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A feminist reading of the Kurdish novels

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1.Introduction

Aim

During the recent years, the Kurdish novel has developed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Despite the unprecedented development of this literary genre, the relevant research on the various aspects of the Kurdish novel is quite behind when it comes to popularity. In my research, I intend to have a critical reading of the Kurdish novel based on a feminist approach. In other words, I will select some Kurdish novels based on some practical criteria and I aim to analyse them as far as the construction of gender is considered. I will look at the way sexual and gender identities are described in the textual body of the selected novels. At the same time, I aim to see how presumptions for womanhood and manhood as cultural constructions have been described in the novels. I will also look at the way the female body and female sexuality are associated with sin and taboos. The world of the novels can be seen as a cultural product, which has a mutual relation with the real world in which is produced. On the one hand, the novels can be seen as literary voices of the very context in which they are produced. Conversely, the world of the novels can affect the subjectivity of the readers and reproduce the gender role as it is constructed in them.

Theory and method

The main approach of my study is text analysis where theory and method are very much related. Based on a close reading of the selected novels I will interpret them based on my argument about gender construction. Literature researcher Palm believes that all literature research has, regardless of theoretical and methodological approach, its basis in text

interpretation.¹ Thus, text interpretation is an integral part of my approach towards the selected novels. However, it must be emphasised that no interpretation can function as the final and end meaning of any given text². In other words, any close reading and interpretation is depended on the interpreter's viewpoint and can not be justified as a general truth. In fact, each interpretation provides the reader with an alternative approach. Palm points out that any interpretation must be regarded as a proposal for a possible meaning³.

Despite the relativity of the interpretation, the theoretical frame of each reading determines the boundaries of the reading of the text. Following a feminist reading of the selected novels, I aim to use the main theoretical debates outlined by the feminist theoreticians who deal with gender systems. During the 1970s the feminist researchers focused above all on the revelation of patriarchal structures constructed in the novels of male authors. As an example, one can refer to Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* from 1969. Elaine Showalter's findings in her studies on the produced texts and her coinage of the central concept of 'gynotexts' provides a good theoretical base for analysing the novels and find out how gender policy has been consciously or unconsciously followed in producing the texts.⁴

During the 1980s some radical changes occurred in the field of literary studies as far as the feminist perspective is considered. The feminist literary criticism can be generally divided in two schools, the Anglo-

¹ P. Anders, 'att tolka texten' (to interpretate the text), in S. Bergsten (ed.), *litteraturvetenskap-en inledning* (literary theory- an introduction), (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 1998), p. 189.

² Ibid., pp. 189-190.

³ U. Lundqvist, *Läsa, tolka, förstå - Litteraturpedagogiska modeller* (Read, interpret, understand – educationalist model of literature) (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1995): P. 16.

⁴ L. Larsson 'Feministisk litteraturkritik i förvandling' (Feminist literature criticism in change), in S. Bergsten (ed.), *litteraturvetenskap-en inledning* (literary theory- an introduction), (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 1998): pp. 117-118.

Americans and the French school. While Elaine Showalter, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar are amongst those that used to be considered Anglo-Americans, Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray are seen as a part of French feminism.⁵ The French feminists, influenced by post-structuralism, take up the function of language with mimesis and representation⁶. Some of them, e.g. Cixous and Kristeva speak about a special female language⁷. They find this female language mainly in modernist novels, for example in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, where language is more liquid and fragmented than the symbolic male language.

Among the influential feminist scholars and literary critics, Judith Butler has a central position. In analysing the gender system in the selected novels for this study, her ideas will be frequently consulted.

As the construction and function of the gender system will be the main focus of my reading of the selected novels, I will discuss the concept of gender and the major relevant theories. The theory about the gender system is used primarily in order to explain the difference of power between women and men. The gender system shapes and influences our attitudes about womanhood and manhood. At the same time and through this gender system, I am looking at the society creating the meaning of the female body and her sexuality, which is associated with sin. This gender system shapes our understanding of the female body. As Lena Gemzöe says, dualistic thinking informs our psychic lives, expectations

⁵ Ibid., pp. 121-122.

⁶ P. Barry, *Beginning theory – an introduction to literary and cultural theory*, (Manchester: Manchester University press, 1995): pp. 121-133.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 121-133.

and attitudes in creating differences between men and women. Everything is inter- dependent in the relationship between women and men.⁸

Gender system

The gender system shapes and influences our attitudes about womanhood and manhood. The gender system is a social structure of gender and creates a kind of marketing for men and women in society. According to Butler, gender is an act that has been practiced, much like a play, and we, as the actors make this script a reality repeatedly by performing these actions.⁹

The most emphasised point in liberal feminism is the participation of women in the political sphere.¹⁰ Two other theorists, who see gender as institutionalised systems, are Cecilia L. Ridgeway, and Shelley J. Correll. According to them, gender is an institutionalised system of social practices which constitutes people as two considerably different categories.¹¹ Moreover, as said by Raine Dozier Source sex is both a physical characteristic and also socially constructed.¹²

⁸ L. Gemzöe, *Feminism*. (Stockholm: Falth & halth, Smedjebacken, 2002): pp. 81-82

⁹ J. Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory", *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (Dec., 1988) : Pp.519-531

¹⁰ The core of liberal feminism is the struggle for women to enjoy the same fundamental democratic freedoms - and rights as men. Women's inferior position in society is seen as a consequence of the historical development which has eliminated women from political and legal rights, and their participation in working life on equal terms. Instead they have been referred to the family's private sphere. Lena. Gemzöe. *Feminism*. (Stockholm: Falth & halth, Smedjebacken 2002): p. 81.

¹¹ Cecilia L. Ridgeway and Shelley J. Correll "Unpacking the gender system a theoretical Perspective on Gender Beliefs and Social Relations", in journal *Gender and Society*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Aug 2004), pp. 510-531. At p. 510.

¹² R. Dozier Source. "Beards, Breasts, and Bodies: Doing Sex in a Gendered World", in journal *Gender and Society*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Jun., 2005), pp. 297-316. p. 298.

The gender system shapes and influences our attitudes about womanhood and manhood. Gender system is a social structure of gender and creates a kind of marketing for men and women in society. According to Butler gender is an act that has been practiced, much like a play, and we, as the actors make this script a reality over and over again by performing these actions.¹³ As Lena Gemzöe says, dualistic thinking informs our psychic lives, expectations and attitudes in creating differences between men and women. Everything is inter-dependent in the relationship between women and men.¹⁴ The most emphasised point in liberal feminism is the participation of women in the political sphere.¹⁵ Those aspects will be examined in the novels following a discussion.

Judith Butler's theories in "*Könet brinner*"¹⁶ (Sex is on fire) are very extensive and broad, but I will focus on the parts that are most relevant to some of these novels. Butler's most important point is that there is no such thing as a fixed sex identity uninfluenced by society and culture.¹⁷ Butler sees sex/gender identity as something that has derived from a heterosexual gender system and means that what we call male and female - both in the anatomical or biological and cultural sense - is constructed through a type of game with reflections and obvious codes.¹⁸

¹³ J. Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory", *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (Dec., 1988), Pp.519-531.

¹⁴ L. Gemzöe, *Feminism* (Stockholm: Falth & halth, Smedjebacken, 2002): p. 81.

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¹⁶ "*Könet brinner*" is a book, in this book consisted of collected essayse by Judith Butler, all these essays have been translated to swedish.

¹⁷ J. Butler, *Könet brinner: (Sex is on fire)*. Translation of Karin Lindqvist. (Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 2005). pp. 46 – 47.

¹⁸ J. Butler, (1999). *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York.. p. 7.

Butler says that sex is in fact the same thing as gender. In other words even sex is socially constructed.¹⁹ Butler is not the only one who has retyped sex as something which is designed and created from the culture. We have Simone de Beauvoir's well-known quotation in this context: "One is not born to be woman, one becomes it."²⁰ Moreover, according to Laqueur, both sex and gender are cultural constructions, and gender precedes sex.²¹ Tollin and Törnqvist assert that the sexes have no inborn characteristics, but it is repeated imitations that create and legitimate such true.²²

Scope of the study and the selection of the novels

The Kurdish novel is a general reference to the novels written in Kurdish which consist of two main dialects, Sorani and Kurmanji.²³ The chosen novels for this study are in Sorani, mainly because of the more central role of this dialect in the current political and linguistic sphere amongst the Kurds. As application of close reading needs a detailed focus on the text I had to limit the number of the novels to be used for this study. At the same time the issue of the selection of the material must more or less be representative of the main trend in Kurdish novelistic writing. Among the criteria that I had for choosing the Kurdish novels for this study I can mention the success of the authors and their popularity among the reading

¹⁹ Butler, 1999, pp. 46-47.

²⁰ S. De Beauvoir, *Det andra könet* (The Second sex), Trans: Inczedy- A. Gobos, Å. Moberg, (Stockholm: Norhaven Paperback A/A, 2002): p. 325.

²¹ T. Laqueur, *Om könens uppkomst. Hur kroppen blev kvinnlig och manlig*, translate. Öjevind Lång (Stockholm: Brutus Östling, 1994). P. 127.

²² K. Tollin. M. Törnqvist, *Feministisk teori i rörliga bilder (Feminist theory in movable pictures.)* (Lund: Grahns Tryckeri AB, 2005), P.119.

²³ For a detailed study of Kurdish novel see H. Ahmadzadeh, *Nation and Novel, A study of Persian and Kurdish Narrative Discourse*, (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 2003).

public. The perception of the works by the reading public and their acquired position among the literary critics are further criteria for the selection of the novels. Based on these assumptions the works of two Kurdish novelists will be the subject of this study, i.e. Bekhtyar Ali from northern Kurdistan (Iraqi Kurdistan) and Ata Nahayee from eastern Kurdistan (Iranian Kurdistan).

As one of the most prominent Kurdish novelists, Bekhtyar Ali, has by now published five novels: 1. *Mergî Taqaney Dûhem* (The Death of the Second Only Child) which was his first novel and published in 1997. 2. *Ewarey Perwane* (Perwane's Evening) which was published in 1998 in Stockholm. 3. *Dûhemîn Henarî Dunya* (The Last Pomegranate of the World) which was published in Sulaymaniya in 2002. 4. *Şarî mosîqare spîyekan* (The City of the White Musicians) which was published in 2005 in Sulaymaniya. 5. *Xezelnûs û Baxekanî Xeyal* (Lyric Writer and the Gardens of Fantasy) which was published in Sulaymaniya in 2008. Among Ali's novels I choose two of them, i.e. *Ewarey Perwane* (Perwane's Evening) and *Şarî mosîqare spîyekan* (The City of the White Musicians). The reason for choosing these two novels and excluding his other three novels is the degree of popularity of these two novels in comparison with his other novels. *Ewarey Perwane* has by now been published in a third edition. In fact, amongst the literary circles Ali's name is mainly associated with this novel. Another reason for choosing this novel is the central position of the protagonist who is a girl and who shares her name with the title of the novel. Ali's other novel in my selection, *Şarî mosîqare spîyekan* (The City of the White Musicians), is in fact the most circulated novel in Kurdistan and even in the Diaspora. According to a note by the publisher on the cover of the book it is published in 10 000 copies, which is an unprecedented number in the history of Kurdish literature. The success of the book was so prominent

that the publisher offered 10 000 American dollars to the author for the publishing of the book. The second reason for choosing this novel is its content which deals with the infamous operations known as Anfal at the time of the regime of Saddam Hossein and the outcomes of the Kurdish uprising following the Golf War in 1991. It is important to see the gender system during these crucial periods of the history of the Kurds in Iraqi Kurdistan.

The second author, Ata Nahayee has by now published three novels, *Gûlî Shoran* (The Shoran flower), which was published in 1998 in eastern Kurdistan (Iranian Kurdistan), *Balindekanî Dem Ba* (Birds of the wind) which was published in 2002, and *Grewî Bextî Helale* (Betting on Helale's Future) which was published in 2007. Of these three novels I chose *Gûlî Shoran* (The Shoran flower) and *Grewî Bextî Helale* (Betting on Helale's Future). The reasons for choosing these two novels and not his other are mainly pragmatic. In fact, *Gûlî Shoran*, has a very strong intersexual connection with a well-known Kurdish traditional ballad which has culturally been very central to the Kurdish public as a part of the Kurdish oral literature. It is important to follow up how the traditional roles in the traditional versions of the story become the subject of change in the modern condition. It is interesting to see the way that the gender system has functioned in two different contexts, traditional and modern. The reason behind choosing *Grewî Bextî Helale* (Betting on Helale's Future) is the central position of the main character as a woman. The narration of Helale's life from her childhood in Kurdistan and later on in a war area in Kurdistan and finally in Stockholm where she spends her final years of her life, provides the reader with a detailed account of the conditions in which a Kurdish woman grows up. Her observations and experiences can be seen as a base in which the gender system functions.

Bextyar Ali and Ata Nahayee's novels provide the reader with reliable material that can be used for an interpretation from a feminist point of view. Methodologically I will provide my research with a plot summary of each novel and the detailed analysis of each novel to shed light on the process of constructing the gender roles.

2. Grewî Bexî Helale (Betting on Helale's Future)

Summary of the novel

The 378 pages long novel consists of nine chapters. At the beginning of the novel we find Helale in a Swedish hospital where she is fighting death after having been stabbed by her husband, Shêrzad. Through flashbacks and stream of consciousness the reader finds out about the details of her life. Even if there are no clear references to the time and place of the story one can easily understand, through numerous allusions, the time and the place. Helale is the daughter of a Kurdish revolutionary, Mîrza, who has spent 15 years in prison in Iran during the reign of the Shah i.e. in the time before the Revolution. Helale who had regularly been encouraged by her father to act as a boy is also an odd character. Since her childhood she has dressed as a boy and has played with boys. Her father likes her to be a boy, assuming that by doing this she can be freer. It is just the father who is a model for her, not her mother.

After the revolution in Iran and following the clashes between the Kurds and the new Iranian regime, Mîrza's family leave the city and go to a distant mountainous area where they live in a village. When the village is under the bombardment and attacks of the regime, Mîrza's family flee to Sulaymaniya in southern (Iraqi) Kurdistan while Mîrza himself remains in the village where he is one of the cadres of a Kurdish political party. As soon as Mîrza's family hear that he has married a young beautiful widow they return from Sulaymaniya to the same village that he lives in. Under the pressure of the children especially pressure from Helale, Mîrza is obliged to divorce his new wife, Rana. Helale starts to work at the radio station as a program producer. During this period she gets familiar with a young boy whose name is Braymok. He has rather

strange characteristics. He introduces a program on Kurdish literature for the radio. Soon after their familiarization Helale and Braymok produce the program together. Helale falls in love with him, despite the fact that Helale's father does not like Braymok. Braymok wants to join the armed teams to go and fight against the regime. While with a team of fighters he becomes victim of a snowstorm. Helale goes to Sweden with her brother and sister and her uncle's family. She studies at the university and finds a job at the Kurdish division within the Swedish Radio. Soon she is contacted by her parents who are still in Kurdistan about helping Shêrzad arrive in Sweden. Shêrzad is the son of one of Mîrza's friends who has joined the party as a fighter. He used to visit Helale's home in the village before she left Kurdistan. It takes a couple of years until Helale marries him and they start a life together. In the beginning they have a nice life. However, soon the problems arise. They have a daughter whose name is Arezu. Nevertheless, they divorce after frequent big quarrels. Shêrzad once beats Helale who then consequently finds herself in the hospital, she is unconscious and there is where she spends the last hours of her life.²⁴

Analysis

It is your destiny Helale that a dagger, mountain after mountain, city after city, country after country, follows you to hit your chest here in Stockholm, in the district of Flemingsberg, on the forth floor of building number 18.²⁵

At the very beginning of the novel, the presence of "xencer" (dagger) is a symbol of a patriarchal system and a symbol of a power which has been transformed from the old generation of men to the young ones. It is clear that "xencer" is a symbol of manhood and power in the Kurdish society. This "xencer" has been brought by Shêrzad to Stockholm. He received it

²⁴ For the summary of the novel I have used Hashem Ahmadzadeh, *Contesting identities in the works of the Kurdish novelist Ata Nahayee*, (forthcoming, 2009).

²⁵ A. Nahayee, *Grewî bextî Helale* (Betting on Halala's fortune), (Sulaymaniya: Ranch, 2007): p. 7.

as a present from Helale's father and he stabbed Helale with this "xencer". As Hashem Ahmadzadeh rightly points out "The dagger can be seen as a reference to the tribal anger and hate which later on victimizes Helale as one who had distanced herself from the traditional way of life".²⁶ Through flashbacks the reader is informed about Helale's life which from her early childhood was full of protests against the patriarchal system. Through the discussion between Helale and Shêrzad, we are informed about women's right and opportunities for them in Sweden. At the same time we know, through flashbacks, that Helale always has argued about women's participation in the public sphere.²⁷ She emphasizes that she has the right to foster her child and to prevent Sherzad from beating her by having the police on her side (p. 14), through comparisons between the situation of the women in Sweden and in Kurdistan.

Helale insistently argues about the norms and perceptions of the female and the male, division of work and participation in politics. For example when the question of the right of living with her child becomes a matter of dispute between her and Shêrzad, she firmly defends her right of living with Arezu in case of any divorce with Shêrzad by stating that: "You know well that in case of divorce and separation, the child will be given to the mother" (p.14).

When Helale was a child she used to play with the boys and she mostly performed very tough roles. She usually referred to herself as a revolutionary soldier (p. 54). These sorts of behaviours by a woman, in a gender system which does not allow the women to cross the already defined roles of men and women can lead to positive images of female practices and qualities. As Palm Morris argues, this sort of description

²⁶ A. Ahmadzadeh, "Contesting identities in the works of the Kurdish novelist Ata Nahayee," (forthcoming, 2009): p. 12.

²⁷ A. Nahayee, pp. 11-16.

can be used to increase women's self-esteem and lend authority to their political stress.²⁸ Helale suggests that women's right and freedom is far from the cliché rhetoric that some men present (p. 188). Moreover, Helale plays a role in a revolutionarily theatre, Jean D'Arc, and highlights her as a symbol for freedom and rights (p. 196).

Education is an important issue for Helale, and she argues for the role of education in being independent and free (pp. 80-81). Here we can easily see the foundations of liberal feminist ideas about women's rights. Helale represents the most fundamental believes of liberal feminism, which highlights the women's contribution to political life and participation in the public sphere.²⁹

In contrast to Helale, her mother represents a traditional woman who cannot see any role for herself beyond the affirmative position of her husband. She is a symbol for the conservative perspective about being a woman who is convinced to have a husband as a shadow which gives the children and the wife security (p. 33). In fact, man as a father and as a husband is associated with power (pp. 87, 96,101). Helale's mother whose name, ironically, is Saadat (happiness) has fixed ideas about the norms that already exist. Saaadat is a conservative woman and struggles to maintain a hierarchy that confirms the man's superiority over the woman's inferiority. Saadat's conservative views and sometimes passive character has been shown through the novel.³⁰ Talking to Helale, who is considering leaving her husband, because of some alleged relations with another man through telephone, Saadat argues that if a woman leaves her husband in her country to meet somebody else, she will be beheaded. Such a crime is going to be avenged only by spilling blood (p. 31). Saadat

²⁸ P. Morris, *Literature and Feminism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993): p. 7.

²⁹ L. Gemzöe, *Feminism*. (Stockholm: Bilda, 2002): p. 81.

³⁰ A. Nahayee, pp. 31, 33, 48, 49, 52, 56.

reproduces the typical patriarchal approaches towards the gender system. In a hot quarrel with her husband, who is encouraging her to act as a boy, she shouts that Helale is not supposed to play with the boys. She argues that Helale is not a boy, but a girl. If something happens to Helale, what will she be able to do? If she is raped what can she do (p. 56)? According to Saadat, the body is all that a woman has, and her body is taboo and associated with sin. There are not any discussions about men's bodies, because as Moira Gatens argued representations of the human body are often the male body³¹ which is neutral and not associated with sin and taboo. When Helale rejects this argument and asks about the soul of the woman, Saadat replies:

gyanî? ...gyanî afret le barimtey leshîdaye. Le barimitey ew samane gewre û grane daye. Hich afretêky aqil ew samane gewre û girane leber dest û chawy chilêsî xelik frê nadat (p. 67).

The soul? A women's soul is a prisoner in her body. It is kept by this great and valuable asset. Any clever woman will not let go of this asset because of people's greedy intentions.

Hearing that Helale has gone to a discotheque in Sweden, Saadat blames her sister in law and says: "Look! Helale is a girl. She is weak. How can a weak girl like her go to such a place (p. 243)? Here we see Saadat's quite conservative mentality which represents a deeply patriarchal society. Moreover, the way she describes the woman's body, as associated with sin, shows an obvious dichotomy of body and soul. The sin associated with women's body is nothing more than her sexuality. Here the perceptions of what is feminine and masculine have been created. The system of binary oppositions explains how this sort of dichotomy contributes to the articulation of a "negative" and "weak"

³¹ M. Gatens. "Corporeal Representation in/and the body politic" in K. Conboy, N. Medina, and S. Stanbury (ed.), *Writhing on the body, Female embodiment and feminist theory* (New York: Columbia University press, 1997): p.84.

female vis-à-vis a positive and strong male. In fact, our thoughts are formed by the hierarchy of those binary oppositions. Gemzöe shows a series of these oppositions which contribute to the organization of our thoughts:

Male / Female

Subjects / objects

rational / emotion

Intellect / body

Independence / dependence

active / passive

Culture / natural

Strong/ weak

Order / chaos³²

According to the gender system, boys are supposed to be strong and intrepid. That is why Helale fights her fears, and tries to portray herself as strong as the boys. She rejects following the normative beliefs according to which a girl is weak, scared and quiet. Her father encourages her to be brave by saying that he does not want a daughter who is afraid of even her own shadow. He wants a boy who is not frightened of anything (52). He appreciates Helale as being a lion, a man (p. 56). Helale, replying to her father's encouragement, emphasises that she is not afraid of anything (p. 52). She does not cry. Her father had told her that a brave boy never cries (p. 105). She is against her mother's idea that a girl must even be frightened by her own shadow. Otherwise she will face many problems (p. 52).

Helale's fight against all the norms and perceptions of the female and the male division of work and participation in politics is clear.

³² Gemoze, p. 83.

However, Helale's ambivalent sex identity can be seen from a gender perspective.

Sex as a constructed identity

In this part of my analysis I am going to give an explanation about Helale's sexual identity. I will apply Judith Butler's famous theory about sex and sexual identity, as cultural constructions.

Helale behaves as a boy in the male costume. She leaves no doubt about her/his sex. For example one of her father's friends tells her father that his boy (referring to Helale) is also interested in weapon as his other brothers are. This man asks Helale: "What is your name my son?" (p. 48). This incident can be interpreted as a good example about how sex has been constructed. Helale, by wearing boy's clothes and through her behaviour, plays a boy's role. Nobody can see that, because she constantly copies behaviours which belong to the men in the gender system. As has been argued by Cecilia L. Ridgeway and Shelley J. Correll, "sex categorization automatically activates gender stereotypes"³³

At the same time we see Helale's acts which, according to the gender system are a "masculine" behaviour. One can imitate all the cultural icons that women and men have through clothing, way of talking, and way of walking. We see here in the text just as Butler argues that gender is a cultural tool that allows and leads us into a "natural sex" and what is called "natural sex" according to her should be seen as an effect of a cultural construction that gender describes.³⁴ At the same time, Ridgeway and Correll argue that: sex categorization based on shape and behaviour such as e.g., dress, hairstyles, and voice tone are culturally

³³ Cecilia L. Ridgeway and Shelley J. Correll, "Unpacking the Gender System: A Theoretical Perspective on Gender Beliefs and Social Relations", in *Gender and Society*, Vol. 18. No. 4 (Agu, 2004): pp. 510- 531. at p. 515.

³⁴ B. Judith, *Könet brinner* pp. 46-47.

supposed to represent physical sex differences. So as Ridgeway and Correll state men and women have yet to construct their appearance according to cultural gender rules in order to be accepted in the gender system.³⁵

Seeing Helale in boys' clothes costume and her masculine behaviour shows that the body has not a significant role in identifying one as feminine or masculine. In fact, there are cultural codes such as clothing and behaviour that create masculinity and femininity. According to Butler, there is not a body which is natural "in itself", but it is the discourse that gives different meanings to the body (biological). According to Butler, "there is not a stable, constant body immaculate discursive of speech."³⁶

Helale's motive to dress like boys becomes clear when she tells us that she uses men's clothing as she needs to be able to move freely in the society. The categories consist of male and female and the existing of a sex order that exist in society, restrict the individual frames and its freedom.³⁷ Helale greets like men (p. 170) and nobody knows that she is not a boy. As we see here, sex is not hiding any innate truths, but it is the repeated imitation which creates and legitimizes these truths. Butler argues that gender can be seen as just a series of repeated acts that are far from being natural. She argues that sex is always felt as something

³⁵ Ridgeway and Correll. P. 515.

³⁶ S. Danius, "Själen är kroppens fångelser: om den vanskliga distinktionen mellan kön och genus" in C. Linden & U. Milles (eds.), *Feministisk bruks anvisning*. (Stockholm: ePan, 2004). P. 160.

³⁷ K. Tollin, M. Törnqvist, *Feministisk teori i rörliga bilder* (Lund: Grahns Tryckeri AB, 2005). P. 119.

natural, but it requires social and traditional necessities to be maintained and fixed.³⁸

³⁸ J. Butler, *Genusetrubbel* (Gender Trouble), translated; Suzanne Almqvist, (Göteborg: Daidalos, 2007). P. 68.

3. *Gûlî Shoran* (The Shoran flower)

Summary of the novel

At the beginning of the novel we find Las, the son of Wisu Aga who has returned home after being disappeared for 15 years. It is clear that Las joined the forces of the Kurdistan Republic in Mehabad, but we don't know where he had been and why it was said that he was dead. He had disappeared during the collapse of the republic of Mehabad. Even if there are no clear references to the time and place of the story one can easily understand, through numerous allusions, the time and the place. He left his family during World War II. Now he is at home again after fifteen years, everything is different for him and he has not been welcomed by his mother "Daye Gûlê". When Las went fifteen years ago, he had a wife "Xanzad" and a son "Yadgar" together with a brother "Ferche". Through flashbacks the reader finds out about the details of the life of Las and his family during his childhood. One time when he is a child, Las has a dream about going and bringing "Gûlî Shoran"³⁹ He went, in order to bring "Gûlî Şoran" which is a symbol of freedom in this novel.

From the very beginning after Las returns, Daye Gûlê shows Las that she is not happy with he has returned, through her silent and friendly answer. The reason that Daye Gûlê is not happy is that Xanzad remarried with his brother Ferche. When Las received the information about his wife and his son Yadgar from his mother he decides to leave home. During these seven days, Xanzad and Ferche feels guilty and they do not know what they can do to rebuild everything. They are helpless. Yadgar tries to visit his father seven days after his father's return. However, he never

³⁹ "Gûlî Shoran" is a Kurdish ballad, there, Las who are in love with a girl has to go to bring "Shoran's flower" for his lover in order to make her happy. Moreover, Las in the *Gûlî Shoran's* novel is going to bring with him freedom for himself and his nation. Moreover, as Ahmadzadeh mentioned in (*Nation and the Novel*: p. 258), there are three names of the characters that are from Kurdish folklore figures (Las, Xanzad, and Ferche).

meets his father because Las had left his mother's house two hours earlier. Later Yadgar asks people about his father and he hears from somebody that his father is staying in a nearby village. He then decides to go to the village but it is too late. His father has died.

Womanhood and manhood according to a gender system

"jn le delaqey chawy pyawewe derwanin" (Gûlî Shoran. P. 22)
(Women see through men's eyes)

As we see here, the narrator believes women see everything through the eyes of men and it means that they cannot have their own opinion about different subjects. In this situation the woman does not have any position; she is waiting for her husband's decisions. At the same time, women see themselves as weak and passive human beings. They have the same opinion as men have about women and womanhood. The woman's mentality is a very patriarchal mentality, moreover, for her to be a good woman and play the exact role of her gender role she must listen to the men around her. To have a lower position in contrast to the man is something normal and natural for her. She knows that she can't travel alone, but, if she has to travel, in that case the company of a man is important for her, without a man it is absolutely not easy for her to travel. (P. 64). In short, as has been shown by Ann, J. Cahill, the cultural image of gender emphasizes the legitimacy of male authority.⁴⁰

At the same time, to be a woman in the Kurdish society is more paradoxical and problematic. Kurdish women simultaneously have to be

⁴⁰ Ann. J Cahill., 'Foucault, Rape, and the Construction of the Feminine Body', in *Journal of Hypatia*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (winter, 2000): P. 171.

shy and strong; they must show respect for the norms in society and at the same time, Kurdish women must be stronger, and different from all other women in the world. For instance Las said to his wife Xanzad:

“Daweşêy chi jine kurdêkî” (P. 67). By hearing that, Xanzad has to remember that she is a Kurdish woman, so it means that she is different from other women, in that case she can not be scared of anything. Something which is very interesting is that despite the fact that women in the Kurdish society have been oppressed all the time, they have still had the opportunity to move themselves freely, particularly when they were seeking for a lost son who had went to the mountains to struggle and fight against the government. As Ahmadzadeh has mentioned, on the one hand, Daye Gûlê is “the most pitiful character of the story⁴¹. On the other hand, mothers are the people with the most power to influence their sons and to make them change their minds and go home with their mothers. Daye Gûlê tried to go and find her son. (Pp. 109 -119).

Ridgeway and Correll asserted that “gender is an institutionalized system of social practices for constituting people as two significantly different categories, men and women”.⁴² The way the narrator is talking about womanhood and the way a wife have to be are patriarchal. The narrator tries to describe a husband from the wife’s point of view which is again very patriarchal. For instance, according to the narrator a husband’s reaction when he is going out for his job has to be like that:

chman pêwyste afret? Jnekey katêk beshermewe chrchî pantolekey bo rastdekatewe, leber xoyewe blê: ”xoshî û selametît.” [...] bo nîwero xwardnêkî xosh saz ke.” jne be shermewe serdaxa û blê “ key xwardnî xosht nebwe?” kabra [...] blê “hemîshe shtî xoshm bwe” (Pp. 130-131)

⁴¹ Ahmadzadeh. P. 263

⁴² Ridgeway and Correll. P. 510.

What do we need woman? The woman shyly saying: your health and well being, while straitening the wrinkles on his trousers.” [...] Prepare a good meal for this afternoon. The woman lowering her head in shyness, saying: Has there ever been a time when you have not had good meals? The husband [...] saying: I have always had good meals”

Through this description of the ideal and typical relationship between a wife and a husband, one can easily see how a woman can give a man positive and relaxed feelings, she can make her husband happy when she can play her traditional gender role (do housework, cooking, take care of his children, perfectly. Moreover, it is the woman’s duty to insure the happiness of the man⁴³. As Hashem Ahmadzadeh pointed out correctly, the woman in Gûlî Shoran has nothing to do except for being a housewife⁴⁴.

In the gender system not just women but also men have to behave according to cultural norms. According to Ridgeway and Correll, through gender systems, differences and inequality has been created in the society.⁴⁵

Awr leyektrinedanewe napyawy nîye. Be deng yektrewe hatin azayetye.” (P. 21)

“to pyawy, bro le shwênyan bgerê. Belam em zeyfe mindalekey debê lêre bin. (P. 25)

(Not being there for one and another is not unmanly. To be there when needed is a heroic action” “You are a man, go and look for them. But the weak one and the child must stay here)

⁴³R. Lal, “Gender and sharafat: re-reading Nazir Ahmad” in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain & Ireland* (Third Series), Vol. 18, Issues 01. (Cambridge University press. Jan 2008): pp. 15- 30.

⁴⁴ H. Ahmadzadeh, *Nation and Novel, A study of Persian and Kurdish Narrative Discourse*, (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 2003): p. 269.

⁴⁵ Cecilia L. Ridgeway and Shelley J. Correll, “Unpacking the Gender System: A Theoretical Perspective on Gender Beliefs and Social Relations”, in *Gender and Society*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Aug., 2004): pp. 510-531. p. 528.

Here we see clearly how manhood is associated with “azayetî” i.e. heroism. To be good is something which is again associated with manhood. All the time individuals have to be aware about their behaviour in order to show their manhood. To be a man means that he has to take all the responsibility for his family’s destiny. In the opposite corner is the woman who has been associated with passivity and weakness and who has to listen to men all the time. In both view of the unique characteristics of men and women and how they are expected to behave, is obviously a central part of the gender system⁴⁶’.

Women’s bodies and sexualities:

“Historically, women have been determined by their bodies: their individual awakenings and actions, their pleasure and their pain compete with representations of the female body in larger social frameworks.”⁴⁷ At the same time, men's sexual violence is part of the background of many women's lives⁴⁸.

Hsên Ajanî qwrmsax tawy dawetê û lechkey leser damalywe.” Be rojy rwnak tawydawetê?! [...] leher shwênêk wegyrî kewt cil û bergî leber dadrê û abrwy berê (P. 43)

(The policeman by the name of Hesen, grabbed her and pulled off her headscarf” Did he do it during the day?! [...] Disgrace her and rip her clothes off where ever she is to be found)

The girl who is named “Nazdar” has been raped by a man and because of this rape she became crazy. The description of the woman’s body and her sexuality is something which is dangerous and sinful. Raping a woman is a very dangerous weapon to use against a family’s honour, because as

⁴⁶ Ridgeway and Correll. P. 511.

⁴⁷ K. Conboy, N. Medina and S. Stanbury. *Wrighing on the body, Female embodiment and feminist theory*. (New York: Columbia University press, 1997): P. 1.

⁴⁸ Faqir. P. 65.

Faqir argues the “families associate their honour with the virginity of their unmarried daughters and with the chastity of the married ones”⁴⁹.

Sherefî binemale be abrwy ewewe bestrawbw abrwy ewysh bo yekemcar metrsî lêdekra. Bo? Chwnka afret û betaybet afretî bê pyaw dawênî xoy lê dwjmin bww. Eqlî natewaw bw sheytan bashitr pêy dewêra” (P. 132)

Ishtyayekî nefretî dedî ke xeric bw qj û kasesery deswtanid. Lew rwxsare detirsa û lebery helidehat.” (P. 140)

(The honour of the family is connected to your chastity and her chastity was questioned for the first time” Why? Because the enemy of any woman and especially women without men finds is their lower body. Her mind was incomplete and so the devil had nothing to fear in her.

(e felt a disgusting feeling which was about to set him on fire. He was frightened by the sight of her and he needed to flee it)

Exact as it is in Ewarey Perwane, Grewî Bextî Helale û Şarî Mosîqare spîyekan, the female body and her sexuality is her enemy⁵⁰. Women are continuously associated with a body which is dangerous for them and for her relatives. (P. 132-133, 139-143)

Women are the honour of men, they are like material objects who are important for men, moreover, they are owned by men. (Gûlî Şoran. Pp. 74, 75). For instance, Xan said to his people after the war that they will not touch or take the enemy’s house as a prisoner meaning the women. This means that women are capable of bringing dishonour to men’s society. In order to support Xan’s opinion, Las’s mother “Daye gûlê” said:

ewey derbestî namwsî xeware bê, derbestî namwsî xelkî sharekeshe.” (P. 74)

jn û mindalî efserekan bo wlatî xoyan denêrêtewe. Xan gwtbwy hez naka namwsî xelk be barmte bgrê. (P. 74)

(If one is closely connected to the honour/grace of the strangers?, then one is also closely attached to the honour/grace of the people of the city as well.)

⁴⁹ Faqir. P. 69.

⁵⁰S. Lee Bartky. “Foucault, femininity, and the Modernization of patriarchal power”, in K. Conboy, N. Medina and S. Stanbury (ed) *Wrighing on the body, Female embodiment and feminist theory*. (New York: Columbia University press, 1997): p. 133.

(The women and children of the militaries are being sent home. Xan had said that he does not wish to take people's honour as hostage)

Here we see clearly how a woman's body and her sexuality are associated and use in the power struggle. Moreover, as Muzfer Iqbal points out rightly in his MA dissertation; "rape is primarily committed in order to strike the enemy tribe"⁵¹ One can understand how women, her body and her sexuality are associated with the honour of the family and the nation. We can see how her body and her gender position have been used as a weapon to humiliate the nation and the community she belongs to.

Even men's sexuality is something which is important for men's position in the society. For instance during the Shah's reign in Kurdistan, the government established a law for the modernization of the society, then during that time, they cut of the crotch of a man's trousers, to humiliate him, his manhood and honour. "Emesh nafokî westa. Bêle bzanîm dezgaket chendeye." (P. 48) (his is the boss's crotch. Let's see how big your thing is)

One can understand why "nêfok/ the crotch" is so important for men. The reason is that men's crotches are associated with the part of the men's body which is usually most associated with pride his genitals. As Luce Irigaray has pointed out "the penis is the only sexual organ of recognized value"⁵²

⁵¹ Iqbal, Muzafar, "Honour killing and silence of justice systemn in Pakistan", Centre for East and Southeast Asian Studies, Masters Programme in Asian Studies, South Asia Track, (Lund : Fall Semester, 2006) p. 7.

⁵² L. Irigaray, "This Sex which is not One" in K. Conboy, N. Medina and S. Stanbury (red) *Wrighing on the body, Female embodiment and feminist theory*. (New York: Columbia University press, 1997): P. 249

4. Ewarey Perwane (Perwane's Evening)

Summary of the novel

The whole story is about a young generation's struggle and protests against social norms and cultural codes. There are many groups of boys and girls who are suffering from problems which they face in their daily lives. The narrator is Xendanî Çikole, a girl who tell us the whole story about different groups of boys and girls who have been in love with each other. Xendan is the sister of Perwane who is one of the main characters in the novel. Some of her narration derives from her experience and some from her friends and the notes which Xendan receives from Mîdyay xemgîn. The main story is set in two different locations. One is "Eshqistan" (the Land of love), the other one is "Qwtabxaney Xoshkanî tobekar" (The School of Penitent Sisters). In Eshqistan, there are many boy and girls who have escaped from their homes and their societies in order to live a free life. Perwane is one of them who flee with her boyfriend Fereydûnî Melek to "Eshqistan. There they try to experience their dreams and find their utopia. Boys and girls believe that they will reach their aims in Eshqistan. Despite the fact that girls and boys in Eshqistan live freely in comparison with their old home "city", there are still problems and violence against women even there. Eshqistan is a new world that has been made by those boys and girls who do not accept traditional and social norms and codes. In comparison to when they were living in their old home and society, all of them are much happier and free in their minds and bodies. In Eshqistan, they are all working together and they make handmade things such us baskets and sculptures made out of tree and they send those things to the city in order to make money and then buy food for themselves. The Blue-Eyed man is a man who takes all those things and sells them in the city.

As a contrast to this new and free world, there is another world which is the opposite of Eshqistan. This place is “Qwtabxaney xoshkanî tobekar” (The school for penitent sisters) There the girls, who are related to the girls who escaped, have to stay in order to rebuild the honour of their family and they are expected to regret everything and become better according to the religious norms. In The school for penitent sisters, there are many religious people who are co-operating with sinners’ families in order to clean the shame that has been created by the girls who have left their homes, and escaped with their lovers. Mela Kewser, Perwane’s aunt, and Zeynebî Kwêstanî are the most important people in The school for penitent sisters. The girls have to work on their minds and bodies; moreover, they have to clean the stain that has been created by their sisters. Families, Mullahs, Aunts, Kwêstanî, and all other people who are conservative, are co-operating in order to find Perwane and the other girls and clean the stain they have brought upon their families. In the end they find Eshqistan and they kill Perwane and Mîdya in a very big and joyful ritual.

Analysis

xencerekanyan derhêna ke lemêj bww lenêw clekanda xewtbwwn. Bînîni xencerekan bes bw bo ewey têbgem deyanewêt Perwane bkwjn” (P. 26)

(They brought out the dagger that had hidden for along time amongst the clothing. The mere look of the daggers was all it took for me to understand that they are intending to kill Perwane)

“Xencer” has the same function as it has in Grewy bextî Helale In Ewarey Perwane at the very beginning, the usage of “Xencer” (Dagger) is a symbol of a patriarchal system and a symbol of a power which has been

there all the time. It is clear that “xencer” is a symbol of manhood and power in the Kurdish society. Even if there are very modern weapons that can be used in different occasions, there is still important to use “Xencer” particularly when dealing with honour killings. When Perwane escaped home with her lover all her family members (her father, her brothers and her aunt) started looking to find her and her brother carried a “Xencer” in order to kill her.

yan kêlgey ew ashqane bw ke xencerî bawk û bra û grope ayînyekan û tayîfe sheranîyekan seryan debrîn” (P. 109)

(It was the land of the lovers that made the daggers of their fathers, brothers, and the religious groups and also the daggers of the warrior tribes cut their throats)

According to Fadia Faqir, honour killing happens “When a feud over sexual misbehaviour towards a woman is settled, it is not the chastity or honour of the women that is restored; that can only be removed by killing her, the bearer of shame, which is also often done in some societies”⁵³. So Faqir’s definition of honour killings can be seen as a masculine mindset for the restoration of honour, as they perceive killing as the only way to restore the honour of their family and community. Patriarchal societies try to murder the people (girls) who brought dishonour upon the family in order to clean their families’ honours.

Kchêky chkolane berew rwman hat û agadarîkirdînewe: “em xatwnane be drêjayî shew berêgawe bwn...iêsta bryare ta katî pêwyst pshw biden, hêndêkîshyan gwtwwyane ta katî nanxwaridin be agayan nehênînewe”. Chwyne jwrêkî dîkey pr le xatwnnî sengîn û selar ke hemwyan leberdem chendeha awêneda qjyan shane dekrd, kchêky chkolane, ke her bew kchey pêshw dechw, gwtî: “em xatwne berêzane, xoyan bo tole sendinewe derazênewe...”. Chwîne jwrêkî tr, dww taqm jnî serspî beser dww parche

⁵³ Iqbal, Muzafar, “Honour killing and silence of justice system in Pakistan”, Centre for East and Southeast Asian Studies, Masters Programme in Asian Studies, South Asia Track, (Lund: Fall Semester, 2006): p. 7.

qwmashî sipî nwshtabwnewe.....em pîrêjnane, chendeha sale xerîkî amade kirdin em dww kfne bo emro”. (P. 231)

(A little cute girl came towards us and told us: “These ladies have been on their way for many hours of the night. They will rest her for a while. The others say that they will not be left alone until its time to eat. We later went o another room where some gracious women were sitting in front of mirrors. Combing their hairs. Another little girl, resembling the first one very much stated:” These honoured ladies are preparing themselves for honour retaliation.” We went to yet another room where two groups of grey haired women were sitting, leaning their bodies over two pieces of white fabric.... These old women have given their whole lives to prepare these two corpses for today.)

To resume a proud and clean life it is important to destroy the element that created chaos in society. “Cengelî Ashqan!”⁵⁴, and those people who have lived there are responsible for this disorder in the society. The narrator has so carefully and consciously mixed the role of religion and the cultural role in the restoration of honour to families in particularly and to society in general. Moreover, with the intention of erasing the shame stained on their families, they will sacrifice the girls and animals. Through this practise they will be forgiven by God, at the same time make the families proud again. Everybody prepares something for this happy ceremony of erasing the stain of shame. Within this context, Fadia Faqir argues that the individual has less importance than the community of the extended families. The behaviour of the individual reflects on the whole family and community and any unacceptable behaviour is strictly forbidden. Brothers or fathers therefore kill any female members of their family if they do anything to sully their honour⁵⁵.

⁵⁴ “Eshqistan” according to Melas and conservative people is “the jungle of adulteries”

⁵⁵ F. Faqir “Intrafamily Femicide in Defence of Honour: The Case of Jordan” *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (Feb., 2001), pp. 65-82. P. 70.

Le dergayekî zor zor nzmewe chwyne hewshêkî dî ke prbu le qesab û bznî serbraw, deyeha bzn serewxwar be chendeha darda helwasrabwwn, sertapay hewsheke bwbbw be xwên,” (P. 232)

“le hêndêk cêgada hestim dekrd ke mrovekan le brî dywarekan westan, le hêndê shwênî trîshda be pêchewanewe dywarekan le brî mrovekan ablwqeyan dedayn.” (P. 233)

(from a low entrance we went in to another back garden which was filled with butchers and head less goats. The blood of the many goats which were hanged up side down on tree poles had created a flood of blood in the garden. (P. 232)

In some places. I felt as if people were taking on roles of walls and on and in other places it was as if the walls taking up the roles of people by creating hinders.)

Through Xendan we know that nobody has any sympathy for the girls; all of them are participating in different ways in celebrating the moment to remove the black shame. Faqir rightly points out that “if women deviate from acceptable gender models and have sex out of wedlock the entire family's honour is threatened. To 'cleanse' his reputation the male usually kills his female relative, for this is where his 'honour' lies”⁵⁶.

The stereotype of manhood according of gender system

“We are born male or female, but not masculine or feminine”⁵⁷

Smile can be feminine and can be associated with womanhood, “Nesradîny bonxosh” is a shy person, and this shyness makes him one of the “girls”.

belam min tenegeyshtm ke ew bew nyga jnane û nermîn û boshnaxyye kchaneye xoyewe, chon salanêk lew chya sextane, wekw cengawerêky aza nwbangy derkrdbw. (p. 9)

Nesradîny bonxosh be trêkewe chawe jnanyekany detrwkand, p. 123

⁵⁶ Faqir. P. 71.

⁵⁷ S. Lee Bartky. “Foucault, femininity, and the Modernization of patriarchal power” in K. Conboy, N. Medina, and S. Stanbury (ed) *Writhing on the body, Female embodiment and feminist theory*. New York: Columbia University press, 1997): p. 129.

(But I cannot understand how Nesradîn with all his shyness, well scented appearance and feminine behaviour could stay in the hard landscape of the mountains for such a long time and therefore be known as this great warrior. well scented Nesradîn blinked his feminine eyes which were filled with fear)

“The delicate and feminine fingers of theirs” (p. 8, 92)

So as we see above, the way one looks at things is also associated with femininity. Moreover, his fingers are beautiful and small as feminine fingers; it means that if some fingers are beautiful then they are like the fingers of women. In the other words, as Ellman accurately indicates, women are associated with a soft body and a soft mind.⁵⁸ At the same time, Xendan is surprised that Nasradîn, with his soft body, could stay in the mountains. It is clear that the idea here is that a feminine body is not made for hard work. To be a good soldier one needs to be a man since struggling on a mountaintop is something that is possible for men and not for women. Issues of hairdressing are also of importance. A man can not have long hair and if anybody defies this rule he will become an outsider. For instance, Govand who was in love with Dlaram, never managed to be accepted to marry her because for Dlaram’s father who did not consider Govand to be a man with his long hair.

In addition, also Ridgeway and Correll indicates this by stating that “In everyday social relational contexts, we classify others into categories of sex based on appearance and behavioural cues (e.g., dress, hairstyles, and voice tone) that are culturally presumed to stand for physical sex differences”.⁵⁹

The father’s and brother’s controlling of the women is a part of their manhood in the patriarchal society; they mostly use violence against their

⁵⁸ Ellman. P. 74.

⁵⁹ Ridgeway and Correll. P. 515.

wives, girlfriends and daughters. It has also been mentioned by A. J. Hassall that the father has a patriarchal right in these societies.⁶⁰

birakanim mnyan be qj kêshkrde jêr zemîneke, be plîkekanda rayankêsham û wekw shêt kewtne wêran kiridanim” (p. 22)
bê ewey prsyarm lêbkat bêrehmane be hewshekeda kêshydekrdm, min dekewtm û seruajnokanim dediran,..” (p. 48)

(my brothers forced me down to the cellar; they pulled me down the staircase and acted crazy as they attacked me.” “Without asking me, he started dragging me around soullessly, my clothes ripping by the knees and me falling continuously.)

As this quotation shows, to have full control and power over their “daughters and wives” is something so natural in this very patriarchal society. For those men who belong to this particular society, controlling women’s bodies, minds, dreams, hopes and their very existences is necessary.

What happens to the women’s sexualities and their sexual desire in a patriarchal society? What is men’s responsibility in this case? What happens to their manhood and honour in their society if their daughters, sisters, wives or mothers bring dishonour upon the family, community or tribe? Because women in male-dominant societies are symbols for disorder, being Fitna and uncontrollable⁶¹, they become the dangers men fear, so they have to be controlled all the time by their relatives. Faqir also argues about this phenomenon by stating “A man's honour is closely related to the behaviour of his female relatives”⁶² in this case women can not own her life, destiny neither her body without it being a man’s responsibility to decide about them.

⁶⁰ A. J. Hassall. “Women in Richardson and Fielding”. In *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (Duke University Press. 1981) pp. 168-174. p. 171.

⁶¹ F. Mernissi, *Beyond the veil, Male-female dynamics in a modern muslim society* (Cambridge: Schenkman. 1975): p. 13.

⁶² F. Faqir. P. 69.

Shanaz Khan indicates that “It is not just men who are controlling women, and deny their rights. Also, women do the same. For instance “mothers” try to isolate their daughters and oppress them as well⁶³. In this patriarchal system, it is not only men who are controlling women, but also women who are symbols of conservative points of view and they are also taking part in the patriarchal society: for instance Zênebî kwêstanî in Ewarey Perwane is one of the most conservative women who teach girls how to control their sexual desires and how they can hate their bodies.

Perwane’s aunt is another woman who represents a very religious perspective on the female body and her being. She is the first person who leads Perwane’s father to the mosque to try to receive more help to find Perwane. (p. 23). Her aunt is not alone. she has “the female Daf players” who are participating in the patriarchal system on her side. Sometime they are more aggressive and have a much stronger reaction against those girls who have defiant behaviour or unacceptable relationships with men.

min demzanî shewêk lew maleda sheytan berela debêt...ew kche hemwman berew dozex û wêranî û kfr radekêshêt.” (p. 24)

(I know that one day the Devil would master that household. That will drag us into destruction and unholiness)

Here we clearly see the aunt’s most religious point of view. Just because Perwane escaped with her boyfriend to live together freely, a chaotic situation has occurred not only for Perwane’s family but for the entire city.

In contrast to the conservative women in the novel, there are women who are represented differently in terms of perspective and they are questioning their gender roles in society. Xendanî chkola, Perwane, Dlaram, Mesume, are those who are represented somehow differently and

⁶³ Khan. Shahnaz, “Zina” and the Moral Regulation of Pakistani Women’, in *Feminist Review*, No. 75, (2003), pp. 75-100. at p. 83.

they stand up against the cultural and traditional norms. In the very beginning of the novel, through Perwane and Xendan's discussion about the relationship between Perwane and her lover, we are made aware about her position and her very radical point of views.

. Perwane states:

Xendanî chkole le bîrt nachê, min le to nachim, min le kes nachm, min yekêky trm" (p. 15)
(you will not forget Xendanî Kchole but I am not like you. I am different, I am someone else.)

Here we can easily see that her interpretation and definition of herself is different and it is concentrated within the context of an individual who struggles for her differences. Perwane tries to challenge her brothers' authority all the time since they are representatives of the patriarchal society. When Perwane's aunt visited them, Perwane challenged her power by wearing the nudist clothes that she had and by her extreme make up. (p. 36)

The stereotype of womanhood according to gender system

Where is the mother's place in the novel?

"daykim ke afretêky kerûlal û chkolane û nexosh bw," (p. 6)

(My mother who was a weak, little, deaf and mute woman,)

Perwane's mother is a sick person; she is handicapped and can not move. She can not speak either and nobody pays attention to her. The only way for her to talk about her feelings is to scream for a long period time until someone helps her. Perwane's responsibility is to clean her mother and her place everyday. Moreover, as Hashem Ahmadzadeh has pointed out

and which suits this occurrence perfectly, the mother can be seen as a symbol for women's powerlessness in the family and the society⁶⁴.

ew kirimane kobikatewe ke dayk lejêr xoyda helydehênan, ew jwrane bonxosh bikat ke rizyny dayk le kwnce tarykekey xoyda bonekey deshêwandin, (p. 24)

She could remove these worms which mother gathered from beneath her, and make these rooms smell good whose dark corner now only reeks from mother's rotten scent."

There are other women who can not speak or who have different disabilities in the novel. For instance, Mêdyay xemgîn is a girl who is deaf and from the moment when her boyfriend knows about this, his feelings change and he is no longer in love in her.

Xwshkekem lal bu hergîz qisey nedekirid, wekw masî wabîw, belam beridewami deywisî, (p. 128)

Belam ke dinyabîw Mêdyâ natiwanêt qise bikat, tiwishy peshîmanyekî tirisinak hat....deygwit: kewate leber kchêky bêzman xom twshy gêjeny merg kiridiwe. (p. 142)

(My sister was mute and she never used to speak, she was like a fish but she always used to write instead.

But when it was certain that medya would not be bale to speak, many deep regrets surfaced. Why did I sacrifice my life for a mute girl?)

According to the gender system in Perwane's society exactly everything, the homes and the households have been associated with women and her womanhood. According to Gemzöe, in this gender system men and women have different jobs where the household is for women.⁶⁵ Moreover, many roles are already gender marked⁶⁶, girls at home have to

⁶⁴ Ahmadzade. P. 278.

⁶⁵ Gemzöe. P. 81.

⁶⁶ C. West, and D. H. Zimmerman. Doing Gender in Gender and Society, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Jun., 1987), pp. 125-151. p. 129.

do all the household chores, cook food for their brothers and fathers and clean the house. Perwane has to clean the house everyday and do whatever her father and brother are asking for and it is something so natural that nobody will question it.

salanêky dwr û drêj ew wekw tarmayyeki bêdeng iyshy ewebw dywar û hewshe û fershekan pakbkatewe, ew krmane kobkatewe ke dayky le jêr xoyda helydehênan, ew sfrane brazênêtewe ke xoy lesery nedexwardn, (pp. 23-24)

(for many years, her job was to do the household chores of cleaning the walls, floors and rugs as well as removing the worms under mother and also to cook food for the dining tables on which she never ate.)

Xendan loves household work and thinks that these jobs keep her busy enough for her to escape from problems. Through her narration, the reader becomes aware of that Perwane does not like household chores, but contrary to her Xanadn enjoins housework. (p. 48). However, the girls are in general associated with material things in the kitchen. These girls spend all their lives in the kitchen, and they smell of spoons and plates.

minîsh le heshamatî ew kche trsawaneda ke bonêkî qwrs û kwshndeyan lêdehat.....kichekanî dwrûberm bony malyan lê dehat, bonî qapûqachax û sfreyan lê dehat ke jyanyan lenawyanda berserbrdibw. (p. 101)

(My self being amongst the crowd of the frightened girls that smelled heavily and morbid...the girls around me all smelled of “homes”, smells of cutlery and table cloths came from them as they had spent all their lives amongst these objects)

Despite the fact that women escaped with their lovers from the society to other places such as “Eshqistan”, which was created by free individuals, they still hold the responsibility for the households. As Ahmadzadeh

argues, in the cities, The School of Penitent Sisters and Eshqistan everything is based on the superiority of men⁶⁷.

It is clear here that even “Eshqistan” is a place where gender roles are fitted within the patriarchal gender system.

The bodies of women and their sexuality

“The body becomes one’s enemy⁶⁸”

According to traditional norms women were associated with weakness and passivity. In the novel, the narrator tells us on several occasions about being a woman in this specific society. Most pictures of women only portray their bodies and their sexualities which are associated with sin. Uncontrollable sexuality and sin are related mostly to women⁶⁹. The feminine body is associated with sin and sexuality since, as Ann J. Cahill correctly points as well, “the feminine body is constituted and experienced as the enemy of the woman”⁷⁰

Throughout the novel, the image of the woman’s body is described as negative and dangerous for women themselves and for the family and whole society. In order to decrease the danger of the woman’s body, they have to kill the body. Zeynebî Kwêstanî is one of the most conservative women and has a very fundamental belief in religion. She is struggling for her belief and tries to convince the girls to be free by killing their

⁶⁷ Ahmadezade. P. 278.

⁶⁸ S. Lee Bartky. “Foucault, femininity, and the Modernization of patriarchal power”, in K. Conboy, N. Medina and S. Stanbury (red) *Wrighing on the body, Female embodiment and feminist theory*. (New York: Columbia University press, 1997): p. 133.

⁶⁹ Gemzöe. 152.

⁷⁰ Cahill. J. Ann, ‘Foucault, Rape, and the Construction of the Feminine Body’, in *Journal of Hypatia*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Winter, 2000), pp. 43-63: at p. 52.

individual wishes and sexual desires. Zeynebî kwêstanî in the school of “xoshkanî tobekar” states:

bo ewey le tobesh bgeyn, debêt le roh cestemanewe destpêbkeyn. Seretay hemw seretakany mradnî cesteye, ewey natwanêt leshî xoy zîndanî bikat natwanêt tobe bkat. Leshî wek espêkî resh waye ke detwanîn le yan le tewyleyekî le xoy reshtrda bîbestînewe be corê lew zwlmeteda kes neybînêt, yaxwd dekrêt wek resheba azadîbikeyn. (p. 158)

(for us to understand retaliation, we must start with our bodies. The beginning of all the problems starts with the isolation of the body; those who can not isolate their bodies can not back from their wrongdoings. The body is like a black horse who either can be imprisoned in a stable much darker than the colour of its skin or be released with the wind.)

bzanin ke ehrîmen le hîch shwênêkkda wekw leshî afret karînerdwe..... debêt lebrken ke leshtan heye, lebrken ke sînetan heye, tobe kirdin yenî benidkiridinî manay benidkiridinî serchawekanî lezet, (p. 160)

(we need to understand if the devil has anything else than to work within the female body... you need to forget that you have bodies and breasts and instead back from your wrongdoings by pulling out the root of pleasure from its depths.)

Here it is very clear that Kwêstanî struggles to shape the body of the women and she offers them possibilities to move. Kwêstanî tries to imprison the feminine body with disciplinary power. Cahill points to the quotation by Sandra Bartky and Iris Marion Young who stated that the female body is in fact “a feminine bodily comportment which is marked by fear: fear of bodily desire, and fear of harm⁷¹. In Kwêstanî’s speech, one can understand how a woman with “the invisible wall that she throws up around her, may consider herself safe; in this space, she has increased control over her body. To go beyond that space is to enter an arena where her body is in danger of being violated.”⁷²

⁷¹ Cahill.. p. 52.

⁷² Cahill. P. 55.

When women give up their sexual desires and wishes and when they have forgotten about their bodies, then women become clean and acceptable as people in society. (Ewarey Perwane: pp. 194-196). Here it is of importance question the understanding of women's sexuality and whether this understanding of sexuality is the only true interpretation of the Quran and Islam? Or is it just a very patriarchal interpretation of sexuality in Islam.

Throughout the novel one can easily understand that the “carnival for killing” is at first hand for those girls who did “zīna” and didn't accept the cultural and traditional norms. The people who enjoy the “carnival of killing” are the fathers, brothers, and males close to their family, then after them it is enjoyed by women who are represent high prestige in the society because of their religious position or their family background. In this way, the narrator lets us know that “zīna” is something which is associated with women's bodies and sexualities. The body of women together with their sexualities are not their own, they do not have the right to mange them according to their own wills.

Their body is a symbol for honour of the family, for people in their village and in their city. Therefore, everybody has a responsibility to control women's bodies and their sexualities.

Zina is an action which refers to sex out of wedlock.⁷³ According to Fatima Mernissi who takes support from Abu-Hamid al- Ghazali for her definition of the word, “zina” is “any sexual intercourse between two persons [sic.] who is not in a state of legal matrimony or concubinage.”⁷⁴ Moreover, women are the honour of the families and the clans, for that reason, when a woman performs “zina”, she brings dishonour to her

⁷³ Sh. Khan. '“Zina” and the Moral Regulation of Pakistani Women', in *Feminist Review*, No. 75, (2003), pp. 75-100: p. 76.

⁷⁴ F. Mernissi, *Beyond the veil, Male-female dynamics in a modern muslim society* (Cambridge: Schenkman. 1975) p. 24.

family and to her clan.⁷⁵ Through the killing of the woman who brings dishonour to the family, the social status of the family, tribe or clan can be restored.⁷⁶

It is noteworthy how men have been affected by the loss of their “Sheref” i.e. honour. This dishonour has been brought upon them by their wives or sisters, so they have to be killed as retaliation.

Hêndêkyan jnekanî xoyan kwshtibw, hendêkyan xwshkekanî xoyan serbrybw, kesanêkyan têzabyan krdbw be kchanî qwtaxaneda, yaxwd ftwayekî melaknyan le kwshtnî zendyqêk yan zynakerêkda cêbecêkrdbw.”
(p. 41)

(some of them had killed their wives, some had beheaded their sisters, some of them had poured acid on girls in their school and some had even carried out the “fatwa” of the Mullahs in the killing of a “Zina” doer)

As said by “mela Kewserî baxewan “Yes, let them be sacrificed to the gods, if you want to free yourselves from the frightening and sinful destiny, these weak creatures, must be freed from the sewers of their sisters” girls have to be sacrificed in order to clean the family’s honour.
(p.106)

A byankene qwrwany, byankene fîday xwda, eger detanewêt gerdny xotan lew toqe tirsakaney gwnah rzgar bken, em zeyfane, em mexlwqe lawazane ke xwênnyan le heman xwênny dayk û xwshke xetakaranyane le gomawey dwnya derbhênin, lew zelkawe deryanbhênin ke serchawey hemww shehwetêke..” (pp.106 -107)

(Some of them faced frightening guilt the night after Perwane left, they could no longer hold their heads high)

⁷⁵ Faqir p. 69.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 69.

Girls who have been guilty because of their mothers, sisters, “zîna” have to go to “Qwtabxaney xoshkanî tobekar” (The school for penitent sisters) in order to be free from guilt, in order to punish their bodies. There, they have to forget their body and their sexual desire. Through the entire book we see clearly the way people use religion for their patriarchal aims. As Shanaz Khan points out rightly “Religion acts as an ideology that pressures women to accept particular norms were regulated through community pressure.”⁷⁷ Those norms are established according to the patriarchal society.

Despite that, religion has been used as a reason when they punish girls who performs “zina”, but as has been quoted by Faqir 'The honour ethic as it applies to women's sexuality is not specific to Islam, but exists in many other non-Muslim societies.'⁷⁸ One can easily see, throughout the novel, that the Quran and religion has been used to save those who are guilty (according to society). At one time, one of them who escapes with his girlfriend says to her:

Qesem bem henarane, xwda djî eshq û redwakewtin nye (p. 114)
Shehla ke be kewayekî brîqedar û chemik shorewe, be qwranekey desityewe
kêwawkêw redwî Azîzî tîrendaz dekewêt, (Ewarey Perwane: p. 114)

(I swear by those pomegranates, God is not against love and elopement),
Shehla with her glittery jacket and long sleeves, with the Quran in her hand,
used to follow Aziz tirendaz over the mountain chains.”

Moreover, even sometimes “mullahs” have more positive opinions than people do. At one time, the mullah’s reaction when a woman who had did “Zîna” was seeking protection, was that he did whatever he could to convince people to let her be free, and he said:

⁷⁷ Khan. pp. 93-94.

⁷⁸ Faqir. p. 69.

As the mullah was a calm and reserved man and he slowly directed the people towards his house where he told them: “this woman may be an angel, a dove or a jackal.. a butterfly or a scorpion, she still has her own people, her own family, her own god who will judge her. Think calmly, and then decide so that we do not commit a sin. (p. 169)

“Eshqistan” was for the people in the city associated with “Heldêrî zina” and “Sheytanistan” (Ewary Perwane: pp. 200, 201) that have just one meaning and the meaning is guilty of sexuality. When people have “the Carnival of killing” it means that they go to “Eshqistan” and there they can liberate the imprisoned sun of honour. “xorî gîrawî sheref”.

The religious sermon at the end of the novel is an ending consisting of chaos which has been created by women. “Cengelî Ashqan”.

Fantasy and escaping to “Cengelî Ashqan”

In many places in the novel, the description of the life inside the family and the cities is so negative that it makes the girls dream about another place to go and settle down in. They are dreaming about a place that can give them the opportunity to realise their fantasies and dreams. They have found “Cengelî Ashqan”, a place that does not have the cultural norms which has limited women’s and men’s individual freedoms, and their wishes and sexual desires. Through the discussion between the boys and particularly the girls, one can understand the oppression on the young generation and their struggle to be free from the traditional norms. Those people who are escaped from their home and left the city have their vision of how their world could be.

At the same time a very nihilistic perspective among the young generation can be a symbol for the position of surrender of those who have not agreed with this system. Through the expressing of the girls’

feelings about life in their city, one can see easily see the oppression on women there.

There are references to the difficulty of the lives of women in the society. As has been shown in the novel there are not so many alternatives for women in their lives, whether they want it or not, they have to accept the patriarchal norms and if they don't their only choice is death or to be killed in a different way. (pp. 41, 198,)

xwswtanî Leyla ke dwatir Zeyneb deygêrawe bo ew nexoshyye kwshndeyey le wltatida blawbotewe, nexoshî xo swtanidinî kchan û afretan,” (p. 198).

(the self immolation of Leyla which Zeneb later blamed on the deadly illness which had spread across the country, the illness of self immolation amongst women and girls.)

In “Cengelî Ashqan” women are still not free, after a short time of living there, we can recognize many problems which come up in their daily life. It is important to keep in mind a question; if there are different gender systems there in Cengelî Ashqan or if it is the same gender system as it has been in the city? Through the discussion between the couples and between the women themselves in “Cengelî Ashqan”, we have been confirming that even women there are not so happy with their lives, that is to say, they are not as free as they thought. Still there, men hold the authority over the women, moreover, they love them in the way that they want them to be not the way that the women actually are. For instance, Sîyamend's love to Mesume is not in the way that Mesume wishes for, but he tries to make her exactly the person who he loves her to be. Clearly he does not love her as she is:

take mexilwqêk ke peywendî legelya debêt Meiswmeye ke beridewam le hewlêkî seyrdaye bo gorînî bo balnideyek...Meiswmesh le shewe drêj û trsnakekanda hêndey bo dekrêt le desitî helbêt, mi desitgîranî to nîm, min

xoshewîstî to nîm, to mercî gwrey evînekemant shkanid... hîch shtêk min be towe nabesîtêwe. Sîyamend ta zyatir gwêy lew hawarane debêt, zyatir shêt debêt, zyatir srwshite trsnak û wêrankerekey bo degerêwe, wehshyanetr pelî Meiswme radekêshêt bo ser drextekan û ewysh cge le helatin hîchî bo namênêwe,” (pp. 140-141)”

A single creature constantly is trying to change into a bird and who has a relation to Mesume. Mesume does only manage to run away from him during the dark and frightening nights. I am not your beloved, I am not your girlfriend, you destroyed the base for our love. Nothing links me to you anymore. The more of these callings Siamend hears, the more crazy he becomes and more of his wild and frightening nature returns to him, and he pulls Mesume’s arm and nothing remains for her than to run away from him)

Through Xendan’s monolog with her God concerning his power and the nature of the human being, we know how she is questioning this religious and social justice which for Xendan is not justice. She does not believe that God enjoys this punishment. She has her way of understanding God and his power. We can say that Xendan is criticizing the patriarchal interpretation of the Quran as well as the interpretation of being a Muslim. (P. 245- 249)

5. *Şarî Mosîqare spîyekan* (The city of the white musicians)

The summary of the novel

The novel starts at the airport in Amsterdam where one of the narrators Ali Sherfyr is waiting for an airplane to go back to southern Kurdistan (Iraqi Kurdistan). There he meets a man who is looking for him. Through this man, Ali Sherefyr gets to know Celadetî Kotir who tells us the main story. Celadetî Kotir and a friend to him “Serheng Qasm” are two students who are in love with music. Through their lives, the reader becomes aware of the importance of music for these two young boys. Their place is clear in this novel and a part of the story is happening in southern Kurdistan and another part is happening in Iraq. All the way through Celadetî Kotir’s destiny the reader has become more and more aware of the tragedy of the Kurds during “Anfal”.

Celadet and Serheng decide to go and study music with Iyshaqî Lêwzêrîn who is a good teacher in music. They stay there for some time in order to learn how to play musical instruments. The teacher and his two students start to travel across their country. The government captures them and they even try to kill them during the “Anfal” process. By accident somebody helps Celadet to survive. Samîrî Babilî is the man who saves his life and he used to be an important person in the Iraqi army.

Celadet ends up with two Kurds in a city with the name of “Sharî tepwtoz”. In this city there are different kinds of people, for instance those who have political problems and those who have problems with the women in their family, and there is those who are labelled as “whores”. In this city he becomes friend with doctor Musa and Dalya Sîracedîn, moreover, Celadet becomes aware about the political and cultural

situation of the people in this place through doctor Musa and Dalya's narration.

Celadat plays music for certain people who come to a special house where there are many young women who are working as prostitutes. During his time there he falls in love with a woman named Dalya but Dalya is always busy with other things and does not give him much attention at all. Through her narration Celadet knows about the process of the "anfâl" attacks and also about the destinies of the Kurdish people in the prisons across the country. Through Dalya and doctor Musa as well as Samîrî Babilî and Celadet's discussion, we as readers are informed about women's and men's situation in the society and in the prisons. However, after a period Celadat decides to leave the place and go back to Kurdistan. This occurs during the year of 1991 when it was somehow relatively easy for him to go back without any problems.

Womanhood according to the gender system

her lew hefteyeda jnekem bêho telaqnameyekî le dadgawe bo nardim û nêwan min û ew bo heta hetaye kotayîhat" (P. 7)

(Without any special reason my wife sent me our divorce papers from the court and now there is nothing more left between her and me, for ever.)

From the very beginning through Ali Sherfîyar's narration, we as readers are informed that the women in the Diaspora have more freedom and even more opportunities to decide over their own lives. By Sherfîyar's narration the reader is told about the relationship he has with his wife. There are no opportunities for his wife to express her views and her wishes. The way Sherfîyar describes his divorce with his wife shows clearly that for women in the Diaspora it is easier to get a divorce than it is for women who are still living in Kurdistan. However, the mother of

Celadetî Kotir died because of the distance which existed between her and her two sons. Celadet's mother also gets a divorce from her husband. It was her husband who did not like her and after the divorce, she was left without any choice or any chance of ever seeing her two sons again. Celadet is one of the two sons of her.

Meryem Feyzî be nexoshyyekî nezanraw kochî dway kird. Pêdechêt beshêk le hoy mrdnekey bgerêtewe bo ew derd û meraqe zororey deway cyabwnewey le herdw kwrekey twshy hatwe. [...] bawkî celadetî kotr, deway sherêkî gewre legel xmanî xoyda, swênidêkî gewre dexwat ke ta mrdin nehêlêt Meryem chawî be dw kwrekanî bkewêt.” (P. 14)

(Meryem Feyzi passed away suddenly in an illness which is still unknown to many people. It seems as maybe some of the reasons behind her sudden death can be traced back to the grief and sorrows she has experienced during her life time and especially after her divorce from and her distance from her sons, [...] The father of Celadet Kotir decided impulsively after an argument to swear not to let Meryem ever see her two sons again as long as she lives.)

In addition, the description of the mothers is in a way that shows the mother's helplessness in their positions. Moreover, there are other women in the novel that have no place in the family and in the society and some of them are paralysed and cannot do anything. For instance, Celadet's aunt is “pekikewte” i.e. disabled, moreover his brother's wife is a bad person and she is very annoyed at Celadetî Kotir. (Sharî Mosîqare spîyekan. Pp. 14, 15). Furthermore, it is recognized amongst the Kurds that those who are working with art are more open minded than other people.

It is believed that although they still have a patriarchal point of view concerning women and also about being a woman and a wife, they are still able to understand many new phenomena in society relatively easier than other people outside the framework of art and culture. For instance, for Iyshaqî Lêwzêrîn who is a musician and still keeps her femininity as a woman, it is strange as women always have been

associated with the household and the chores within that household. In the way Lêwzêrîn talked about his wife, one can see that for him, a wife can in the best of situations be a good householder, do the chores properly and also a good listener for her husband, her father and if she has any, for her brothers. According to Lêwzêrîn, a woman shows her loyalty to her husband all the time. (p. 27) For instance Lêwzêrîn has these ideas and thoughts concerning his wife:

maleke malêkî gewre bu, rojêk le rojan lem maleda keybanuyekî chapuk salar û serwer buwe. Cêgakan, rengî perdekan, rêkxsitnî jwrekan, bony hendê swch û kelênî tayebtî, hemw halawy cestey bzt û nadyarî afretî lêdehat. (p. 27).

(There were once a large household, and once, a long time ago there was a good and proud housekeeper here. The beds, the spaces, the arrangement of the rooms, and the corners of this place all reek with the smell of the emptiness of a body and of the shapes of a women.)

When a wife has a relationship with others out of the boundaries of her marriage, it is so obvious that her husband has the right to even kill her without looking into any possible doubts. Also, sexual misbehaviour, lead women to be impure and it is impossible for her to ever again be able to restore the honour of herself and her family. Moreover, the shame and stain can only be removed by killing her⁷⁹. Lêwzêrîn said:

ke rojêkyan zanî jnekey xyanetî lêdekat, lebirî ewey wek pyawanî tr pelamarî cheqo û tfenig bidat, pelamarî flwte konekey dayewe.” (P. 30)

(One day when he found out that his wife would betray him, he decided not to do as other men and surrender to the use of rifles and guns but instead to surrender to his old flute)

The description of the beauty of the nature, for instance; the water, the trees, the birds and other natural objects are the same descriptions when

⁷⁹ Iqbal. P. 7.

Iyshaqî Lêwzêrîn is explaining the music to Celadetî Kotr to Serheng Qasim. Also he had the same descriptions when he was talking about music and women as well. Both of them were associated with water, birds and trees and the natural environment in general. Moreover, the way he is describing the beauty of women, is similar to the way in which he has described the beauty of nature. At the same time, the body of women has been compared with material things as well. Monique Wittig has shown that to see women as a “natural group” lead to the division of them from men, (a categorisation occurs) and also that “we have been ideologically rebuilt into a natural group”⁸⁰

iêwe debêt cwanî xalîs bdoznewe, cwanî xalîs bjîn û cwanî xalîs bibînên.
Ew drextaney deybînên, ew baldaraney le dwre defrn, ew awaney le
tenîshstanewe xwrey dêt...hemw shtekany em dwnyaye debêt wek cwanî
bibînên, drext bo iêwe drext nîye, mosîqayeke rxwsarêkî taybetî wergrtwe,
xwêndinî balnda bo iêwe deng nîye, belkw mosîqayeke le mexlwqêkî trda
berceste bwe. Afret mosîqaye, wek mosîqash gwêyan lêbgrin û seyryan
biken. (P. 31)

(You have to find true beauty, live true beauty and also to see true beauty. These views you are seeing, the birds that are flying there at this moment, the waters are we can hear from this distance, all of the objects in this world must be seen as beauties. The views are not seen by you as views, the music has adopted a new face, the songs of the birds are not songs according to you, but you consider the music as something which has been created else where. Women are music, and you should view them as music and listen to them as if they were music.)

As I mentioned in the theoretical part of my work, all these comparisons of women with nature and beauty has been constructed through the system of binary oppositions that explains how this sort of dichotomy contributes to the articulation of a “negative” and “weak”, “passive”, “emotional”, “body concentrated” and “natural” female vis-à-vis a

⁸⁰ M. Wittig, “One is not born a Woman” in K. Conboy, N. Medina and S. Stanbury (red) *Wrighing on the body, Female embodiment and feminist theory*. (New York: Columbia University press, 1997): p. 309.

positive and “strong”, “active”, “intellectual” and “cultural” male. As a point of fact, our thoughts are formed by the hierarchy of those binary oppositions.⁸¹ As we can see through women’s daily lives in the novel and their ultimately passive roles in the different societies they live in:

Our women have gone through their lives by sitting in front of their television sets, the television sets have subsequently been their only source of measure of ugliness and beauty, and there were not many Kurdish men to be seen on the TV shows and on TV in general. [...] And the only men which our women saw on the TV were the ones appearing on the films and in the Arabic soap operas, which caused these ladies to spend one half of their lives in the sofa in front of the TV. This was the reason why a person like Pirteqal Babli was able to come, with his eyes which were reminiscent of the eyes of a bird who has fled the rain, and weaken the knees of the ladies and make them put their hands on their chests and say: Wow, he is good looking! (P. 382)

Still the description of women is the stereotype character of women in general. They are (sly and attention seeking). As Mernissi indicates most correctly a woman’s beauty lead her to become “Fitna” which is associated with disorder and chaos⁸². With their Fitna they can make men lose their self control. All these procedures and plans have been created through a cultural belief in creating differences between men and women. Another stereotype in the descriptions of women show how they are associated with fear and weakness. When neqîb Samîrî Babilî talks about his father and his first experience in the Army he retells he experience quite vividly and explains that he did enjoy the army since it was his chance to hide like a frightened woman. (Sharî Mosîqare spîyekan. P. 174)

⁸¹ Gemoze, p. 83.

⁸² F. Mernissi, p. 4.

Women's bodies and their sexuality

Yet again in the (*Sharî Mosîqare spîyekan*), the body of the women is associated with sin and sexuality. For instance, Dalya Sîracedînîsh is sexually active and with her beautiful body and her expressive sexuality she has the ability to make men melt by the mere look of her. (P. 71).

It is her *fitna* which makes men lose self control.⁸³ In addition, it has been believed that the way a woman is looking at things are different from the way a man is looking and observing things. According to Celadet, the eyes of women are different; they consider things from other and different perspectives. (Pp. 147-149).

We can clearly see here how the different categorizations of sex automatically set in motion different gender stereotypes⁸⁴. Celadet believes that women is so very complicated and that women will demand and want different things from men and according to Celadet, it is important to keep in his mind that a woman and a man are in a relationship of any kind will have different needs. A woman will need consoling and speaking on different occasions and for different purposes, to cheer her up and make her happy or to strengthen her will and thoughts. (*Sharî Mosîqare spîyekan*. P. 353, 381). In this novel, on the one hand, there are many descriptions of women; many of those descriptions are about their bodies as female bodies and also about the female sexuality which is also clear in the assertion of Conboy, Medina and Stanbury who state that “women have been determined by their bodies”⁸⁵. The fetish description of Shanaz Salîm by Celadet showed the

⁸³ Mernissi. P. 4.

⁸⁴ Cecilia L. Ridgeway and Shelley J. Correll, “Unpacking the Gender System: A Theoretical Perspective on Gender Beliefs and Social Relations” in *Gender and Society*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Aug., 2004), pp. 510-531. p515.

⁸⁵ K. Conboy, N. Medina and S. Stanbury. *Wrighing on the body, Female embodiment and feminist theory*. (New York: Columbia University press, 1997): p. 1.

different grades of the patriarchal society; where we have not any presented any opportunities for women in order for them to think and talk about their bodies, their body images and their sexuality in general.

Xanmêkî balaberzî, sine pir, [...]. Leshêkî prî hebww, belam lewane nebww ke mrov pêyan blêt qelew, belkw be pêchewanewe estwrî sîney hawrê bww be kemerêkî barîk, be dww laqî drêj û berz, belam pr û gwshtin, lepal ew sîfete nawazaneda, nîga û temashakridinekanî sîhr û efswnêkî jnaney ewtoyan pêbexshîbw,” (Sharî Mosîqare spîyekan. P. 381)

(A tall lady, with a wide and luscious chest, [...] She had a voluptuous body, but she was not the size you would name over weight, no, her waist matched the size of her chest beautifully and her two long legs and tall figure which at the same time was full and meaty, was amongst those very rare occurrences. Her look, and her intense glance was magical and luring in a way only women with those characteristics could possess.)

On the other hand, as has also been argued through history, women are; because of their natural behaviour, must without any doubt sacrifice themselves for their families, their fathers, husbands and boyfriends. In addition, according to Ridgeway and Correll “gender inequality results from women's own "voluntary" choices”⁸⁶ which have been created in the gender system, where men have had more power than women.

Dalya’s “voluntary” choices are not something that have appeared from her nature, but, which come from the cultural attitudes and are socially constructed. Dalya is a symbol for real female love for a man as she gives everything that she has, even her body and soul, to her first boyfriend (Basmî Cezayrî) (P. 139) and later, she did everything for Celadetî Kotr. According to Toril Moi “the romantic versions of love are

⁸⁶ Cecilia L. Ridgeway and Shelley J. Correll. P. 524.

‘grants’ which the male concedes out of his power.’⁸⁷ Dalya said this following quote which conquers with the previous statements:

Celadet gwêbgre, bo min hemw shtêk tewaw, min iytir bo to dejîm, yenî chenid btwanim agam le to debêt.” (P. 136)

(Celadet, listen to me, everything is finished for me, I hereby live for you and I will therefore do everything to care of you.)

In the “Sharî tepotoz” women are working as prostitutes and the city is a place for those girls who have had problems with their families. These girls then had to escape from their homes in order to save their lives and not be killed by the male members of their families. All those girls have had to sell their bodies in an attempt to survive financially. In addition, one can understand that women without any families will have many deep and serious problems when it comes to survival in the society, mostly because all cultural norms are based on things which benefit men and only men. Through Celadet’s narration we get to know that they see these girls as people with no other skills than the skill of dancing and entertaining men. It is also stated that this city is the city where the most beautiful women are gathered in such despair, hopelessness and desperation that they will turn to any person who has the spark of life left and sleep with any man as there are not any other place left for them in this world. (P. 79)

Women in “sharî tepwtoz” are just sexual objects for those men who do not have the opportunity to find a girlfriend or a wife for themselves. They come to this city only to satisfy their sexual needs and desires. Although, the girls try to find better and more descent jobs for

⁸⁷ T. Moi, *Sexual/Textual politics, feminist literary theory* (London and New York: Routledge, 1985): p.27.

themselves, they are not very successful in doing so and they are let in despair. The cultural system there obligates the women to stay in their positions most importantly because they are needed for the patriarchal society. The needs are everything from men's sexual pleasures which must be satisfied by women to normal everyday needs where women come in handy and all this happens at the woman's expense. The destiny of women in this city is terrible as they are supposed to behave according to an idealized and mythical sexual attractiveness of the female body.⁸⁸ As it is shown in the coming quotation, the views on women are not high and instead degrading.

Herchî afretî em shareye hemwyan sozanîn, lesh froshin? Hemwyan... her hemwyan heta Dalya Sîracedînîsh?" (P. 80)

Ew pyawane rwy têdeken ke le hîch shwênêk amêzanbwnyan dest nakewêt û dên û lêre be pare deykrin," (P. 79)

Are all the women here prostitutes, whores? All of them, even dalya Siracedin?"

The men who set out to come here are men who never have experienced the warm embrace of women so instead they come here and buy it with money""

According to Celadet and other men around him, all the girls there are guilty and so they are not worth anything. When the girls become older, their popularity amongst men who have used to be their customers, decline and they are no longer attractive as even prostitutes as a result of their age. When these women realise that their situation has changed and that they no longer have any value left as prostitutes and that they have become useless in this city, many of them commit suicide. In a paragraph in the novel this is explained rather sadly by one of the prostitutes aware of this situation:

⁸⁸ E. Goffman, "The Arrangement between the Sexes". In *Theory and Society*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (Autumn, 1977), pp. 301-331 P. 308.

Ba pêt blêm hîch sozanîyekî pîr natwanêt lêre bjy, kçekan le temenêkda wazdênn û deron, yan xwdkwjî deken, hêndêkyan rêbwarêk helyandegrêt û deyanbat, yaxwd kesêkî nzîkyan derdekewêt û deyankwjn, leber ewe min tenya kesm ke demênimewe, (pp. 82-83)

(let me tell you, no old prostitute can ever live here, many of the girls leave this place at one time or another and disappear, they either kill themselves or they are taken by a wanderer to go with him, or some old relative finds them and kills them, therefore I will be the only one left here.

More or less the whole city of “Cengelî Ashqan”, is filled with prostitutes and there is plenty of place for people who have a deviant behaviour. There is a place for women who have escaped death by their families and those women had no chance of survival in their societies, because of their unacceptable behaviours. For instance to be in love with somebody who is not accepted by one’s father, brother or closest friends, leaves women no other choice than to do follow the directions their family points out and listen to their family’s wishes. Sexuality is one of the most important elements which has been used against women in all societies, particularly in the societies which are very patriarchal. In addition Uli Linke also points to this matter when discussing the sexuality of women as something frightening and feral along with the notion of reproduction through childbirth, as something which is used to legitimate the power balance of today between male domination over its female counterpart.⁸⁹

Dalya has been in love with an Arab boy (Basim Cezaiyrî), since she was studying in Baghdad. Her family in Kurdistan knew this so when Dalia went back to Kurdistan for her holidays, her brother decided to kill her in a very painful way. Here again we see, as also Schechter points out, that the home is the most dangerous place for the women⁹⁰. According to

⁸⁹ U. Linke. “Manhood, Femaleness, and Power: A Cultural Analysis of Prehistoric Images of Reproduction” in *Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 34, No. 4 (Cambridge University Press 1992), pp. 579-620. p. 579.

⁹⁰ Schechter. P. 5.

the family, she had to pay the most painful price existing for her dishonour and rude behaviour in Baghdad which in reality was nothing more than a mere love interest in a boy with Arabic origins and to declare her love for him by having sex with him. This was considered the worst thing that could happen to a family. Just by accident she survived the attack and ran away to Baghdad to later find herself in the city of the prostitutes. Also in the novel the process of honour killing is repeatedly brought up. One special segment is when it is discussed how Dalya's brother are intending to kill her, "calmly", in a way nobody will learn about it but at the same time cause her the most pain possible. They want a punishment for her that is equivalent to the degrading situation they consider her to have put them in. (P. 94)

Women's sexualities and their bodies which are associated with the nation:

"Women's honour became a symbol of national 'purity' and identity."⁹¹

As we can see from the above quotation, women's bodies and their sexualities which are closely linked with the honour of the society, is at the same time associated with the honour of the nation.

Through Celadet's narration of those Kurdish soldiers who have been participating in the Army and who later also were sent to the war against Kuwait, we are told that they sometimes stayed in the city of prostitutes for many days. They had sex with the girls in the city. Moreover, for the Kurdish soldiers to have sex with these women was new therefore, they often lost themselves in the city. The way they had sex with the girls and

⁹¹ Faqir. P. 77.

the way they saw sex as a weapon against the Arab government is interesting as they believed that they would win and have power just by having sex with the Arab girls who in their minds were the honour of their enemy country.

“Often the city would be filled with these hungry Kurdish soldiers who would come and for the first time in their lives, sleep with a woman in those houses. [...] When they saw the naked women, they used to faint...they would get drunk and start arguments and fights. They would come to empty the wounds from the wars in the arms of these Arab girls. When they slept with these girls, they were thinking that they had retaliated the pain and suffering from the war. They would come to resurrect their honour and dignity. They thought that sleeping with an Arab girl would ease the hurt of the damage and wounds and suffering that had been forced upon their nation and homeland.” (P. 271)

Dalya’s sexual relationship with powerful men in the government is not only for pleasure. She uses her body in order to find her boyfriend who is in prison. A very powerful man in the army forces wants Dalya to have sex with him in a room where the government have all their files about deceased people, many of them Kurds. So here we see how powerful people in the government through their power receive and demand women and their sexualities. (Pp. 95-96). For Dalya it not just a feeling of being raped, it is even worse than that. The feeling of being the representative of her nation’s honour hurts even more than that. (P. 223)

Another example of the relationship between female sexuality and her nation or country is that government officials rape Kurdish girls in order to humiliate the whole nation as stated before. Women’s bodies and their sexuality have always been associated with their homeland, nation and country. There are many female victims in the prisons who have been raped by those men who were soldiers and had power in the Iraqi government. When Iraq’s government tortured Kurdish people in the

prisons, they used many different methods to make them speak. They used the most humiliating ways against both men and women. For instance, Nasrîn xefwrr was raped by many Iraqi soldiers and her husband was a Peshmerga. When she was finally freed, her husband divorced her because she had been raped. They raped her several times and then they hung her up naked for one week. After all this they cut off all her fingers. She was crying all the time and she screamed to “Neqîb”;

mez bo xwa mez bo pêxember, mêdekem demkwjêt û mindalîshm hetyw dekewn, xwa qbwî nye. Seydî dwayî ta demirm pêm delên ewe ew jneye ke ewende Arab swarî bwn lîngî bo cwt nakrêt. (P.428)

(For god’s sake, my husband will kill me and my children will left without a mother as well. Til the end of my life I will be told that I was the woman who could not hold together her legs and that way prevent so many Arabs from entering her).

Even men’s sexuality is important for the humiliation of the people. For instance, they cut off the penis of a Kurdish fisher and they gave it to the fish. For them, this is the worst thing that can happen to a man. A man without a penis in a patriarchal society will be in the worst position of the society. (P. 420)

The worst things that can happen for a woman in a patriarchal society of this kind are being raped and then continue to live in the same society. The destiny that awaits her outside of the prison walls is often worse than within. Pepule Cemal is one of those women who were raped in the prisons by army soldiers. Now she is free and instead she stays with her cousin who rapes her every night. Moreover, she never dares to go out making her the same prisoner she was before but this time surrounded by her cousin instead of strangers. (P. 423)

The narrator show us his sympathy for all these victims and through his description of those victims and particularly the female victims, he is

criticizing the whole Kurdish patriarchal society. He sees those victims as heroes of humanity. (P. 429)

6. Conclusion

Through a feminist interpretation of *Grewî Bextî Helale* (Betting on Helale's Fortune) I have come to the conclusion that the novel shows how the category of womanhood and manhood is a cultural construction. These make up a gender system which creates our perceptions about womanhood and manhood. The gender system has been created by civilization. In the gender system we have the binary oppositions which are created by the dualistic nature of our perceptions about everything. Something which is very clear in the novel is that Helale is the person who stands against those perceptions about women and men. By her questioning of all the terms which create manhood and womanhood, she wants to free herself and the others from the norms that limit human capacity and opportunities for development and participation in private and public life. However, Helale questions the current perceptions about sex identity. By wearing boy's clothes and by her behaviour, she plays the role of a boy. Nobody can see that, because she constantly copies the behaviours which belong to the men in the gender system. In fact, in the novel we can see that sex roles have an effect on our freedom. Because of the chaos that Helale through her deviant behaviour created she must be punished. This punishment according to Shêrzad who represented the patriarchal norms Helale has to be killed. Helale's tragic fortune, however, shows that the dominant cultural paradigms are still under the hegemony of the men, who will do whatever they can to preserve it.

A feministic reading of *Gulî Şoran* shows that the novel reveals the woman's situation in a very patriarchal society. Through the discussion that had been done between different characters we can see how the category of womanhood and manhood is constructed. Moreover, for woman in a gender system is obligated to be a good woman and play the exact role of her gender role that has been already created for her. The

way Day Gûlê reacts shows how strongly she believes that women have a lower position in contrast to the men. In fact, she sees this phenomenon as something which is normal and natural. Through a very patriarchal narration the cultural image of gender stresses the legitimacy of male authority.

At the same time, through Ferxe and Xanzad's destiny and their opinion about themselves the reader is aware about their feeling of guiltiness as a result of a sexual act that is not acceptable according to cultural norms. Men and women particularly have to play the gender role all the time in order to be accepted in the society. Moreover, all the time individuals have to be aware about their behaviour in order to show their manhood or womanhood. The gender system is simply visible in Day Gûlê's character who intensively confirms masculine power and patriarchal mentality. Men have to be "Aza" (strong) and women "Shermin û bêdeng" (shy and silent). Something which is very clear in the novel is that the woman's body and her sexuality is associated with sin, she is more body and sex than an individual. Xanzad and Nazdar are two women who, when talked about by the narrator, are the subject for their feelings for men, sexuality, love and body. Also throughout the novel when we face women and their opinions about different subjects, it is very clear that they simply do not have their own viewpoints and if they do it is just their father's or their husband's opinion. The destiny of a woman who goes over the cultural norms is death or in the best case she must live with her guilty and shamed feeling for ever.

Ewarey Perwane is about the resuming a proud and clean life for women through destroying the elements that create chaos and an unclean life in society. In Perwane's society as many other societies in the world female, femininity and woman's body are associated with "Fitna" and chaos. Perwane's and other girls' were struggling against the cultural

norms which have been created on the men's benefit. This led their destiny to death. Perwane and her girlfriends brought dishonour to their family through loving boys and escape with them to "Eshqistan". Hence, to erase the shame of their families, they must be sacrificed. Everybody in such a society participate in different ways in celebrating the moment of removing that black shame. Nobody has any sympathy for the girls. As we see through the destiny of Perwane, Mîdya, and many other girls, crossing the gender norms, which legitimise men's authority in the society, is the most dangerous thing that can happen in the society. Girls in "Qwtabxaney xoshkanî tobekar" (the school for penitent sisters), are subject to Kwêstanî's endeavour to be shaped according to the masculine norms. Kwêstanî tries to imprison the feminine body with disciplinary power. In Kwêstanî's speech, one can understand how a woman with "the invisible wall that she throws up around her", may consider herself safe; in this space, she has increased control over her body.

The division of the daily activities in both "Eshqistan" and the city based on the traditional gender roles, makes a woman to do housework, and be as a servant to her "father, brother and husband". According to this gender system man and woman have different jobs and without any hesitation the household is for women. Moreover, women have been constantly reminded about their femininity and womanhood and the fact that their body and sexuality are their biggest enemy. The fathers and brothers in a patriarchal society are supposed to control the women. They mostly use violence against their wives and daughters. Gender system simply justifies this division and takes it as a normal and natural thing.

The clearest thing concerning gender system is that the cultural representations of gender stress the legitimacy of male authority. In *Şarî Mosîqare spîyekan* (The city of the white musicians) the destiny that Celadet's mother had, shows that woman in Celadet's society has no right

to divorce. In case it happens the mother does not have any chance to be with her sons. There are other women in the novel that have no place in the family and in the society. Some of them are paralysed and cannot do anything. For instance, Celadet's aunt is "pekkewte" i.e. disabled. The women have always been associated with the household. Ishaqî Lêwzêrîn is one of those men who keep the norms unchangeable. For him a wife can in the best case only be a good householder.

There are many events in these novels that emphasise woman's body and her sexuality is something that must be controlled. Since the description of woman's body is linked to the nature, her body is dangerous. At the same time, her beauty is "fitna", which makes men uncontrollable. Comparisons of women with nature and beauty has been constructed through the system of binary oppositions that explains how this sort of dichotomy contributes to the articulation of a "negative", "weak", "passive", "emotional", "body concentrated" and "natural" female vis-à-vis a "positive", "strong", "active", "intellectual" and "cultural" male. Through Celadet's point of view about being a woman, we can clearly see how the different categorizations of sex automatically set in motion different gender stereotypes.

In the "Sharî tepotoz" women work as prostitutes. We can easily see that they have no choice, and they can not find their place in the society. Women's body and their sexuality, which are closely linked with the honour of the society, are associated with the honour of the nation. It is perhaps the most striking aspect of gender system to give the men the right and legitimacy to conduct their control over the women.

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