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Structure and Narrative Technique in *The Forty Rules of Love*

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Abstract: *This paper attempts to underline the structure and the narrative technique in Elif Shafak's The Forty Rules of Love; it shows how diverse techniques, mostly postmodern, merge, in order to contribute to the delineation of the author's vision of the human condition. In other words, the artistic choice of the author – the two embedded narratives and various techniques adopted in this novel – vividly translates and enriches Shafak's thematic concerns and underscores a cry out for a humanistic worldwide unity through the essential human ingredient – love. The paper shows the dialectical relation between the constituent parts of structural framework of the novel and also shows the diversity of techniques give an ostensible impression of chaos in order to produce a holistic narrative that succeeds to link together all these diversified techniques by the embracing web of unlearning, then re-learning not only to live, but also to love.*

I. Introduction

In a world within which humanity is smothered by racism, fanaticism, feuds, and deadly warring views, in a world "beset with religious clashes, political disputes, and endless power struggles" [1], comes The Forty Rules of Love to show that this same hectic world can be united, at least, under the banner of the essential ingredient of the life of mankind: love, acquired by the quest of self-discovery, by the process of unlearning in order to re-learn. This is strikingly delineated not only by the dialectical relation between the constituents of the structural framework of the novel, but also by the author's merging of a rich diversity of techniques, which give the seemingly impression of chaos and shattering that haunt the condition of the world, into one holistic narrative, that links together all these diversified agents by the embracing web of unlearning, then re-learning not only to live, but also, and above all, re-learning to love.

II. The narrative structure of the novel

"The structure of a narrative is like the framework of girders that holds up a modern high-rise building . . . it determines the edifice's shape and character" [4] Structurally, The Forty Rules of Love comprises two parts: The main narrative that concerns the plot of Ella's world, and the sub-narrative within which one traces the story of Rumi and Shams of Tabariz. The first is divided into a prologue and subsequent small sections, the second into a foreword and subsequent small sections. However, it is not just a novel embracing another novel; there is much more a sense of an intrinsic relationship between both components: the forty rules of love, as rules, are what generate the sub-narrative "Sweet Blasphemy", which is, in turn, what sharpens Ella's awareness and triggers her initiation into self-discovery. The rules are, in fine, a driving force within the larger scheme, that is, Ella's narrative. Hence, there is some kind of a dialectical relationship between these main divisions.

Nevertheless, one encounters another division which also reflects the author's deliberate and encompassing vision of the whole work. "Sweet Blasphemy" is divided into a foreword, a section by the killer, and five other divisions pertaining to the four elemental constituents of the cosmos (fire, water, soil, wind) plus the "void". This heptad is employed in order to echo the "seven stages on the path of Truth-- seven maqamat every soul had to go through in order to attain Oneness" [1]. Similarly, Ella's narrative is structured around seven divisions: a prologue, a selection of Ella, and the same five divisions in "Sweet Blasphemy", delineating as well the path which Ella is to tread towards her true self. It is, further, very significant that each of the two plots is inaugurated by sections that announce beforehand Ella's filing for divorce, and the murdering of Shams [1], both of which occur after the encounter with the void-phase. Hence, they are not one-way narratives. The structure seems to reflect the artist's vision of the cause-effect relationship between the path one treads, the choices one makes, and the inevitable sequels that ensue afterwards. This visualizes the inevitable reverberations or "the far more lasting" effect caused by a "stone . . . disrupt[ing] still waters" [1].

III. The techniques employed in the novel

3.1. A novel within a novel

Concerning the techniques employed in the making of this work, "The simplest way of identifying stylistic devices as defined would be, Riffattere suggests, to compare the author's intentions with his realization of them" [5]. Everything employed, therefore, does not exist in void. The "intentions" of the author are the artist's vision of the human condition which s/he wants to communicate to the world; the technique registered is the artistic vision that best translates the author's vision of the human condition. Shafak's uses the strategy of embedding a novel within a novel both of which "mirror each other across two very different cultures and seven intervening centuries" [7]. This strategy of merging East and West into one narrative is intentionally undertaken in order to exhibit a kind of resemblance among remote eras and spaces, and to show that, as always, the cure of traumatic conditions is one and only: it is to unlearn our stale and imposed selves molded of ignorance and prejudices, and to re-learn to live and love, by embracing our true humanistic essence. David Lodge states that "style is the means by which the writer, or in linguistic jargon 'encoder', ensures that his 'message' is 'decoded' in such a way that the reader . . . understands the information conveyed" [5]. Shafak's technique, hence, serves the purpose of conveying her 'message'. All exploited techniques feature as postmodernist aspects.

3.2. Hybrid diction and time shifts

First of all, hybrid diction pervades the novel. Words like "baraqa, fana, nafs, hamam…" not only preserve the identity of a non-English culture, they also call one's attention to the existence of another culture, which no matter how much it differs from one's own culture, there can always be found a common ground when the true intention of attaining and maintaining harmonic peace is present. The choice of "minimalism", that is, characters from everyday life experience, contributes to the authenticity of the artist's vision. In both plots, Shafak portrays the lives of characters with whom one can identify oneself, thus sharpening one's awareness of one's life experience, one's knowledge of one's self and of the world around.

Moreover, temporal distortion, which is the literary technique of using a nonlinear timeline, is detected in both plots, where one notices flashbacks and forward shifts in time. The function of the time shifts in a narrative is best stated by Lodge (1992), who contends that "through time-shift, narrative avoids presenting life as just one damn thing after another, and allows us to make connections of causality and irony between widely separated events…[it] may change our interpretation of something which happened much later in the chronology of the story…" [4]; and this is exactly what Sahfak, in the mouth of Shams, wants to communicate: "the past is interpretation. The future is an illusion. The world does not move through time as if it were a straight line proceeding from past to future" [1]. The most significant example is registered in the first section of the 'killer', who recounts the incident of conspiring against Shams. The killer states that he was about to wake the drunkard at the adjacent table, yet he did not; and only towards the end does the reader get to know that the drunkard was Suleiman, that he heard all about the conspiracy, and that he told Shams all about it in order to save him, yet the latter was killed despite the former's attempts to prevent it. This may reflect the author's belief in the dominance of destiny over the scheme of events – "for each there is a time to love, and a time to die" [1]. Yet this does not strictly imply absolute preordainment, for "your destiny is the level where you will play the tune. You might not change your instrument but how well to play is entirely in your hands" [1]. Hence, it does not matter what awaits at the end of the path; what matters most is the track one chooses to tread, the cross one chooses to bear and endure, and the effect one stamps on one's surrounding long after departure. This belief is also echoed in the main narrative when Jeannette and her boyfriend broke up despite their defying Ella's interference at a certain moment in their experience. The forward shift in time is best exemplified towards the end when Ella's narrative shifts one year: from August 12, 2008 directly to September 7, 2009 –a year that turned her hectic past into "a time so distant and vague that it felt like a fairy tale, not like her past" [1] a year summed up in one single, yet meaningful, statement: "One year of love and awareness" [1]. Not only does this shift shed light on the shortcomings of the function of memory in modern life, it also intensifies the sense of urgency engendered by Aziz's imminent death.

3.3. Pastiche, prologue, and readers' involvement

In addition to all this, Shafak utilizes an essential postmodern aspect – the pastiche [6] – which stands for divers "pasted" elements of previous genres and styles of literature. This not only contributes to the holistic vision of a seemingly chaotic word, but also may reflect a

reconsideration of the "anxiety of authorship", by Shafak's mastery upon, and assigning a role for such ancient genres as drama (through prologue) and poetry, both of which previously referred to as men's territories throughout the history of literature. It is also noteworthy to underline the fact that this is also hinted at in the reversal of roles of Ella, who becomes an author of emails and of lies, and her husband, who is reduced to a reader and receiver. The author exploits prologue and assigns it its original function (assigned primarily to the chorus), that is, to comment on the prevalent human condition. The prologue exposes the stagnancy of Ella's life and anticipates the turbulences unexpectedly engendered by just one single event. Through it also, Shafak achieves the involvement of the reader. This involvement is another postmodernist aspect [6]: "Between your fingers you hold a stone and throw it into flowing water" [1 emphasis mine]. It is a mere invitation for the reader to step into the realm of the novel, and to contemplate about her/his own life.

3.4. Intertextuality and dreams

"Intertextuality", which, according to Lodge (1992), is "entwined in the roots of the . . . novel, . . . novelists have tended to exploit rather than resist it, freely recycling old myths and earlier works of literature to shape, or add resonance to, their presentation of contemporary life" [4]. The novel has a direct intertextual reference with Rumi's poetry, especially the "Mathnawi" [1], with the Bible [1], and with the Qur'an [1], it has a latent intertextual connection with other texts: the rule that states that "the whole universe is contained within a single being—You. Everything that you see around . . . is present within you . . ." [1], echoes Campbell's "Each of us has a meaning and we bring it to life. It is a waste to be asking the question when you are the answer" [2]. "Manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity" [4] in order to manifest a universal aspect of the human conscience, the novel also recalls a passage in one of the most famous poems in English literature, Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" [3]:

Ah! Well-a-day! what evil looks
Had I from old and young!
Instead of the cross, the Albatross
About my neck was hung.

The same metaphor is echoed when the killer in "Sweet Blasphemy" likens his haunting guilt to "invisible necklaces" which he "wear[s] around [his] neck" [1]. This intertextual reference juxtaposes the killer's guilt with that of the mariner after he kills the albatross. Intertextuality is a crucial factor in the conception and composition of the text, and not a merely decorative one. It pertains to the universality of the human experience. The sense of guilt which goes back to the primordial killer, Cain, extends to the killer, and then haunts Rumi's son, Aladdin, at the end of the narrative: "Later on, I lived that moment over and over in my mind so many times . . . Once or twice I conjured a memory of Shams escaping from our hands into the pitch-black night . . . all the things that I thought would vanish once he was gone have stayed firmly planted in our lives" [1].

Dreams are another element that the author employs; the element of dreams here may have the function of foreshadowing, or it can be an aspect of magical realism which incorporates the introduction of fantastic or impossible elements into a narrative that is otherwise normal. Rumi's recurrent dream of Shams' burning his own fingers in order to enlighten the former's dark path [1] can be explained both, as a foreshadowing of Shams' sacrificing himself in the process of Rumi's initiation into the realization of his true self, or as an expressionistic device of Rumi's yearning to meet his fellow companion, his soul-mate. Poetry, in the mouth of Suleiman the Drunk is another instance of intertextual relation with Khayyam's poetry which presents a humanized attitude – away from what is wrong and what is not – towards the drinking of wine [1]. Yet, later, Suleiman's recitation of poetry becomes an act of sarcasm and defiance in the face of tyranny carried on the hands of those who are supposed to be protectors of the people of Konya—the hypocritical Baybars and his fellow-guard [1]. Furthermore, Aziz's usage, in his novel, of actual dates, of real geographical names and down-to-earth characters can be considered as mere realism, yet in the larger scheme of the Shafak's novel as a whole, "Sweet Blasphemy" is nothing but a mere historio-graphic meta-fiction, where real historical characters and events are fictionalized. However, by faction, the line which separates fact from fiction is blurred, and the sub-novel breaks free from its meta-fictional status when the reader continues reading it, as though an entity by itself, even after Ella finishes her reading of it.

3.4. Mysticism and skepticism

Moreover, mysticism (the belief that direct knowledge of God, spiritual truth, or ultimate reality can be attained through subjective experience) and skepticism (a philosophical stance that rejects dogmatism, fanaticism, and intolerance) are at the root of The Forty Rules of Love, which undermines stereotypical dichotomies and beliefs, and challenges religious fanaticism, and advocates

the unlearning of the taken-for-granted morals, creeds, and inherited beliefs, for the sake or re-learning the ultimate truth, meaning, and love. Both elements are inherent in the journeys of development of the main characters of both plots. Both, Ella and Rumi, break free from their old selves imposed upon them by the society that sacrifices individuality to conformity. One also catches glimpses of Aziz's development when he recollects to Ella the phases of his spiritual journey. Ella is liberated from her old self, from being a person “frightened of the unknown” [1] a person who has evaded confrontations for the sake of the so-called familial duty of setting the "perfect-picture table" imposed by society, from a person for whom “guilt was [a] middle name” [1], from a person who, in short, has been “best at letting the days go by, the routine take over, and time run its course” [1], whose life has been written for her, not by her, and could be summed up by “The Forty Rules of the Sedentary, Suburban, Earthly Housewife” [1]; Ella is emancipated from a life "of still waters" where each decision is "filtered through her marriage” [1], and "in which she never confronted the death of anything"[1], and is transformed into a woman who dared to abandon it all: "her kitchen, her dog, her children, her neighbors, her husband . . . and walk out into the world where dangerous things happened all the time" [1]. This emancipation would never have happened were it not for her "long[ing] for love" [1], and her seeking it. Described as "an invitation, a cry for help" [1], Ella's first email to Aziz symbolizes her embarking on the journey that irrevocably uproots her from her stagnant self and changes her life forever. Ella, by the process of unlearning and re-learning, in short, turns to be the "guerilla Ella" [1], independent, and able to devise her own survival techniques without panicking from solitude, after she realizes that "loneliness and solitude are two different things. Solitude is better for us, as it means being alone without feeling lonely” [1]. Similarly, Rumi changes from a person obsessed with maintaining his social image, from a person who blindly follows what is 'right' and leaves what is 'wrong', not only into a poet, “a vehicle for letters that are placed in my mouth” [1], but also into a person who has “gotten rid of the need for an audience” [1], a person whose new certain belief is that “all idols that stood between the individual and God had to be demolished, including fame, wealth, rank, and even religion” [1]. Shams “has taught [him] to unlearn everything [he] knew” [1]; Rumi unlearns not only societal dictates and creeds, but also his "anxiety of influence"; this is symbolized by the scene in which Shams drowns all Rumi's book-heritage [1], and on which, later, Rumi comments: "Everything Shams did, he did for my perfection. . . . He threw my books into water, forcing me to unlearn all that I knew" [1], as if this is an act of purgation from all old beliefs and dogmas. Shams has been, in short, the agent by whom Rumi has succeeded in breaking "the shell [he has] been living in” [1]. Hence, the radical change in Ella and Rumi could not have been attained but through "love" which was like "a stone . . . hurled from out into the tranquil pond of [their] life” [1]. The path they themselves decide to take could not be taken by anyone else on their behalf: "love cannot be explained. It can only be experienced” [1]. Ella and Rumi's development has been engendered by trying ordeals epitomized by their encountering the void – "the supreme stage of nothingness . . . the consciousness of nothingness that keeps us going" [1]; for it is nothingness which brings one into confrontation with the need of the thing which one mostly lacks. This indeed applies even to Shams at whose development one is allowed to glimpse when he admits that “as for me, I, too, have changed and am changing. I am moving from being into nothingness. From one season to another, one stage to the next, from life to death” [1]. Nevertheless, Aziz's stages of development culminate in his realization the letter i in the word 'Sufi'; it is also the stage where he encounters the 'void', where “the whole world turns into a blank screen, waiting to be written upon” [1].

3.5. Point of view

In addition to all mentioned techniques, Shafak exploits, in the narrative concerned with Ella, the omniscient point of view with Ella's consciousness at the center. Yet, other characters are given a chance to voice their thoughts through dialogue – for example, Ella's dialogue with her husband [1], and Ella's dialogue with her kids – and through the use of technology, 'techno-culture' – the exchange of emails between Ella and Aziz; his message to Ella's cellular phone; the telephone calls between Ella and Scott, and Ella and Jeanette, and their voice-messages left on the answering machines. One can also proceed to say that Aziz's "Sweet Blasphemy" establishes a mental dialectical exchange between him and Ella, telepathy, mostly evident at the outset when She opens his novel, and reads: “. . . love is not only a sweet feeling bound to come and quickly go away” [1]. Instantly she recollects an earlier moment when she tells her daughter that “love is only a sweet feeling bound to come and quickly go away" [1], and she senses that "this writer has her in mind as a reader” [1].

The variety of voices is further accentuated in "Sweet Blasphemy", which is mainly a combination of correspondences (that is, an exchange of letters) and a polyphonic medley of

voices; each section is assigned the role of voicing the thoughts of, or recounting events that involve, a certain character, with certain events narrated from more than one point of view. This certainly pertains to the author's undermining of absolute truth and objective kinds of Knowledge like history. It is perhaps her way of saying, what is expressed in Lodge's words, that "no ideological or moral position is immune from challenge and contradiction" [4]. In an interview with Elif Shafak, she declares that "this artistic approach is also in harmony with Sufi philosophy. Sufis, like artists, live in an ever-fluid world. They believe one should never be sure of himself and they respect the amazing diversity in the universe." This strategy also triggers one's awareness to one's own dealing with discourse which could be easily manipulated for certain ends and distorted for the sake of veiling of truth.

3.6. Numbers

Shafak's novel is packed with certain numbers that are known for their literary, if not cultural, significance. Number 'forty' prevails throughout the novel and is associated with almost every character in the novel: Ella is forty [1]; Aziz tells her that "there are forty degrees between man and God" [1]; the novice describes his suffering in "the first forty days of my trial" [1]; Rumi has a recurrent dream "for the last forty days" [1], and when Shams leaves Konya, Rumi "spend[s] forty days in chilla, thinking of the forty rules" [1]; Aladdin gets caught eavesdropping "exactly forty days after my father and the dervish had cloistered themselves in the library" [1]; "the day [Desert Rose] left the brothel was the coldest in forty years" [1], and when Desert Rose decides to reject her old self, she goes "to the public bath and wash[es] [herself] forty times with forty prayers" [1]. This number stands for the suffering on the path of spiritual salvation towards which all these characters aspire; and "in mystic thought forty symbolizes the ascent from one level to a higher one and spiritual awakening" [1]. Number 'three' is also prominent: when Shams leaves his homeland "three smells accompany my memories of this place: cut wood, poppy-seed bread, and the soft, crisp smell of snow" [1]; Shams gets the approval to travel and see Rumi on his third plea [1] ; In the velvet box handed to him by Baba Zaman, Shams finds "three things: a silver mirror, a silk handkerchief, and a glass flask of ointment" [1]. Rumi acknowledges that he "has been blessed with three things [he] hold[s] most dear: knowledge, virtue, and the capacity to help others find God" [1]; Shams "stepped into a street where three odors loomed in the air: sweat, perfume, and lust" [1]; and most significant is that "three years after [Rumi and Shams] met, they were tragically separated" [1]. Number three pertains to the notion of self-sacrifice for the sake of others. The use of numbers 'four' and 'seven' is also evident and they correspond to the levels of the reading of the Quran and the "maqamat l nafs" [1] respectively.

Not only are numbers involved in the making of the novel, but also the study of the occult significance of alphabetical letters. Letters are directly associated with Shams and Aziz, perhaps to evoke a sense of affinity that extends to the resemblance they share and which Ella has noticed. In "Sweet Blasphemy", Shams recollects when he gets to know that the name of the spiritual-mate is 'Rumi', "one by one, [he] said the letters of his name: the powerful, lucid R; the velvety U; the intrepid and self-confident M; and the mysterious I; yet to be solved" [1]. Interestingly enough, it is not in "Sweet Blasphemy" that the meaning of 'I' is realized; its significance is figured out in the course of Aziz's life whose development is represented by the significance of the constituents of the word "Sufi"; and this accentuates the intrinsic relationship between the two narratives. Aziz has undergone drastic changes which he labels after the four letters of the word "'sufi". The first turning point is the moment his beloved, Margot, died; the second is when he encounters the Sufis for the first time ; the third is when he hears about Shams of Tabriz and decides not to go to Mecca as he has planned; and the fourth when he notices that "from a man getting ready to die, he had turned into a man falling in love at the most unexpected time" [1].

3.7. Definitions, symbolism, imagery, and titles

To the journey of development of Ella and Rumi belongs also the element of definition, which essentially corresponds to the evolving of their characters from stagnancy and negative stability represented by the "Earth", which stands for "the things that are solid, absorbed, and still" [1], to transcendence evoked by "Void", which stands for the things that are present in their absence" [1]. Love took hold of both, Ella and Rumi, "at first through its presence, then through its absence—" [1]. Only with the absence of their beloved soul-mates does the development of Ella and Rumi reach its completion.

Not less important is symbolism which is "characterized by a shimmering surface of suggested meanings without a denotative core . . . it tends towards a rich plurality" [4]. The most significant symbol in the novel is the "silk scarf", which epitomizes protection and sacrifice for the

sake of others. Before he departs to meet Rumi, Shams confides to Baba Zaman that "his part in the story resembled the silkworm. He and Rumi would retreat into a cocoon of Divine Love, only to come out when the time was ripe and the precious silk woven. But eventually, for the silk to survive, the silkworm had to die . . . It takes the lives of hundreds of silkworms to produce one silk scarf" [1].

Another prevailing symbol is the "mirror" that is directly associated with the true reflection of the self: "cities are erected on spiritual columns. Like giant mirrors, they reflect the hearts of their residents" (p.49); Baba Zaman tells Shams that "the mirror will show [him] [his] inner beauty" [1]. Rumi sums up the significance of the mirror when he speaks about Shams' effect on him: "like a mirror that reflects what is absent rather than present, he shows you the void in your soul – the void you have resisted seeing. . . . For me, that mirror is Shams of Tabriz" [1]; Shams also reflects on his companionship with Rumi declaring that they "had experienced an exceptional beauty and learned what was like to encounter infinity through two mirrors reflecting each other endlessly" [1].

The novel is also pregnant with imagery that pertains to the journey motif, to knowledge, and to self-discovery, mainly and most importantly, water imagery: Desert Rose describes Rumi's voice as "a mountain stream fed by the melting snow" [1]; Rumi sees Shams as "the sea of Mercy and Grace" [1]; "Love is the water of life" [1]; young Rumi walking behind his father was described by Ibn Arabi as "an ocean . . . walking behind a lake" [1]; Shams and Rumi were referred to by Master Seyyid Burhaneddin as "two rivers meet and flow into the ocean of Divine Love as one single watercourse" [1]; Shams teaches Kimya that "the Quran is a gushing river" of many levels to dive into [1]; Kerra also is aware that "religions are like rivers: They all flow to the same sea" [1]; these are but few examples, yet it is worth noting that water is also an extension or a kind of mirror that has the power of reflection.

Not only do symbols and imagery have crucial roles in the narrative, but even the two titles in this novel are endowed with special significance. As Lodge (1992) states, "the title of a novel is part of the text—the first part of it, in fact, that we encounter – and therefore has considerable power to attract and condition the reader's attention" [4]. Firstly, "the forty rules of love" is misleading, because the first impression it gives is that it is just a love story, love as an earthly one. This is perhaps an invitation from the author to the reader to be aware of the deceptiveness of appearances, and to the danger of jumping into conclusions; besides, the word "rules" connotes something to be dictated or strictly followed, yet this is the farthest from what the novel is about; "Religious rules and prohibitions are important, but they should not be turned into unquestionable taboos" [1]. In the novel, rules are not imposed but are found within the soul and are illuminated through personal experience: "individual rules need to be read in the light of the whole. And the whole is concealed in the essence" [1]. Secondly, "Sweet Blasphemy" is a more direct statement of blurring the stereotypical dichotomies of right and wrong, black and white, haram and halal: "in this life stay away from all kinds of extremities, for they will destroy your inner balance" [1]. This has echoes in both the sub-narrative (other than being just a title), and the main one: in Shams story to the judge, when Moses attempted to reform the shepherd's prayer which the former saw as blasphemy, God tells Moses that "his words might have been blasphemy to your ears, but to me they were sweet blasphemy" [1]. Ella's relation to Aziz prior to their face-to-face encounter is envisioned as follows: "so maybe it was blasphemy for a married woman with children to write intimate e-mails to a stranger, but given the platonic nature of their relationship, Ella deduced, it was sweet blasphemy" [1].

Finally, the forty rules of love are not stated arbitrarily or just for their own sake, they represent turning points in the enlightenment not only of the main characters, but of almost all other characters. Into some of these rules, Shafak also integrates the element of storytelling or parables [1] that accentuate the meaning of these stories and endow them with solid validity.

IV. Conclusion

Although Shafak employs a rich diversity of techniques into her double-narrative, she skillfully merges them into oneness that establishes the solid organic unity of her novel. "In reading…any…novel, we enter a unique linguistic universe; we learn a new language designed to carry a particular experience" [5]. Shafak's novel is indeed a vehicle of conveying her message— a cry for warring people to find love within themselves and transcend their deep-seated animosity and unite into oneness. Nevertheless, for David Lodge, "A novel is . . . defined as 'a perpetual pattern or structure possessing qualities as a whole that cannot be described merely as a sum of its parts" [4]. Hence, one should not envision the novel as a mosaic portrait of diverse techniques; rather, one should always look beyond this portrait in order to reach for the metaphysical meaning lurking within the depth of the whole—in Elif Shafak's words: "Don't reach for the details at the expense of the whole" [1].

V. References

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