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As Rumi Travels along the Silk Road in Feminist Costume: Shafak's *The Forty Rules of Love*

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Transnational exchange has been an inseparable part of both the ancient and modern Silk Road. This paper shows how Rumi (1207-1273), a famous Persian Sufi poet, travels along the Silk Road in the 21st century. With the birth of a Rumi phenomenon in the West, Silk Road artists have rediscovered and adapted him for different purposes. Elif Shafak, the Turkish-British novelist and women's rights activist, espouses feminist beliefs in her bestseller, *The Forty Rules of Love* (2010). Benefiting from the views of feminist theorists like Woolf, de Beauvoir and Friedan, this paper reveals how Shafak appropriates Rumi for her feminist purposes. *Forty Rules of Love*'s protagonist, Ella Rubinstein is analyzed, compared and contrasted with her former literary counterparts Pinhan and Zeliha, heroines of Shafak's previous novels. By adapting Rumi's definition of equality, Shafak shows how egalitarianism must pervade the relationship between women and men. The adaptation of Rumi's ideas regarding the equality of sexes finds a different dimension when Shafak reveals that all humanity possesses femininity and masculinity at the same time. By means of ideas prevalent in the ancient Silk Road, the five classical elements theory, and the yin and yang principle, Shafak portrays unity within contradictions. It is concluded that although individuals might belong to different typologies of the five symbolic elements of nature, they

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can at the same time complement one another's inharmonious personalities peacefully. The process of integration of female and male sexes can be expedited by opening up one's heart to a universal love.

Keywords: *The Forty Rules of Love*, Elif Shafak, Rumi, Feminism, Love, Silk Road

Introduction

From the medieval period to the early 21st century, the Silk Road, a transcultural realm, has facilitated the migration of materials and philosophies within Asia, Europe, and North America (Dang 2013, 107; Ma 1999, 39-53). The journey of literature along the Silk Road is a very good example of transculturally artistic commerce. Persian Sufi writing, including the works of the 13th century Persian poet Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Rumi, reached China (Green 2015, 169-170). Persian literature traveled along the Silk Road and found itself in India (Behera 2002, 5077-5079). It continued the journey with the help of the Turkish immigrant population who mostly joined Samanid and then Buyid armies. Dethroning their masters and establishing the Ghaznavid Dynasty, they invaded northwestern India, which not only paid for the construction of new mosques but also spread the popularity of Persian literature (Liu 2010, 105). The chronicles of Rumi's travel entered a new phase in the modern Silk Road through the "Rumi phenomenon." The "Rumi phenomenon" is a new sensation of which Shafak's *The Forty Rules of Love* is an example (El-Zein 2000; Furlanetto 2013). This female writer has redefined and recreated Rumi's ideas in her 21st century English novel, more notably by adding a feminist flavor to the narrative.

Elif Shafak, the award-winning novelist and political scientist, was born in 1971 in Strasbourg to Turkish parents. From an early age, Shafak's attention was drawn to the mechanics of patriarchy and the inferior status it imposes on women (Shafak, personal communication, December 6, 2014). This was caused by the childhood experience of her parent's separation that compelled her to spend some time with her grandmother in Turkey. Although critics believe that Shafak perceived Turkey as a male-dominated society (Gayas 2016, 12-14), in her novels, she portrays Istanbul as a female entity and "likens her to an old woman with a young heart, who is eternally hungry for new stories and new lives" (Shafak 2006). By advocating women's equality and freedom, Shafak focuses on women's role in society in her novels. She started her career of authorship in 1997 when her first novel *Pinhan* was published. In addition to *Pinhan*, *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2007), one of Shafak's most controversial novels, depicts certain similarities to *The Forty Rules of Love* (2010) in which she reveals her deeply-held, feminist beliefs with an eye to a much higher ideal, which is the

distinctive feature setting apart *The Forty Rules of Love* from the other two novels. Alongside bringing women's issues to the fore, Shafak has also shed light on Rumi's life, the "peerless Sufi poet and sage [who] is now well known in the English-speaking world" (Nasr 2005, vii).

During the first decade of the 21st century, artists and critics claimed that Rumi had become one of the most famous poets in America (Shafak 2003, 86-88; Nasr 2005, vii; Furlanetto 2013, 2). Furlanetto's (2013) article further elaborates the term "Rumi phenomenon." She argues that Shafak has placed her American heroine alongside Rumi to catch the attention of the American readership to the utmost, since she was fully aware of the recent American fascination with the "Rumi phenomenon." Furlanetto (2013, 4) describes Americans as desperately in need of Rumi and his teachings for multiple reasons, the most important of which is that the "Rumi phenomenon" is a "programme of spirituality, designed to fit the American hunger for spiritual guidance."

The novel's storyline is twofold. On the one hand, it follows the first-person narrative of Ella Rubinstein, a middle-aged Jewish-American housewife, who through her relationship with Aziz Zahara, a wandering Sufi, experiences a spiritual rebirth that opens her eyes to the realities of her life. On the other hand, there is Shams of Tabriz, the 13th century wandering Persian Sufi Dervish, who recounts the details of his inspirational relationship with Rumi. Adil (2010) considers Shafak's narrative as "racy, told in first-person fragments, letters, emails and braided through with Shams's theosophy as told through his 40 rules of love." Iannone (1994, 66) believes that there are "differences between the sexes, but to the extent that writers are bound by them, their work sinks below the level of literature" because only the great writer attains the "capacity to transcend [these] particularities."

Shafak's technique is closely linked to Virginia Woolf's definition of "literary androgyny," which is in line with Rumi's view toward artistic creation. Woolf, a 20th century British novelist and literary critic, paved the way for modernist and feminist writers in Europe and North America. She believed that good writers must have the capacity of "both sexes to operate with both male and female tracks running at once – 'masculine' and 'feminine' not being peculiar to each sex but representative of different qualities both sexes possess" (Iannone 1994, 76). Informed of both Rumi's and Woolf's outlook, Shafak follows the same path as the author of *The Forty Rules of Love*: she narrates the story through the eyes of multiple fe/male characters capturing their experiences as keenly as possible. By incorporating examples of the Quran's verses in her novels, Shafak, along with many Islamist feminist writers, researchers, philosophers, and activists, has tried to "deconstruct the misuse of the Quran which has been used to dominate women and confine them to the private sphere" (Diner and Toktaş 2010, 42). She is also highly critical of the "Turkish 'package," the amalgamation of "modernization, westernization, and secularization," its "gender specific essence and logic by which the female body has become a symbolic battleground, particularly after the demolition of the Ottoman Empire" (Şimşek 2016, 106).

Though feminism is not new to the Silk Road (Werner 2004, 106-108; Braithwaite and Zhang 2017, 32-33), no study has scrutinized the interconnection of the adaptation of medieval literature on the modern Silk Road from a feminist perspective. In addition, there is a paucity of literature regarding a feminist reading of *The Forty Rules of Love*. Consequently, this paper aims to analyze the protagonist of *The Forty Rules of Love*, Ella Rubinstein, by applying the feminist theories of Virginia Woolf, Simone de Beauvoir, and Betty Friedan. The analysis of Ella Rubinstein is two-sided: first, she is juxtaposed with the protagonists of Shafak's two earlier novels, namely *Pinhan* and *The Bastard of Istanbul*, and second, she is compared with the major fe/male characters of *The Forty Rules of Love*.

Ella: The Heiress of the Legacy of the Silk Road's Strong Woman, Pinhan and Zeliha

Tuğlu's (2016) comparison of Pinhan and Virginia Woolf's Orlando paves the way for a feminist reading of *The Forty Rules of Love*. It is assumed that Pinhan and Orlando are "double-headed," which means they "carry the biological features of both sexes" in a fluid time and space (Tuğlu 2016, 91). This spatiotemporal mutability is repeated in *The Forty Rules of Love*. The parallel narrative structure of the novel that features the contexts of both 21st century America and 13th century Konya mirrors the transcendental essence of the temporal and spatial dimensions of the story. Most importantly, this element is conducive to Pinhan's and Ella's understanding of the nature of sex because rather than biology, sex represents human needs and social conventions (Laqueur 1999, 197). In the same vein, Simone de Beauvoir's (2010, 330) famous quote has functioned as the cornerstone for feminism: "One is not born, but rather becomes, woman." For her, not economy or biology but rather civilization forms "this intermediary product between the male and the eunuch that is called feminine" (de Beauvoir 2010, 330).

Once a distinct division separates the two categories of female and male, certain archetypal roles are ascribed to each category; for example, the passive and reproductive role of the female body is opposed to the powerful and phallogocentric role of the male body. Shafak's position during the Gezi protests of 2013 in Turkey is unequivocally against the "authoritarian and anti-feminist policies that reinforced 'marriage, reproductive, motherhood, homemaker, and nurturing functions for women'" (as cited in Şimşek 2016, 112). Marxist feminists like Rivkin and Ryan (2004, 768) note that these labels are privileged in capitalist cultures to make women "better domestic laborers, better angels in the house." Similarly, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (2000, 24) argue that acquiring the art of pleasing men is "not only angelic characteristic [but also] the proper act of a lady." These complex and sensitive issues are what Shafak mirrors in her novels.

The heroine of *The Bastard of Istanbul*, Zeliha, gathers her feministic rigor to avoid surrendering to a patriarchal society. Zeliha's open rebellion happens even when her mother Gülsüm Ana, a woman who has internalized patriarchy, warns her about the consequences of divorce and the destiny of motherhood. This rebellion also brings to mind Ella's abrupt revolt against the established rules and regulations that David, her ostensibly caring husband, has set for her. Ella, like Zeliha, eradicates "an unquestioningly accepted rule of the society: a woman is the honor of a family and her responsibility is to protect this honor no matter what are the conditions" (Güzel 2016, 576). Ella explains how the effusive Valentine's Day card she received from David "felt like […] an obituary" (Shafak 2010, 3). She believes that others think of her as a woman who built "*her whole life around her husband and children*," and she "*lacked any survival techniques to help her cope with life's hardships on her own*" (Shafak 2010, 3; emphasis in the original). Consequently, Ella and Zaliha can be looked upon as the 21st century heiresses of Virginia Woolf's legacy in *A Room of One's Own*. She asserts that a woman needs a private room, freedom, and courage to create (Woolf 1997, 122). With recent egalitarian improvements initiated by Betty Friedan and Second Wave Feminism, many women in the labor force in the 21st century own beyond what Woolf labels a "private room." Women can afford a house. Yet, this ownership and their sense of freedom is more of a physical nature since the mental restrictions in the form of unwritten societal regulations limit women's freedom. Ella is a good example representing this subjugation.

Nevertheless, by observing the destinies that lie ahead of both Ella and Zeliha, the restrictions can by no means hinder their progress towards the ideal that they have in their minds. Therefore, the message behind such female characters as Pinhan, Zeliha, and Ella is captured by Rubin's delineation of "domesticated woman." The personality and power of "domesticated woman" is understood only in the predetermined roles she plays for men: "a wife, a chattel, a playboy bunny, a prostitute, or a human Dictaphone" (Rubin 2004, 770).

Women are not to be considered inferior once they are set in certain relations with men, rather the legitimate and logical perspective in society calls for a renewal of old archetypes that uphold such positions. Women and men are equal partners, and such a fresh perspective is beneficial to both of them. Once they are considered equal, as Rubin mentions, women and men transform into "helpmates" and companions for each other who no longer fight over supremacy and prioritize concerns that are more important than power and control. This sense of equality is what Shafak adapted from Rumi's values in *The Forty Rules of Love*, which takes the shape of "The Forty Rules of the Religion of Love" introduced through Shams's engaging discourse during the course of the novel.

Ella Rubinstein as the Worthy, Modern Successor to Her Predecessors

Ella, the heroine of *The Forty Rules of Love*, positioned in the context of 21st century America, lacks nothing in her life. She is married to David, a prosperous dentist, who has provided his family with many luxuries such as a large Victorian house and prestigious apartments. Nonetheless, Ella claims that she and her husband "did not connect on any deep level" (Shafak 2010, 1). Her situation echoes what Betty Friedan first labeled "the problem that has no name" in 1963 in *The Feminine Mystique*. Shared by numerous women in North America, this unnamed problem is diagnosed by modern feminism revealing "frustration, insecurity, lack of fulfillment and identity in women" (Iannone 1994, 74-75). Friedan (1974, 27) asserts that society should "no longer ignore that voice within women that says: 'I want something more than my husband and my children and my home.'"

Friedan's unnamed problem is exactly what Ella experiences after being married peacefully for twenty years, because she is reminded of the fact that her life has been devoid of love for a long time. After the birth of her daughter in 2006, Shafak experienced post-partum depression for more than ten months. She addresses this period in her autobiography *Black Milk: On Motherhood and Writing* (2013). Concerning the reason why she has chosen this title, Shafak challenges the ideals of femininity and domesticity by explaining, "mother's milk is not always as white, that is, spotless as society likes to think"; for her, the black milk is the "ink" to write "about [her] experience [and] that of other women" (Shafak, personal communication, March 17, 2010).

Shafak offers a brand new definition of motherhood: rather than being expected as always-supportive and forever-selfless creatures defined in and by the family, mothers should celebrate their autonomy, independence, and selfhood. Her protagonist, Ella, seems to have undergone the same experience. She has always tried her best to care for the every need of her family, especially her children: "Ella's children topped her list of priorities" (Shafak 2010, 2). However, all of a sudden, she has come to sense a strange feeling that her current condition is not what she prefers, and this discovery leads to her sense of depression. In Ella's case, the depression is not only because of the birth of her twins but also because of David's extramarital affairs. Despite the fact that Ella is aware of David's infidelity, she has managed to forgive him. A woman will "surpass the male characters of the novel" because she shows greater strength "in response to sexual betrayal ... as the lessons of life grow sterner, the heroine grows in inner light – in wisdom, grace, and humility" (Iannone 1994, 71). Needless to say, Ella does not simply endure but triumphs over adversity.

When the marriage of Ella's eldest daughter is disrupted, her feelings start to change and she begins to perceive the importance of passion and love in marriage. This is the starting point for Ella's sense of alienation and her approaching Aziz Zahara, his spiritual mentorship,

and her ultimate appreciation of Rumi's religion of love. Before Ella's abandonment of her family, David finds a job for her as a reader in a literary agency. This job in fact functions as what Freeman (1975, 170) calls, "Boring Job: Woman Wanted." Ella comments that she does not care about the task of reading different novels and reporting on them (Shafak 2010, 11). David found this job for Ella to function as an escape from the serious problems of her life. At the same time, Ella, who used to care much about her physical fitness, evidenced by her "list of resolutions" (Shafak 2010, 113), no longer pays attention to such trivial issues as she knows she "hadn't aged well, and she'd gained considerable weight over the last six years" (Shafak 2010, 130). Since Ella understands that "[w]omen were victims of a patriarchal, commercialized, oppressive beauty culture" (Kroløkke and Sørensen 2005, 8), she interprets beauty through Rumi's "Forty Rules of Love." Mary Daly (2000, 64) notes that courage "is the key to revelatory power of the feminist revolution"; similarly, Ella musters the courage to leave her family to spend time with Aziz, a vehicle through whom she can gain revelatory insights.

13th-century Konya, south of Ankara in Turkey's Anatolia region, is the other setting of *The Forty Rules of Love*, showing the affinities between Rumi's time and 21st century America. Shafak describes Turkey like "[a]s you travel across the Middle East, including Turkey, you will see the cities belong to men. The streets belong to men. Women are being pushed back into the private space" (Shafak, personal communication, May 11, 2017).

Konya features three major female characters, namely Kerra, Kimya and Desert Rose, whose lives show the image that Shafak paints of Turkey and the Silk Road. Kerra is Rumi's second wife who used to be Christian before converting to Islam. In her first appearance during the narrative, she complains of her being born a woman for multiple reasons, the most important of which is that "[n]obody gives women books to open their eyes" (Shafak 2010, 167). Kerra is content with her marriage up until the point when Shams of Tabriz enters their life; just then she becomes aware of the old resentment, the "unnamed problem" she has been harboring inside herself. Though Sham and Aziz's characterization have a parallel structure, unlike the seemingly serene life of Ella and David, Kerra and Rumi have had arguments before the arrival of Shams. Only with the appearance of Shams does she understand that she has been able to deal with her problems successfully; however, a bigger "unnamed problem" is revealed to the reader. Through a rivalry with Shams to win Rumi's heart, she comes to a new understanding of her "self." In the end, when Kerra adjusts herself, albeit passively, to the current situation and comes to terms with living under the same roof with Shams of Tabriz, Shams leaves. Similarly, Aziz leaves Ella through his death; however, their departure does not devastate Ella and Kerra because they are both self-empowered to different degrees.

Disregarding the gender norms of the 13th century Silk Road, Rumi appreciates Kimya's exceptional gifts and adopts this twelve-year-old girl. He decides to tutor her in his own house.

Since it is contrary to common mores, even a leading figure like Rumi doubts the outcome of Kimya's schooling in the beginning: "But you are a girl. Even if we study intensely and make good progress, you'll soon get married and have children. Years of education will be of no use" (Shafak 2010, 171). After Kimya and Shams met in Rumi's house, they gradually fall in love with each other. However, Kimya is not as strong as Kerra in facing the difficulties.

Though Islam and Persian poetry have been an inseparable part of the Silk Road (Beckwith 2009, 229), Shafak tries to focus on the controversial aspects of religion and literature on the modern Silk Road. In one of the episodes of the novel, Kimya asks about the interpretation of one of the most debatable verses of the Quran: the thirty-fourth verse of *Al-Nisa* [Women], the fourth Surah. It reads:

> Men are in charge of women by [right of] what Allah has given one over the other and what they spend [for maintenance] from their wealth. So righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in [the husband's] absence what Allah would have them guard. But those [wives] from whom you fear arrogance – [first] advise them; [then if they persist], forsake them in bed; and [finally], strike them. But if they obey you [once more], seek no means against them. Indeed, Allah is ever Exalted and Grand ("Surah Al-Nisa" [4:34-44])

In replying to Kimya's question, Shams espouses two diametrically opposing interpretations. One reading maintains the subjugation of women, while the other advocates women's autonomy. This clearly shows the enigmatic and paradoxical nature of Shams, which after their wedding, eventually precipitates Kimya's death. All through their short married life Shams avoids Kimya, so much so that, Kimya laments, "[b]ride and groom – that is what we were supposed to be. It has been seven months since we got married. All this time he hasn't slept with me as my husband even once" (Shafak 2010, 311). Shams's avoidance and negligence deeply hurts Kimya; furthermore, he does not try to familiarize her with his mystical beliefs. Shams misinterprets Kimaya's talents as self-assertion and empowerment. He fails to notice her emotional dependence as a young, deserted bride who has been previously abandoned by her parents.

Interestingly enough, Simone de Beauvoir also comments in her *The Second Sex* on the same verse in the Quran. By highlighting one interpretation that maintains the subjugation of women, she overlooks the possibility of myriads of readings. She concludes, "pre-Islamic bedouin women had a much higher status than that accorded them by the Koran" (de Beauvoir 2010, 105), and that "Koran treats her [woman] with the most absolute contempt" (114). On the other hand, Shafak presents her readers with both scenarios, while at the same time she indirectly sides with the interpretation promoting women's autonomy and dignity.

The last major female character that is associated with the Silk Road and the 13th-century

Konya context is Desert Rose, a prostitute managing to recover from the depth of misery. Her recovery is facilitated by the assistance of Shams of Tabriz, who once during the course of the story saves her life. Desert Rose has her own interpretation of Rumi's "Forty Rules of Love." She is a thoughtful person who firmly believes that her struggle for freedom will ultimately have the desired effect despite the difficulties that accompany this metamorphosis. As de Beauvoir (2010, 324) claims, "it is more comfortable to endure blind bondage than to work for one's liberation; the dead, too, are better suited to the earth than the living." Although it is seemingly more comfortable for Desert Rose to earn her living through prostitution, she, indeed, chooses to fight for liberation. At the beginning of the story, she is portrayed as a helpless young girl who is destined for prostitution, but as the plot unravels, she proves to be the opposite. In fact, the only reason for her unconditional surrender is that she becomes so desperate for money that she, perforce, turns to prostitution. However, in spite of the difficulty that de Beauvoir mentions, the fact that women like Desert Rose are considered to be beyond redemption and society's harshly condescending view, Desert Rose succeeds in regaining liberty. She welcomes risks, since, despite the potential dangers of attending Rumi's preaching, she remains unrelenting in her decision to go and listen to him. She yearns for escape from her life as a prostitute so that she will be able to embrace faith wholeheartedly:

> [Faith is] like a hidden rose garden where I once roamed and inhaled its perfumed smells but can no longer enter. I want God to be my friend again. With that longing I am circling that garden, searching for an entrance, hoping to find a gate that will let me in. (Shafak, 2010, p. 121)

Desert Rose *is* a rose in the real sense of the term, but she needs to be discovered by Shams and she must find herself through the interpretation of Rumi's "Forty Rules of Love." She will bloom fully at last, despite the thorns in her psyche and the rocks in her path. Along this road, Desert Rose is troubled by Baybars the Warrior who continuously molests her. Baybars is one of the security guards of Konya who supposedly has responsibility for ensuring public safety. However, he is the primary cause of Desert Rose's torment. He considers himself a man of morality and decency, so much so that his uncle, Sheikh Yassin, actually acknowledges him as a paragon of virtue, which is certainly ironic. In his brutal treatment of Desert Rose, Baybars literally reduces her to nothingness. De Beauvoir (2010, 431) explains this process of reduction: when woman "does not accomplish anything," when she is told "that she is nothing […] empty and unlimited," she will "seek to reach from within her nothingness to attain All." This exactly applies to Desert Rose's circumstances, since one of the main incentives for Desert Rose to pursue her prostitution is Baybars' barbaric behavior.

A comparison between these two groups of female characters, those who live in 21st century North America and those who lived the in the 13th century Silk Road region, reveals

a great resemblance in their dilemmas and experiences. Ella is mired in a marriage that completely lacks love or sense of mutuality, a situation that is exacerbated by David's frequent betrayals: "During the last twenty years, every wish she had, every person she befriended, and every decision she made was filtered through her marriage" (Shafak 2010, 1). However, by deciding to leave this hollow life behind and start a new life with Aziz, Ella manages to fill the black void and to solve the "unnamed problem" that she has been suffering from. As for Kerra and Kimya, both of them are racked by the fact that they do not receive the attention they desire from their husbands, the result of which is submissive adjustment for the former and untimely death for the latter. Though Desert Rose differs greatly from both Kerra and Kimya, in that she is able to overcome the limitations of her time and male domination, still when she is compared to Ella, Desert Rose does not achieve her ideal due to certain constraints imposed on her by patriarchy. Ella succeeds in accomplishing both liberty and liberation to the highest degree. Actually, Ella rebels against all the barriers that stand between her and her ideal, until she achieves what she has always wanted but has been afraid to embrace. By adapting Rumi's life and works, Shafak builds a bridge between the desires and dreams of women in the ancient and the modern Silk Road.

The Forty Rules of Love: Timely Message of Universal Love Shared by All

Shafak weaves ideas prevalent on the ancient Silk Road, five classical elements theory, and the yin and yang principle into the fabric of her story. *The Forty Rules of Love* is divided into five parts that correspond, with slight variations, to the five symbolic elements of nature, namely earth, water, wind/ air, fire and void. At the beginning of each part of the novel, one page is dedicated to these elements where each is briefly explained. Although there is no other direct reference during the course of the story to any of these components, the reader can notice all these elements at work. Five classical elements theory is closely related to the principle of yin and yang. Everything on earth has an inclination toward yin or yang.

> Yin is inner directed, soft, gentle, flowing, yielding, passive, diffused, cold, and wet; it is associated with water, earth, the moon, femininity, and night. Yang is outer directed, fast, hard, solid, focused, sharp, hot, dry, and aggressive; it is associated with fire, the sky, the sun, masculinity, and daytime (Dahlin 2016, 235)

The proponents of the yin and yang principle believe that the basic sources of human livelihood is found in five phases (*wu xing*) – water, fire, wood, metal, earth – that dynamically change in the manner of yin and yang principle (May and Tomoda 1999, 14-15; Graham

1989, 327-329; Waltham 1972, 126; Needham and Wang 1969, 242-243). Shafak applies these theories and principles to her novel by means of characterization. Ella and Rumi, the hero and heroine of the novel, are characterized as water-type people. They are calm, clever, introspective, and constantly in search of knowledge and truth. Because the dominant emotion of the water-type is fear, they mostly prefer to be alone, and this may lead to their isolation. Social and spiritual rituals, openness, and sensitivity can compensate for their imbalances (Chokoisky 2014, 31-35). The concept of void is metaphorically portrayed in the last part of the novel. Both Ella and Rumi suffer from a gaping void, and it is only filled by the presence of Aziz Zahara for the former and Shams of Tabriz for the latter. Aziz Zahara and Shams of Tabriz, who are the perfect foils for Ella and Rumi respectively, are characterized as fire-type people. They are energetic, intuitive, fond of beauty, and unconcerned about material wealth. Their dominant emotion, in contrast to that of the water-type, is joy. They are usually happy and try their best to cheer those around them. While these two groups of characters have conflicting attitudes, based on the yin and yang principle, their contradictory traits fascinate and complement the other side. Both poles are equal and the decrease in one pole inspires an increase in the other to reach their ultimate goal: harmony.

During the course of the story, Shams indirectly refers to the yin and yang principle when he tries to interpret the thirty-fourth verse of Surah *Al-Nisa* for Kimya. He explains:

> You'll see that the verse is not about women and men but about *womanhood* and *manhood*. And each and every one of us [...] has both femininity and masculinity in us, in varying degrees and shades. Only when we learn to embrace both can we attain harmonious Oneness (Shafak 2010, 198; emphasis in the original)

Dayekh (2016. 1718) believes that the heptad structure of the novel, a foreword, a section by the killer, and five other divisions pertaining to the four elemental constituents of the cosmos (fire, water, earth, wind/ air) plus the "void," represents the "seven stages on the path of Truth – seven maqamat every soul has to go through in order to attain Oneness." This condition of "harmonious Oneness" is in fact, as Shafak elaborates, the "perfection of the human condition, *al-insan al-kamil* [the complete human/ harmonious Oneness]" (2004, 47). For Iannone (1994, 76) "'masculine' and 'feminine' experience wield[s] not only particularly but as larger metaphors for different aspects of the universal human condition." Iannone's explanation clarifies Rivkin and Ryan's (2004, 768) point differentiating physical or biological identity from psychological identity: "Women can be just as much 'masculine' as men, and biological men might simply be 'masculine' only out of obedience to cultural codes." In writing *The Forty Rules of Love*, Shafak has benefited from intertexuality technique by weaving Rumi's words into Joseph Campbell, the 20th century American literary critic, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the 19th century British Romantic poet, to deliver a sense of unity beyond

the diversity of human experience. Beyond the clash of civilizations and religions, beyond power rivalry, *The Forty Rules of Love* unites the readers under "the banner of the essential ingredient of the life of mankind: love, acquired by the quest of self-discovery, by the process of unlearning in order to re-learn […] to live and [to] love" (Dayekh 2016, 1718-1719).

What Ella and Rumi experience, the amalgamation of both masculine and feminine qualities, functions as larger metaphors for the universal human experience that can be extended and shared by every individual. This experience could not have been gained without the element of "love" that is as a "stone […] hurled from out of nowhere into the tranquil pond of [their] lives" (Shafak 2010, 3). As Gail, the protagonist of Shafak's *The Saint of Incipient Insanities* (2004), explains "we tend to resist to being changed by our lovers for fear of losing them, but maybe the alteration that comes with love is our only saving grace" (Shafak 2004, 22).

Conclusion

Whether Rumi's exact words have immigrated to 21st century America to shape new literature and to form the "Rumi phenomenon" is not the matter of concern. What is important is how the modern Silk Road adapts and rearranges a Persian classic in North America that is the legacy of Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan. This paper showed how Elif Shafak, a Turkish-British novelist, revealed significant progress in *The Forty Rules of Love* (2010) in comparison with her former novels. This statement is proved by comparing the heroine of *The Forty Rules of Love* with two of her predecessors, namely Pinhan and Zeliha, the heroines of *Pinhan* (1997) and *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2007) respectively. As for Pinhan, her raison d'être is to substantiate the fact that the nature of sex is not predetermined but rather defined under the influence and the needs of those who occupy positions of power. Consequently, being a woman should not be considered as something inferior because there is no inherited difference between man and woman. Zehila takes a major step forward in the confirmation of the equality between women and men. By openly flouting the archetypal stereotypes that are ascribed to women in order to justify their position as the inferior sex, Zeliha advocates equality that leads to beneficial effects such as a fresh and sensible perspective for both genders.

Informed by the views of Woolf, de Beauvoir, and Friedan, Shafak shows that the "unnamed problem" overshadowing women's life is not new to the Silk Road. From a feminist perspective, she has reinterpreted Rumi's respect for and avowal of individual identity in her novel that evolves around "The Forty Rules of the Religion of Love." Once Ella Rubinstein is compared with Kerra and Kimya, it becomes clear that they are all in the same situation –discontentment with their married lives; however, they react differently. Kerra and Kimya

select adjustment while Ella rebels against this discontentment. Desert Rose also acts against the prevalent patriarchy; however, compared to Ella, due to certain limitations, she cannot achieve her ideal fully. The pentagonal structure of *The Forty Rules of Love* reflects the five symbolic elements of nature, and earth, water, fire, wind/air, and void are closely associated with the principle of yin and yang. By integrating the prevalent philosophies of the Silk Road, Shafak characterizes the major fe/male personas of the novel. Ella and Rumi are water-types while Aziz Zahara and Shams of Tabriz belong to the fire-type. Though each of these types possesses diametrically different characteristics, the significant point is that they complement each other in a harmonious manner. This leads to the statement that all humanity retains within themselves femininity as well as masculinity, and it is circumstances that cause the dominance of one over the other. What humanity must strive to achieve is the condition of *al-insan al-kamil* or "harmonious Oneness" that is made possible through opening up their hearts to a universal love.

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