically and finds its echoes through her peers in class. It is apparent that abjection continues to be present in this young female's life outside the Kazancı house at the social level.

It does not take her long to make out that something is not normal around her and people direct her to believe that it is because she is not 'normal', either. Something is abnormal, unusual, and abject about her inside and outside – once a bastard always a bastard, - at home or outside home. When the lack of father and an intimate connection with the mother are linked to the lack of beauty, Asya seeks love outside and tries to compensate for it with connections to people who are at her parents' age. The attraction, style, confidence and independence of her mother are indeed factors of her secret jealousy and admiration towards Zeliha that keeps her away and she is clever enough to sense that:

(...) I was born a bastard, (...) I don't even know who my father is. I never ask, they never tell. Sometimes when my mother looks at me I think she sees him in my face but never says a word. We all pretend there is no such thing as *father*. Instead there is only *Father*, with a capital F. when you have Allah up there in the sky to look after you, who needs a father? Aren't we all His children? Not that my mother buys that crap. I tell you she is more cynical than any woman I've ever known. And that is precisely where the problem is. My mom and I, we are so alike and yet so distant. (p. 146)

She struggles to get over the rivalry with her mother and to identify with her because of the lack of a father who will provide the resolution by banning incest and pushing her away. Nevertheless, as she expresses, she is so alike to Zeliha because just as her keeping silent against Mustafa's rape, Asya keeps silent to being left fatherless. Zeliha does not inform the family members about the deed for the sake of not losing her independent position at home and they never ask who the father is. Similarly, Asya does not share how she feels against this unfair act toward her, which is being bound to live

with an army of females and being denied the truth. She also never asks because she enjoys her life outside at Café Kundera where she secretly goes and communicates with older people instead of Zeliha. It may be her way of escaping the truth that could possibly injure her, as well. It is also easier for her not to face her mother about the issue since it may lead to reconciliation between them and it means she has to abandon the Kundera days, which will make her spend more time with the Kazancı women at home.

Being parallel to her mother, Asya develops her personal strategy to deal with the hurting feeling of abjection. She does not reflect it to her style like her mother, but as she does, she prefers to use her body that is the physical attraction – her youth to postpone the feeling and to express herself. To compensate for the lack of father's love and existence, she has an affair with the old married Dipsomaniac Cartoonist with whom she hangs out at Café Kundera. This relationship is mainly at the physical level. In a way, she resists the cultural taboos and as a single young female, she would like to show that she can satisfy her desire and have a sexual experience. In one of their meetings, the cartoonist tells her after they have an intercourse:

You have such a dark side, Asya. (...) Because it doesn't show on your sweet face, it's hard to tell at first glance. But it is there. You have a bottomless potential for demolition. (...) When you drink you drink to the extremes, when you criticize you bulldoze, when you get down you sink and hit the bottom. I honestly don't know how to approach you. You are so full of rage, baby (...). (p. 146) (...) Despite all that poison that you harbour inside, and perhaps because of it, you are in some odd way so special and such a kindred soul. And I love you. (p. 150)

Here Shafak once again reverts the culturally constructed taboos by getting use of binaries. Though Asya, in appearance, displays a sweet face, she has a wild bold soul inside that gives an old and experienced male chills and creeps. He goes on even further and confesses it, which is normally very unordinary in a male dominated society. Appearance vs. reality and male vs. female binaries are deconstructed and handled from the other direction by Shafak to make the reader gain awareness and broaden the perspective. Asya is attributed abject characteristics by the cartoonist such as having a 'potential for demolition' and 'rage', which are typical phrases to label a female as the dangerous enemy. Although he is scared of her potential to destroy him, he is fascinated by her game changer behaviour and feels admiration towards Asya because abject, according to Kristeva, "beseeches, worries, and fascinates desire, which, nevertheless, does not let itself be seduced." (Kristeva, 1982, p. 1) As the description goes, Asya is not the object of desire as the abject is not "an ob-ject facing me"; it has only one feature

of an object that is “being opposed to I” (p. 1) and she does not let herself be used and seduced by the cartoonist. Upon his question as to when to meet again in his house, she says:

You mean *when are we meeting here in my cathouse?* (...) Because as we both know too well, this is not your home! Home is where your wife of so many years is, whereas this place is your secret cathouse where you can imbibe and get laid without your wife knowing a thing. This is where you screw your *chicks*. The younger, the shallower, the tipsier, the better! (Shafak, 2015, p. 145)

The fearless language she uses here like her mother that is the opposite of the traditionally suitable one for ladies highlights her rebel nature. Also, the fact that she is well aware of the other women that visit the same place, that she is not the only one and that she knows what he looks for in young girls - shallowness, youth and tipsiness to feed his appetite more easily - highlights that what she does with the cartoonist is her choice and she does not have any restrictions or boundaries as a young single woman, but what he does as a married man with limitations is dishonesty and unfaithfulness. Thus, she is not the subject of the real guilt here just as she is not accepted as an individual subject outside as a woman, especially as an abject woman, so she is “neither subject nor object” (Kristeva, 1982, p. 1) Shafak illustrates that what is abjected can in fact be more virtuous, realistic and honest whereas what seems socially normal and superior can be the opposite and women cannot be identified with their physical appearance or sexual choices. To Kristeva, “what is abject is not my correlative, which, proving me with someone or something else as support, would allow me to be more or less detached and autonomous.” (p. 1) Having such qualities as “detached” and “autonomous” herself, Asya provides the same qualities for the cartoonist, but also makes the truth visible and enables space for self-criticism for the cartoonist and general criticism for the views of the society. What seems negative turns out to be positive, which is Shafak’s way of re-stabilizing and constructing the binaries thanks to the inclusion of abject in her novel.

It is this realism and transparency of Asya that makes her separate from the other older generation of Kazancı women and gives her courage to mirror what she sees without softening or decorating it. It is a skill inherited by her mother. Along with Zeliha, she is the only woman in the house who could analyse and criticise the unnecessary devotion to Mustafa and his ignorance and disinterest in response. She announces directly:

We need to face the truth! (...) All these years you have all doted on Uncle Mustafa as the one and only precious son of this family, and the instant he flew from the nest, he forgot about you. Isn't it obvious that the man doesn't give a hoot about his family? Why should he mean anything for us, then? (Shafak, 2015, p. 130)

The phrase “flying from the nest” is usually associated with women as the birds are mostly identified with the female and the nest refers to home, so the female either flies to get some food to feed the little ones or flies away to find a mate and leaves the family home as in Mustafa's case. The choice of language here is a deliberate one by Asya to make Mustafa lose his significance and to underrate him since loading a male with domestic values is uncommon and unacceptable in patriarchal systems. She questions the gender codes and transverses them. This also shows that as a third generation victim of the Oedipus complex, she does not favour women and the characteristics associated with them, so she uses such language to despise and belittle Mustafa. “She did not like women, which would have been easier to deal with had she not been one of them. Whenever she met a new woman she did one of two things: either waited to see when she would hate her or hated her right away.” (p. 85) As seen here, in addition to replacing the father figure with older males and to having sexual relationships with them bravely, she turns to the strategy of othering women with certain linguistic signifiers as a reaction to the absence of a family triangle and close parental ties in spite of being a female herself. Devaluing and scorning Mustafa as the only interacted male in the novel and removing him from the story before it comes to an end stresses the failure of Oedipal mechanism in Asya and Zeliha.

As the story is narrated by omniscient point of view and there is no identity of this objective narrator, it is a product of a meta narrator leaking to the text through its subconscious. (Yivli, 2013, p. 2643) Shafak's consulting to meta narration is her technique to enlighten the socially constructed taboos resulted from the male dominance and encoded gender roles and their influence on the female in patriarchies. She delivers the message through inductive reasoning in an oblique way since as a contemporary female writer, she would like her readers to have their own path in the maze of reading experience just like her characters do. As an addition to removal of Mustafa, unlike the Turkish title of the novel *Baba ve Piç* literally meaning *Father and Bastard*, Shafak removes the father figure from the English title of the novel by keeping the bastard only. It is a hint that as a female, Asya actually does not need a male to construct her identity. It is a crossed out and vanished figure. Asya's own self and the support of the other

female figures around are enough to build her identity, which is indeed realised through her mom and Armanoush later in the course of the novel thanks to the reconciliation with the mother after the revelation of the father and to the friendship that two young females have broadening their perspectives. In that way, Shafak subverts the traditionally written stories which have a father, a mother and a child triangle and nominate the spokesperson as the male figure in the family – either the father or the male child – to be their representative. She points out that as the characteristics attributed to gender are not stable, so does the family unit. There is no ideal form of structures in societies and they can be made flexible as long as they work for the well-being of the individual without harming anyone or limiting anyone else's right and freedom. For Shafak, the key to achieve such balance and peace in societies is communication and it is made available through female communication by silencing the dominant and oppressive male as it was what is needed to be changed to perform the revolution.

Being a rebel niece, an aggressive daughter or a brave lover are not the only identities that Asya holds in the novel. She does not merely have traits that make her seem to be on the edges, but also in-between. She is stuck between the traditional and the modern, being in isolation and in community and in the past and present until a hand of a sister comes and takes her from the hole. Till that time, she believed that she was in need of choosing a side, but thanks to Armanoush, she feels completed and sees that she is the way she is with her hybrid characteristics. She has a marginal relationship, but is not marginal enough to be able to tell this to her family, she is always in a community among intellectuals at Café Kundera, but feels alone most of the time, she is among family members, but likes to spend most of her time in her room and she has a past that bears her a label, but she does not even know about it and her present is stuck to it. She asserts: "All I want is to be free and to be myself and all that shit.... If only I could be left on my own..." (Shafak, 2015, p. 146) She feels she is consumed by the current system and the choices it offers to her; that is why, she wants to stand detached and still. For her, the past is "nothing but a shackle we need to get rid of. Such an excruciating burden." (p. 148) "If only I could have no past – you know, if only I could be a nobody, start from point zero and just remain there forever. As light as a feather. No family, no memories and all that shit...." (p. 148) At that point, she is not aware of the fact that what she tries to get rid of is a part of herself and will lead her to wholeness. She does not belong to anywhere like a rootless wild flower, but coming to terms with the past,

accepting it as it is instead of constantly criticising and fighting with it and of judging and blaming the family members for it are the solutions of this deadlock. It is an ongoing struggle till the arrival of Armanoush because even her name Asya, which means Asia, connotes the roots. She lives in Istanbul – a city that connects Asia to Europe like a bridge. It does not consist of Asia solely and shows the qualities of both traditional Asia and modern Europe. Since she is obsessed with finding definite roots or having no roots, it takes longer for Asya to realise that the questions she asks bear the answer itself. Even her name is a part of the answer she looks for, which highlights that she should stop ignoring the past and turning to the future. Rather, she should take the past and the present as a whole instead of questioning them all the time and trying to fit herself to one. Istanbul is a unique city because of having two opposing sides that complete each other. It may be in-between, but is not in search of identities unlike Asya. She fluctuates between her modern soul and her traditional name until she feels complete with Armanoush, who becomes Europe to her Asia, and they unite like Istanbul – in Istanbul.

As her name suggests, Armanoush is the third generation Tchakhmakhchian with Armenian origins. Being Armenian is her true identity according to her father's side and unlike Asya, who wishes to escape from the past - from Asia to be rootless, Armanoush desires to dig deep into her past, which is the main reason why she suddenly finds herself in Istanbul. Having her grandmother's fate, she is surrounded with multiple names aka identities to describe who she is: Armanoush that is the choice of the Tchakhmakhchians, Amy that is the mother's preference to emphasise her American genes and Madame Exiled Soul that is the nickname she has chosen for herself to articulate her feelings at the online meeting spot of Armenians in the diaspora - Café Constantinopolis. While Asya is searching for her identity, Armanoush is mostly having an identity crisis in regard to which one to choose at which situation. She feels the urge to constantly arrange herself to fit in to the changing conditions in order to be accepted. She types in the chatroom:

The Janissary's Paradox is being torn between two clashing states of existence. On the one hand, the remnants of the past pile up – a womb of tenderness and sorrow, a sense of injustice and discrimination. On the other hand glimmers the promised future – a shelter decorated with the trimmings and trappings of success, a sense of safety like you have never had before, the comfort of joining the majority and finally being deemed normal. (...) I think I can relate to the Janissary's Paradox. As the only child of resentfully divorced parents coming from different cultural backgrounds, (...) Being the only daughter of an Armenian father, he himself a child of survivors, and of a mother from Elizabethtown, Kentucky, I do know how it feels to be torn between opposite sides, unable to fully belong anywhere, constantly fluctuating between the two states of existence. (p. 116)

In this passage, Armanoush's using the term the 'Janissary's Paradox' referring to the Ottoman Empire to transmit her feelings proves her clinginess to the idea of roots and that she is inseparable from her Ottoman ancestry although she is not informed about it back then. Her collective consciousness plays a game to her here and while she is intending to have a journey to her past, it is already there with her. She is the abject in-between –between the past and present causing her to miss the joy of the present and have adaptation problems while her mind resides in the past. She assumes that belonging to the majority will reward her with safety and with being 'normal' as she feels insecure because of the alienation she is exposed to in each group she interacts with. However, she has to have a real journey as well as a spiritual one to explore that having multiple identities and a hybrid culture are also normal and make her precious. It is this condition of hers that leads her to find her foil character Asya, a sister and a cousin in Istanbul. In the continuation of her text, she writes in the chatroom:

You guys were all born into the Armenian community and never had to prove you were one of them. Whereas I have been stuck on this threshold since the day I was born, constantly fluctuating between a proud but traumatized Armenian family and a hysterically anti-Armenian mom. For me to be able to become an Armenian American the way you guys are, I need to find my Armenianness first. If this requires a voyage into the past, so be it, I am going to do that, no matter what the Turks say or do. (p. 119)

She depicts this situation as being 'on the threshold' meaning if she takes a step forward, she is inside of one side and if she takes a step backwards, she is outside and vice versa. She does not comfortably write about the superiority of Armenian culture in the chat room because she is half American at the same time and she even lives with a Turkish stepfather. She cannot agree to be a total American, either as even her name is in Armenian. She harbours both the traditional and modern like Asya and also the national and multicultural. She feels that she has to sacrifice one part of herself for either party to prove that they belong to them, so she cannot fully identify with the people who are in the chatroom and are Armenian from both parents, either. Hers is an ambiguous and exceptional situation. According to Kristeva, "the mainspring of the tragedy lies in that ambiguity, prohibition and ideal are joined in a single character in order to signify that the speaking being has no space of his own but stands on a fragile threshold as if stranded on account of an impossible demarcation." (Kristeva, 1982, pp. 84-85) Armanoush would like to recover from this tragedy of ambiguity by facing the truth thanks to her Istanbul journey. On the contrary to Asya, she does not want to forget, but remember the past. Both girls believe that the other side of the threshold is the right

direction from their view. The abject situation and being abjected by the social groups they spend time with bring about the positive result of self-exploration and reconciliation with the multiple identities as well as with the families. Otherwise, she would not visit Istanbul and meet her other half.

Armanoush's chat with her fellows in the online room also indicates a typical quality of the abject which is it holds people together. The group's abjection and dislike of the Turks as a reaction to the deportation are what make them stay close to one another. Nonetheless, it is ironic that the name they pick to define their café is Constantinople; in other words, Istanbul. What they stand aloof is buried within themselves and contributes to their current existence. The same applies to the community in Café Kundera, where the theme that puts the literary group together is mainly nationalism. When Armanoush arrives at the place as an Armenian guest of Asya and start to talk about 1915 events, they have a quarrel which even turns into a fight within the group excluding Armanoush, who is humorously supposed to be the subject of interest. The point is that 'the other' or the abject is what helps us define ourselves. For this reason, to provide balance and reunification, Shafak places the yings to yangs in the opposite directions: Armanoush arrives at Café Kundera and Asya shows up at Café Constantiople as the abject other, who create chaos and disorder at first, but then, enable resolution thanks to opening up space for communication. As the omniscient narrator, Shafak reflects what is happening like a camera from both parties' perspectives and leave the interpretation to the reader by not taking sides as the author.

Armanoush's strategy to overcome her inside conflict is communication, too being in line with Zeliha and Asya; however, hers differ from them in terms of form. While the former are in favour of using their body, swear words or harsh criticism, the latter is calmer in personality and her traditional side outweighs mostly. She finds her way of communication through writing. Her pen is stronger than her mouth as it finds expression in the chatroom. Another outlet of Armanoush is reading. Rather than diving into fashion or dating like her peers, she prefers to dive into the world of her novels and prefers a plain clothing style. When it comes to have a romantic relationship, she seeks intimate spiritual connection more than the physical one and it is indeed her aunts and grandmother who encourage her to go on dates. For this reason, she has pleasure in enriching her narration with allusions to some literary works of art in the course of the novel: "Leaning her forehead on the dusty window, she reflected on the "other I" in

Borges's Labyrinths as she watched the wispy fog drift up off the horizon. Armanoush too had another self, one that she kept at bay no matter where she went." (Shafak, 2015, pp. 94-95) By referring to Borges' labyrinth metaphor, Shafak attaches her own understanding of literature and writing techniques to the novel. Borges believes that life is like a labyrinth itself that opens endless ways ahead of us and forces us to make a choice without knowing where it will lead us and what is awaiting us there. He approaches literature in the same way and equates labyrinths to the notion of time in his writings. In time through the labyrinth, the characters come across a new face of themselves that appear as they discover new paths; in other words, the characters meet themselves or are introduced with themselves over and over. For him, no matter how dark and complicated life can be like a labyrinth, it is also fun as one tries to find a way out there like a game, which is why Borges frequently places it in his works. By hosting two opposites, a labyrinth offers the idea of abject at the same time and in Armanoush's case, it works for the dark or hidden side of the identity that is invisible from outside and does not abandon her wherever she goes. Borges's idea overlaps with that of Shafak; thus, she benefits from intertextuality in her novel to hint that everything is possible in life and the reader is free to be directed to any way out in the labyrinth via peculiar and authentic interpretation.

In terms of the family trope and more specifically of the relationship with her mother Rose, Armanoush follows a similar pattern to the Kazancı women. The father figure is again mostly absent, but this time, he is not dead or ignorant. Instead, Armanoush's father Barsam Tchakhmakhchian is physically far away from her daughter as they live in different states of the USA, but he is fond of her unlike Levent Kazancı or Mustafa. The reason for this compulsory separation of the family trope is obviously the divorce of the parents, which caused a halt in the process of the Oedipus complex for Armanoush like the female members of the Kazancıs.

When psychoanalysts speak of an object they speak of the object of desire as it is elaborated within the Oedipus triangle. According to that trope, the father is the mainstay of the law and the mother the prototype of the object. Toward the mother there is convergence not only of survival needs but of the first mimetic yearnings. She is the other subject, an object that guarantees my being as subject. The mother is my first object-both desiring and signifiable. (Kristeva, 1982, p. 32)

Normally, as a reaction to the father's rejection, the female child gets closer to the mother with intuition to be protected and they are bonded as they pitch in mutually to come to being as subjects in the symbolic order of the society. However, because of

the absence of the father as a result of the divorce when Armanouh was only a baby, she has not had a chance to overcome this complex and even afterwards, when she becomes a teenager and then a young adult, it has been very difficult for her to reach out to her mother, who still has been traumatised and obsessed with the idea of taking revenge from the Tchakhmakhchian family that she sees as the main reason of the divorce with their dominantly othering and intriguing behaviours.

Always categorised as an outlander for the Armenian family, Rose has been explicitly called *odar* – meaning *other* on her face. She “had always felt like an outsider there, always aware of being an *odar*—this gluey word that had stuck on her from the very first day. (Shafak, 2015, p. 38) The family complains of being othered by the Turks in the Ottoman Empire; however, they give Rose the same treatment proving that abject is what we despise and try to escape from, but end up turning into it in the end. It is also another strategy of Shafak showing that we are actually not much different from each other as Turks and Armenians – as human beings all around the world, so the other is a reflection of I at the same time. In order to cope with the feeling, Rose develops a disgust against almost anything that is connected to her ex-husband’s culture, against food in particular, since it takes up a significant part of the Armenian culture and has been a topic of discussion on daily basis. Although her name suggests a fragile, delicate and vulnerable being, when it comes to giving up sacrifices that has been done so far and prioritising herself to get to the destination of her true identity, she demonstrates decisiveness and aggression. When she is out at the supermarket and passes by the international food aisle, she abruptly and unintentionally starts criticising Armenian food severely and praises the local American food fanatically:

She stole a nervous glance at the jars of eggplant dips and cans of salted grape leaves. No more *patlijan*! Nor more *sarmas*! No more weird ethnic food! Even the sight of that hideous *khavourma* twisted her stomach into knots. From now on she would cook whatever she wanted. She would cook real Kentucky dishes for her daughter! (...) What’s more, fried eggs and maple-syrup soaked pancakes and hot dogs with onions and mutton barbecue, yes especially mutton barbecue.... And instead of that squelchy yoghurt drink that she was sick of seeing at every meal, they would drink apple cider! From now on she would choose their daily menu from Southern cuisine, hot spicy chili or smoked bacon...or...garbanzo beans. She would serve these dishes without complaining. (p. 39)

At that point, Shafak implicitly intervenes once again to indicate another irony that all the food names mentioned here are in fact the same in Turkish and that yoghurt drink refers to *ayran*, which means the two sides attempting to abject each other meet at the common ground without showing massive variations. Rose’s using words such as

‘weird’ ‘hideous’ and ‘squelchy’ for the Armenian food are forwarded not only to the food directly but also to the type of behaviour she has received from the Tchakhmakhchians up to now. By choosing these adjectives, she abjects them, as well and interestingly ends up uniting with what she has looked down on: she marries a Turkish man who has almost exactly the same cuisine and culture. Shafak reminds her reader that the lesson continues until it is thoroughly learnt by the subject. Besides, the fact that such food ‘twisted her stomach into knots’ is an important characteristic of abject, which is food loathing according to Kristeva.

Loathing an item of food, a piece of filth, waste, or dung. The spasm and vomiting that protect me. The repugnance, the retching that thrusts me to the side and turns me away from defilement, sewage, and muck. The shame of compromise, of being in the middle of treachery. The fascinated start that leads me toward and separates me from them. Food loathing is perhaps the most elementary and most archaic form of abjection. (Kristeva, 1982, p. 2)

It is an uprising against the other that already inhabits inside human beings, which is made apparent via loathing. It one more time shows the heterogeneity of human form and identity, which is not in perfect mix, so the body needs to defy and farewell the abject in flow. (p. 10) The psychological symptoms are embodied in physical forms so as to protect the unity of the being. To her, abjection resides inside humans whose symptoms are “rejection and reconstruction of languages” unlike phobias that are at an intersection with abjection, but differ from it in terms of the symptoms where the being turns away from the nasty object that causes the overdose of the feeling and throws up. (p. 45) By exemplifying it in Rose’s condition, Shafak rejects abjection of her character and reconstructs the language as suggested by Kristeva in that after the divorce, Barsam the husband is sent away, silenced and Rose begins talking over the incident by herself ceaselessly winning arguments against him and the Tchakhmakhchians in her mental role-plays:

It made you talk to yourself. No matter how much dialogue you imagined, you were never out of words. Over the past few weeks Rose had repeatedly argued in her imagination with each and every member of the Tchakhmakhchian family, defending herself with determination, winning every time, fluently articulating all the things she had failed to voice during the divorce and had been lamenting ever since. (Shafak, 2015, p. 38)

Tracing the previous female characters mentioned above, Rose’s strategy of resolution lies in communication, too in order to overcome the abject feeling. However, her main addressee is herself. Like the act of vomiting, she empties herself out getting rid of the burden on her chest. It is a signal that if one is loaded with more than the

maximum capacity inside, naturally the extra intakes are to be left out. When the throwing up occurs eventually, the defilement is associated with dirt, which not only affects the subject but also pollutes the surrounding environment. In other words, the abject makes an impact around injecting itself in society making the symbolic nervous. Simultaneously, the subject has a transformation initiated in language. She starts to sound more adamant and determined: "If all this was tantamount to some sort of a tunnel of anguish God was compelling her to crawl through, she would emerge from it no longer recognizable as that weak woman she once had been." (p. 36) Being abjected in the Tchakhmakhchians and then performing the abject on bodily functions prepare her to be converted to a stronger self and reach awareness. This mental change finds its echoes on the order of her life, as well. As a formerly over-sacrificing person who gave up her college education for the sake of maintaining the bond of the marriage and its balance after the baby, she now has a dream to continue with it. She takes the first step in doing so by being employed at a college cafeteria. From the woman of complaints, she is transferred into the woman of action, which means she deactivates her passive, subordinate and obeying manners while activating the outspokening and self-confident woman dedicated to achieve her dreams with her daughter by her side.

Another female character that undergoes transformation in the novel is Banu Kazancı. Being deprived of the love of the father and the sincerity of the mother, like her other sisters, she has not grown in a healthy family unit and a severe encounter with the Oedipus complex has not passed her over, either. Although she is married, she keeps living in the Kazancı household as she has lost her twin sons to childhood illnesses and her joy of life together with them. That is why, she takes a voluntary leave from her chosen family and takes refuge in the Kazancı shelter. As a quite traditional and religious woman who prefers to live her life according to the rules of Islam, leaving her husband behind and visiting him every now and then is such an unusual act, which shows her neatly covered marginal side. She carries both sides of the binaries within herself and more interestingly, in that patriarchal order, the reader does not get to see a reaction from the husband, but only subordination. He accepts his secondary condition and is silenced in the novel by Auntie Banu. With that, one more time, Shafak reverses the gender codes of the society and attaches such incidents in the narration as usual types of behaviour so that the reader is accustomed with it and does not find it weird in real life.

Unlike her kins Zeliha and Asya, she opts for isolation and locks herself in to deal with the traumas and obscurity of the past in regular periods. After all, as a female child, she is also the unwanted 'other' in the family meeting the feeling of abject the earliest as the eldest sister. Also, by being the only sister in the family who has psychic powers and who covers her head despite all the oppositions against her decision, she is 'the other' domestically one more time. She gives up eating food except bread and water, refuses to see people and to spend time with the family in the living room or on breakfast and dinner tables although she is one of those types of people who survives to eat. She even rejects seeing her favourite TV series; dedicates herself to worshipping, which means she turns her back to earthly pleasures, secludes herself and disciplines her soul in her own ways. In that sense, she uses her body to react like other female Kazancıs.

The symbolic may attempt to claim the female body identifying it with the honour of family and society, but women can testify thanks to abject that it can only be themselves who have the control over their bodies. Banu puts forth as clearly as possible that she has the right to use her own body and appearance in the way she wants - like Zeliha, but from the opposite side. Although she is passionate about eating, has a sweet tooth and is more overweight than other sisters, which she does not mind, she proves that she can make the tables turn any time she wants and use her body to function her strategy in revolting against abject. Hers is not a loud one; she favours to conduct her resistance in a silent way, but this does not signify her weakness because as Foucault argues, power operates well in accordance with the experience of resistance, which is the essence of creating "docile bodies" (Foucault, 2012, p. 135) alluding to the bodies that could be "subjected, used, transformed, and improved." (Güven Kılıçarslan, 2019, p. 151) It is an act of silent revolt, somehow an intentional abjection of the self through isolation showing that women do not have to agree with speaking in the dominant language of the male in the symbolic order and "ironically, by being silent, they are able to speak for themselves, for the "other"". (Güven Kılıçarslan, 2019, p. 1519) She tames her ego in silent seclusion and opens up space for differences in her soul by breaking the homogeneity and embracing heterogeneity inside.

Silent revolution of Banu is not limited to her bodily expressions. Her secret, but resolute decision to prepare the *ashure* bowl with the potassium cyanide for Mustafa makes her revolt reach its peak after she finds out the truth about Zeliha's child, which happens owing to the willing abjection in her room paving the way to curiosity, changing

her mind-set, leading her to logical comprehension and widening the perspective. By changing the classical ingredients and adding the poison in it, she plays with the recipe of a well-known traditional dessert. In doing so, Shafak does not only make Banu transform a long-accepted recipe, she also transforms the typical female narration and welcomes creativity. The inclusion of magic realism in Banu's flashback travels with her djinn Mr. Bitter, which leads her to the dark secret of incest, the use of intertextuality, deconstruction of binaries and using them in reversed ways, presenting multiple narrators in non-linear order and multiple identities, which emerge as a result of fragmented selves that are on a self-exploration journey, all work for her subversion of the classical female writing based on male gaze as a female feminist and contemporary author. The abject qualities attributed to her characters, which seem to be negative in society's view, but turn out to be positive, are encouraging and motivational both for the characters' themselves and for the resolution of conflicts with each other and in social issues. These are significant features that make Shafak a distinguished universal writer.

Last but not least, another sister Feride displays the experience of female abject in the Kazancı household. In spite of the fact that she does not take up a considerable space in the course of the narration, the childhood traumas appear in several mental disorder forms with her entrance. Diagnosed with various psychological illnesses, Feride moves from one disorder to another periodically in that every time her symptoms are intensified, she changes her hair colour and style. The doctors have even created a chart for this situation in order to keep track of the history of the illness and her ups and downs:

Short, midlength, very long, and once entirely shaven; spiked, flattened flipped, and braided; subjected to tons of hair spray, gel, wax, or styling cream; accessorised with barrettes, gems, or ribbons; cropped in punk style, pinned up in ballerina buns, highlighted and dyed in every possible hue, each one of her hair styles had been a fleeting episode while her illness had remained firm and fixed. (Shafak, 2015, p. 26)

Like the rest of the Kazancı women, Feride's struggle of the Oedipal complex and her wish to be noticed by the parents, which are repressed ideas and are stored in the unconscious appear in such forms without her permission. The different hair styles are there to attract the attention she has never had at home and although they change forms and her appearance vary outside, the conflict inside her remains stable, which is in relation to the opposition of appearance vs. reality. Her looks may be crazy, strange and unusual outside and she might have been abjected since her early school years with the label of "bizarre" even as a little girl (p. 25), but inside her there is a saddening

conflict that needs to be solved. Feride's defence mechanism and her resistance to be othered is no different than those of her sisters as she consults to her body to express herself, too. Such marginal hair styles are a reflection of how complicated and chaotic she feels inside. It is a method of protesting against the male discourse that makes the female body be subjected to discussions, so to be able to gain the destroyed respect for the self back, women turn to their bodies that are the fundamental cause of their lesser condition and they "wage war with the same gun, their bodies." (Toksöz, 2009, p. 18)

Feride develops hypochondria and becomes obsessed with accidents, illnesses and the third page news of the paper. After diagnosed with stress-ulcer and major depressive disorder, she has been moved to

"borderline" – a term construed quite arbitrarily by different members of the Kazancı family. Her mother interpreted the word "border" a problem to be associated with police, customs officers, and illegality, thereby finding a "felon foreigner" in the persona of Feride. She thus even became more suspicious of this crazy daughter whom she had not trusted in the first place. In stark contrast, for Feride's sisters, the concept of "border" mainly invoked the idea of edge, and the idea of edge invoked the image of a deadly cliff. (Shafak, 2015, p. 27)

This borderline status indeed indicates her abject state in domestic borders and the approach towards her particularly by the mother Gülsüm. Feride is a foreigner for her, whom she calls 'crazy', and she does not put trust in her own daughter, who has already disappointed her by existing in the second gender. As for the sisters, she evokes death and fear with her abject feature and with her position on the threshold. She is in-between being a mentally healthy individual or ending up being a mentally ill person that is weird and disturbed in the eyes of the society. As a matter of fact, she is in between ranging mental disorders fluctuating from one to another. In line with it, her identity is fragmented, not singular and not fixed among these psychological illnesses whose effects are also structured in physical forms – hair styles. As a result, the body becomes both a means of expression for the silent female and a close companion that reacts against any inconvenience occurring inside caused by an outside attack with the aim of protecting and defending the self. According to Kristeva's theory of the unconscious that is grounded on Freud, the repressed content affects the subject either in speech such as through parapraxes or in bodily symptoms or both such as through hallucinations. (Kristeva, 1982, p. 7), which could explain Feride's case.

To conclude, Elif Shafak's work is a rich tapestry woven with intertextuality, deconstruction of traditional binaries that challenge the rigid gender roles and societal

norms and with multiple narrators that follow a non-linear timeline and provide objective perspectives for the postmodern reader. When these are combined with the use of abject in her narration, her technique appears to be even more strengthened and outstanding since it sheds a light on the fragmentation and exploration of the self in the end. The abject element in her characterisation works for resisting categorisation especially of women and help them change certain patterns in the order of the society from negative to positive. The characters' reaction to and dealing mechanisms with the abject function as a catalyst for individual growth and for providing reconciliations with their complementary others. They also assist in conflict resolutions both in personal and societal levels, which in turn result in a more inclusive order in society. Therefore, Shafak presents a more nuanced and a redefined feminist way of writing making herself a universal female voice in contemporary literature.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has been prepared to comprehensively examine the use of abject through a feminist lens in three contemporary novels. To conduct the analysis, Iris Murdoch's *Nuns and Soldiers* (1980), Anne Rice's *The Queen of the Damned* (1988) and Elif Shafak's *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006) have been compared and contrasted under Julia Kristeva's theory of abject, which is a reformulated form of psychoanalysis. To provide a more insightful approach towards the theory, the preceding psychologists and philosophers of the theory such as Freud and Lacan, whom Kristeva placed the base of her own theory, have also been addressed.

Since Kristeva targeted Freud's Law of the Father and she disagreed with Lacan on his assertions of the symbolic and the real, which are the phases in a child's development making him/her ready mainly for a patriarchal society, she aimed at bringing the Law of Mother and arranging the child to step into a society where both male and the female complement each other. Instead of accepting the dominance of the father in a family triangle, she believed in the union of the two genders in that the father is not in the playmaker position having all the control at hand, but is a major assistant to the mother in the proper upbringing of the child. Kristeva held the opinion that the bond between the infant and the mother already start when the baby is placed in the womb, so when s/he opens his/her eyes to the world, even with sounds and gestures, the bond continues meaning that the unity is kept through verbal and non-verbal communication between the two. As communication is an ongoing process, there is no clear-cut moment for a child such as getting out of the womb or rejecting the breast to separate from the mother. The child is prepared for the world with the initiative of the mother via attempts of communication and the theory is opposed to the dominance of the father; therefore, it naturally hosts semiotics and feminism inside, which marked it appropriate for the intended research. As it is a kind of reconstruction of Lacan's psychoanalysis, Kristeva similarly applies reconstruction in the use of binaries that shape the society. She is in favour of reversing or deconstructing them so that they benefit not only the male but also the female as well as all the marginalised/abjected minorities because her theory

suggests that boundaries are disconnecting for people whereas making the lines blur is an act to reconnect.

With that in mind, the reason behind the specific choice of Murdoch, Rice and Shafak is due to the fact that they are all female writers who hold different national identities and come from various backgrounds, but present a similar writing pattern and come together around the same purpose. Murdoch is an Irish-English writer, Rice is American and Shafak is a Turkish female writer, who also has American citizenship. These contemporary women writers apparently write in English including Shafak, who put *The Bastard of Istanbul* down on paper originally in English. Thus, during the analysis, some important points have not been lost in translation. When it comes to the selection of these particular texts, the level of abundance of research on the novels have been taken into consideration. Murdoch has gone under research mostly through her most well-known and awarded novel *The Sea, the Sea* or her philosopher identity has been prioritised. Compared to her other novels, the research on *Nuns and Soldiers* was less common and the variety of resources were limited in that unlike her other novels, it was not even translated into Turkish, which showed that the interest in the novel and contribution to the area from the English Literature departments in Türkiye were scarce. Also, the novel at hand was either subjected to comparison with Murdoch's other novels or with canonised English or American writers. Thus, it is believed that the dissertation has become additional contribution to research on Murdoch from Türkiye. Likewise, Anne Rice's *The Queen of the Damned* has been favoured for research in terms of gothic literature mostly or Rice has been compared to other famous writers who focused on vampires such as Angela Carter. Moreover, since the novel is the final book in a trilogy, research applying the theory of abject to it or comparing it with international works has been found to be less popular. Lastly, Shafak's *The Bastard of Istanbul* has been exposed to comparative research with other Turkish novels in general or the book was not dealt from a feminist view with the touch of abject; rather, the major interest regarding the novel was on its political and historical aspects in the national and international sense. As a consequence of these, the study is hoped to have filled the gap in the area regarding the lack of research according to the abovementioned criteria.

In line with Julia Kristeva's theory and her motivation, Murdoch, Rice and Shafak employed similar themes and strategies centred around the concept of abject in their works. It has been observed that abject has been used commonly in the selected

works mainly as a theme and in the construction of the characters in order to prove that coexistence of the opposites and a more harmonised society are indeed possible. Furthermore, abject has been used as a means to deal with the oppression of society on the characters that are on threshold. By issuing the abject in their works as female writers of different nations, Murdoch, Rice and Shafak showed that women suffering is universal and these writers are international in that sense.

In addition to focusing on the abject, all three of the novels shed a light on social conflicts and problems centred especially on women. Shafak does this by placing her ground on more global topics such as multiculturalism, history, politics and intercultural relationships between countries such as Türkiye and Armenia as she says: “I am more interested in showing the things we have in common as fellow human beings, sharing the same planet and ultimately, the same sorrows and joys rather than yet adding another brick in the imaginary walls erected between cultures/religions/ethnicities.” (Chira, 2015, p. 73) Rice is more interested in social and gender equality, justice and rational thinking. Similarly, Murdoch is eager to take love, freedom and human religion to the centre of her novel. However, what they have in common are the importance of individualism and human, taking action and identity formation. Adoption of these thoughts take a person to social justice and well-being.

The characters who block the development of identities and the management of a peaceful social order with their old-fashioned mind-sets are removed from the storyline as a resolution by these novelists. In *Nuns and Soldiers*, Murdoch removes Guy early in the plot since his male-dominated perception of the world and attempts to hold control over the female do not serve the benefit of the new world order anymore. Likewise, Rice in *The Queen of the Damned*, removes Enkil the former King and the spouse to Akasha before the novel reaches to the middle as a result of his torturing the female – the Queen Akasha. However, Rice makes a significant move here by also removing the selfish and cruel Akasha, who tries to found a world in which only 1% of the male population can survive. This implies that she does not give privilege to the female. Unless rational and logical evaluation of the actions take over, there is no place for people who employ a problematic approach and methodology even if these people are females saying that their motivation is to end world problems such as hunger and violence against women. Killing all the males, some of whom are completely innocent and are husbands, sons and brothers to those females is also a type of violence against women. Finally, in Shafak’s

case in *The Bastard of Istanbul*, Mustafa, who does not even have a proper conversation and is totally silenced from the very beginning of the novel is exiled to America and killed at the end of the novel as a result of his brutal rape to her biological sister Zeliha causing her to suffer all her life. With such witty plot constructions, these contemporary female novelists give the message that in the new world order they would like to establish, only those who care for the prosperity of others can have a right to survive regardless of gender.

Another notable affinity that is shared by the novels is the connection they make between America and the new world order in their minds. In *Nuns and Soldiers*, America is the place for the female voices Anne and Daisy that provides an opportunity to reach their salvation. It offers the realisation of what brings peace and harmony to their souls – helping the ones in need through a religious charity cherishing on humanity primarily for Anne and accepting the failure, continuing the change and moving on by spreading the wings for Daisy, so they end up in the States. In *The Queen of the Damned*, America is cited as a place where both mortals and immortals work on their intellectuality with the socio-cultural and artistic opportunities it provides. As a likeness, when the resolution is provided in the very end of the novel and the ancient vampires that are able to empathise with the humans and put being good and doing good to the front decide to stay together from then on, they end up settling in Miami happily to lead a fulfilling life. Thus, America appears to be a uniting place for them that used to live separately prior to that. Lastly, in *The Bastard of Istanbul*, where America is one of the main components of the setting of the novel, it appears as a welcoming and embracing spot or the ‘pot’, in which the ones who could adapt and contribute are melted in unity, whereas the ones, who are corrupt, selfish and under-developed are thrown out of it. In other words, even America which is famous for being a multicultural ‘united’ country does not accept the ones like Mustafa, who is a threat to deteriorate that unity, so he is killed without going back to there. America is seen as a suitable location – a land of opportunities – for the ideal new world order these writers would like to establish in their novels.

The slight difference that is worth-mentioning in the practice of these writers is the number of the male characters and the space they occupy in the plot, which could be associated with the periods the novels were written in. To illustrate it with examples, in Murdoch’s *Nuns and Soldiers*, which was produced in 1980, the main male characters are Guy, Count and Tim. Though Guy has an early leave, Count and Tim are crucial in

terms of the theme of acceptance of failure and abjection related to male suffering. They have long dialogues, self-assessments and the assessment of events that lead them to salvation and reconciliation with their true identities. When the chronological order is followed, in Rice's *The Queen of the Damned* written in 1988, it could be suitable to say that the male and female protagonists occupy almost the same amount of space. The struggles of both parties are conveyed through Lestat's and Akasha's points of view in general in the majority of the book; however, the twin sisters Maharet and Mekare and Khayman, Armand and Louis are also essential for the cohesion of the novel and for the justness of the confrontation in the end. Rice lets every main character present his/her perspective in a separate chapter trying to provide them even space. Finally, in Shafak's *The Bastard of Istanbul* released in 2006, the narration is almost entirely constructed on the females. The male characters are only mentioned as names such as Barsam or Aram, which interestingly means 'calm' or 'quiet' in Persian (Google Translate, n.d.) and later on, even the most popular one of them Mustafa is taken off from the story as a kind of punishment. The awarded ones are all females; Zeliha and Asya are reunited as mother and daughter, Banu provides the long awaited justice with her uncovering of the secret past of the family, Amy is introduced to and reconnected with her roots in Istanbul and Rose finds her true identity as an independent woman after her journey to Istanbul following her daughter, which is indeed a journey to her inner self helping her to regain her self-confidence. As the timeline gets closer to the 21st century, the lens to view the novels is zoomed in towards feminism.

The research has identified that the styles of the novels, in order to attract attention to the female suffering, Murdoch, Rice and Shafak use parallel strategies, which are peculiar to postmodern and contemporary literature. The most outstanding technique that they all share is the inclusion of oppositions to make a contrast. It is mainly provided with binaries and the doubles as characters. To exemplify, mortals and immortals, life and death, inside and outside, nuns and soldiers, I and the others are commonly integrated in narration and they are either dissolved completely or the meanings they carry are extended, which is the case in nuns and soldiers. As for the other binaries mentioned, the social codes are cracked, so the sharp distinctions in I and the others; for example, are removed and the people who are kept outside are taken inside such as abject characters whose associations with the negative are turned into positive as a result. In Murdoch's novel, it is Anne, who is accepted in the worldly world after

the convent, Daisy to the USA, Count to Belfast and Tim to a higher position after marrying Gertrude. In Rice, Lestat, a vampire, is accepted into the mortal world as a rock star. In Shafak, Amy is welcomed in Café Kundera in Istanbul, a Turkish gathering place for the intellectuals and patriots, and Asya is accepted in the chatroom where Armenian diaspora in America meets regularly to keep their unity. Likewise, the strict boundaries between the two genders and the fixed associations of them are made flexible by showing that the female symbolic is also possible. The female is not typically caring, affectionate, soft, weak and fragile or does not have to give birth and become a mother as in the case of Akasha. A nun does not have to be in isolation by following the orders of the mainstream Christianity as in the case of Anne or a high class female does not have to accept the proposal of a man belonging to the same class as in the case of Gertrude. Plus, these characters are usually doubles to each other who complement each other although they have different personalities like Amy/Asya, Anne/Gertude and Akasha/Lestat.

Another technique the writers favour is including multiple narrators in stories to provide objectivity and to make the reader be a part of the production with various possible interpretations. This also clearly demonstrates the fragmentation of each character and their development, step by step, until they feel complete, having found their identity at the end of a journey of self-exploration, which includes a period of suffering. Therefore, all the protagonists undergo a change, a transformation before they take action and set out. This taking action has been reached at the end of questionings, dialogues/communication and evaluation of the self and of the incidents taking place. Generally, the dialogues reflect the reader's probable reactions and are used to come to a resolution as in Akasha and Lestat's long conversations regarding world problems caused by men. In Rice, it is a very active dialogue with the participation of both parties, but in Murdoch, as well as active dialogues such as the ones between Guy and Anne, Count and Anne or Gertude and Anne, there are also monologues referring to the dialogues with the inner self. Being different from the other novels, Murdoch applies a unique strategy that is unselfing aka silent communication. According to Murdoch's unselfing, "The good person, (...), must be humble; she must learn to stand back and wait. She must let things happen, and attend to them, receive, rather than rush in and do things." (Hämäläinen, 2015, p. 746) It is because the patient suffering of the female

characters and their being slow in taking actions are more visible in Murdoch, which has caused her to be criticised by not being a real feminist.

As a matter of fact, while Iris Murdoch is evidently supportive of the ideals of the women's movement, she does not identify herself as a feminist. (Guerin, 1992, p. 153) However, her work reflects ideas and issues addressed by feminist writers, critics, and theorists. Concerns central to feminist consciousness are present in nascent form in Murdoch's novels. When comparing Murdoch's work with that of later feminist writers, it becomes clear that while she creates situations where characters face similar problems, her fiction offers solutions to those problems. In her feminist-driven writing, her moral concerns regarding religion are handled with a philosopher/novelist approach, so she diverts from Rice and Shafak in that issue to some extent. As a response to this and to the criticism for having more male characters in her novels, she cleverly suggests: "I think I want to write about things on the whole where it does not matter whether you're male or female, in which case you better be male, because a male represents ordinary human beings, unfortunately, as things stand at the moment, whereas a woman is always a woman!" (Lovibond, 2011, p. 5) She is not particularly interested in the specific issues faced by women, but she strongly supports women's liberation, especially in terms of ensuring they have equal rights and, most importantly, equal access to education. (Dooley, 2003, p. 61) When all these are taken into account, it could be concluded that though not a fierce feminist, Murdoch hosts the basics of it, which come to light in her themes, character construction and the message in her novels. Returning to the topic of communication in novels, finally in Shafak, the active communication is there but dialogues among the family members are not really active, so diverging from the other two, the communication with the world is also conveyed through body and art. Zeliha does this by choosing a grotesque, unusual but attractive dressing style. She shows her protest against being abjected with this style, piercings and also with her art on the body of others in her tattoo shop. This grotesque is also touched with the style and manners of Akasha, Daisy and Asya, who mirror their aggressiveness in their language. Thus, the use of grotesque has become another technique shared by all the novelists in question that contributes to the reaching of the novels to wider readers by calling on a popular interest in the era. The combination of the concept with realism makes them even more appealing and the message of the novels are transmitted to larger crowds in a faster way with the intention of being effective in the long run.

Iris Murdoch in *Nuns and Soldiers*, Anne Rice in *The Queen of the Damned* and Elif Shafak in *The Bastard of Istanbul* have appeared to be contemporary female writers, who support one another by uniting around similar themes and ideas despite having minor divergences, in the way their formulated female characters stand up for each other as sisters in the aforementioned novels. The use of abject characters helped them to break the norms in societies and to direct the reader to contemplate upon what does not serve women without denying the freedom and humanity of men, which is the basis of the new world order in the international sense. Through the inclusion of abject, these writers have reconstructed the image of a contemporary woman just as Kristeva reconstructed psychoanalysis according to her own terms.

As a suggestion for further research, biographical elements of these female writers could be centralised in order to emphasise the universality of women suffering and to vary permanent solutions regarding it, which could raise more collective awareness thanks to possible empathy and identification with the writers.

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