

Women in Fariba Vafi's My Bird (Parandehye-man): A Portrayal of Gender Role, Cultural Beliefs, and Social Relations.

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Abstract

From a feminist perspective, patriarchy is a pervasive system that has long denied women freedom, equality, dignity, and opportunity. Within this framework, literature functions as a powerful medium through which women's oppression can be articulated and critiqued. Accordingly, the present study examines Fariba Vafi's award-winning novel, *My Bird* (2002), a work that reflects significant shifts in women's roles and the construction of gender identity in Iranian society. The primary objective of this article is to explore how the traditional and social conditions shaping women's lives intersect with their sense of womanhood and their social action. It further shows how female characters negotiate tensions between personal identity, social roles, and inner desires. The study seeks not only to depict the lived reality of gender domination, but also to analyze the transformations occurring within that reality. Additionally, the study seeks to highlight female characters' agency to counter traditional notions of femininity and how they circumvent the established norms of a male-centred universe. Ultimately, the article demonstrates that Vafi's work contributes significantly to contemporary discussions on gender, social change, and the evolving roles of women, offering a nuanced perspective on how literature can reflect and inspire transformations in both personal and societal conceptions of womanhood.

Keywords: Ethno-medicine, Homoeroticism, Primitive, Barbarian, Pleasure Seeker, Overeater

Introduction

Over the past century, the literary production of Iranian women has expanded significantly, marking the emergence of a substantial body of female authors who have shaped modern Persian Literature. Writers such as Takin Hamzeloo, Forough Faeekhzad, Zoya Pirzad, among many others, have established themselves as innovative and influential voices. Their works frequently articulate the lived experiences of women in ways that foreground pervasive feelings of alienation, uncertainty, and the loss of a coherent sense of self within the constraints of traditional Iranian society. In doing so, these authors not only document gendered realities but also contribute to the development of new narrative forms and subjectivities in contemporary Iranian literature. Forough Hashabeiky declares that “by the time of the 1979 Revolution in Iran, the Persian novel had developed both qualitatively and quantitatively” (141).

Fortunately, women have been successful in highlighting intricate political and social issues, as well as the constraints of domestic life and marriage through their writing. Drawing from research on the women's movement, in accordance with Hashabeiky, Ladan Rahbari also says that “the status of women has been improving in many social aspects since the late 1980s” (40). This has resulted in the production of some of the finest literary works of art and, most importantly,

has inspired societal change towards gender equality. Nayereh Tohidi suggests that:

The history of Iranian women's quest for equal rights and their collective actions for sociopolitical empowerment dates back to the formation of the modern social movements for constitutionalism and democratic nation-state building in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (77).

Women's activities_ particularly their literary production and their social and political rights_ are deeply connected to Iran's central patriarchal power structure. Therefore, female writers' literary careers cover women's issues and gender relations, exploring how the cultural and socio-political circumstances of women's lives intersect with both their literary works and their critical reception. Iranian female writers have been questioning the ways in which traditional norms in Iran are created through history, especially after the Islamic Revolution. A few female authors have managed to secure a spot in the exclusive group of prominent Iranian writers. This perception is further reinforced by the exclusion of women writers from various eras of Iranian literary history. Women's literature arises either as a response to female fulfillment or as “sexual oppression and reflect their struggle for identity” (Talattof 531).

Female writers have started producing novels that reflect their actual positions and situation in society. They also aim to provoke necessary

changes through literature, mirror the real situation of the oppressive society, and expose the desires and attitudes that most women feel and think. They seek to break down the current traditional norms and rebuild them more equitably. Fariba Vafi is recognized as one of the most significant contemporary female authors whose works articulate the emergence of a new woman who redefines the conventional expectations associated with traditional femininity. In her novel, she constructs female characters that embody diverse modes of womanhood and reflect multiple configurations of feminine identity. Through these representations, she challenges the restrictive social and cultural roles historically imposed upon women.

Fariba Vafi and Contemporary Iranian Feminist Fiction

The Iranian feminist and writer Fariba Vafi, born in 1963 in Tabriz, Iran, stands out as a revolutionary female figure who sheds light on literary and political concerns of the contemporary era. As a prominent writer, she occupies a central position among the circle of well-known Iranian writers. She has published seven novels and five collections of short stories. Her novels have received literary awards and are translated into many languages. In the past decade, her books have been analyzed by scholars and critics. Gender inequality and identity have been major components of her works, with her female

protagonists feeling the impact of traditional and social norms. Her stories deal with a complex array of issues, the most important of which is the representation of women under patriarchy. Vafi focuses on the everyday life of ordinary women who try to define themselves against cultural expectations.

In her first novel, *My Bird* (2002) (Parandehye Man), Vafi offers telling pictures of the life circumstances of her female protagonists: a married woman who is the main female character, her old, sick mother, and her sisters. The novel invites readers to bear witness to the lived experiences of its female characters and to the ways they respond to the circumstances surrounding them. These women are situated within social and domestic spaces structured by traditional gender role allocation, which positions them as housewives and as occupying subordinate roles within a gendered hierarchy. Through its narrative, the novel examines how the gender of the main female protagonist- discursively marked through pronouns and grammatical reference- interacts with and shapes the range of actions associated with her. Moreover, the distinct behavioral patterns exhibited by male and female characters can be read as reflecting prevailing norms of gender propriety within traditional Iranian society.

Vafi seemingly traces the root of this problem back to the traditional system that either confines or represses young women's confidence.

Living in a culture that preferred its women to be simpering or silent, the main female character, a middle-aged mother, voices her thoughts and feelings. Being able to speak her mind makes her a remarkable character. She has proved her loyalty and devotion to her husband and her children, and then dares to fight social status and demand her rights. She has carefully navigated between her identity and cultural pressure as a mother, wife, and daughter on the one hand, and the quest for independence and individual rights on the other. Her transformation from her father's house to her husband's house marks the beginning of her experiences, as her primary responsibilities revolve around building a family and becoming a wife and mother. Mahin, her oldest sister, carefully tries to strike a balance between silence and communication in social situations. She is considered the most intelligent daughter, partly because she has a fiancé, and together they have emigrated to another country. Shahla, the youngest one, who has been subjected to the social body of Iran, offers a fascinating overview of a single woman who tries to find her way under a conservative traditional state in Iran. The old mother, who has been shaped by patriarchal patterns and traditional restrictions in Iranian society, accomplishes her desire in the end, showing her indifference towards her husband's death. Her roles and her relationships with her daughters are objects of investigation and sources of inspiration. Their relationships are

consequences of the traditional and social norms that have shaped and subjugated Iranian women strictly to the roles of wife and mother. The importance of mother-daughter relations in shaping identity helps to gain a better understanding of women's power in their roles. It can be beneficial to examine how having children, getting married, and living abroad impact the quality of mother-daughter relationships.

Discursive Constructions of Gender in *My Bird*

My Bird tells the story of a working-class family through a first-person narrative. The unnamed narrator gradually reveals the layers of her family life. At the beginning of the novel, she describes their newly purchased 50-square-meter apartment in a poor neighborhood in southern Tehran. The new apartment excites her because she believes her family will be freer and no longer face the limitations that being a tenant imposed on them. The narrator is a middle-aged housewife whose blue-collar husband desperately wants to migrate to Canada by any means. For Amir, his country is a dystopian world where he and his family have no future. He sees Canada as a utopia where people are dignified and doors to success and progress are open. He envisions it as a land of pleasures, with blond girls with whom he fantasizes about moments of dalliance. Unlike her husband, as the main female protagonist, she prefers to stay with her children, Shadi and Shahin; she is reluctant to deal with the pains of adjusting to an alien culture.

The narrator, an attentive wife, senses her husband's growing disinterest in her. She understands that once Amir attains his intended destination, he will not return, consequently placing the full responsibility of raising the children upon her.

While she remains silent and devoted to her family, Amir is portrayed as flirtatious and indifferent to his wife. The narrator doesn't limit her story to Amir; she also writes about her childhood memories, her parents, aunt, uncle, and sisters. She shares her parents' conflicts, her father's struggle with Alzheimer's, and his eventual death in the basement. She talks about her domineering aunt and her henpecked, hookah-smoking husband, who used to leer at her when she was a child. The narrator introduces her sisters: Mahin and Shahla. Mahin marries someone in America and moves there, while Shahla stays with their mother, enjoying the freedom she was denied in her youth by traditional society. The author thoughtfully chooses her title: "My Bird." It refers to her husband, who is eager to migrate, and the common belief that every person has a bird that follows them wherever they go. The narrator later shares her fascination with her childhood basement. It was terrifying in the past, but she eventually overcame her fear and quietly revealed her desire to move there. As the story unfolds, the narrator discusses Amir's plan to sell their small apartment to fund his migration to Canada, regardless of the consequences for his

family. The story ends ambiguously, leaving readers uncertain whether Amir has sold the apartment and begun his journey to Canada. Ultimately, the narrator mentions her bird, symbolizing her escape from Amir and her wish to start a new life on her own.

This article analyses the representation of women's confrontation with their society, which limits and restricts their wishes, desires, and selves. It also describes how these female characters teach their own feelings, demonstrating a feminist approach to the authentic female agenda. The opening of *My Bird* represents a main female character who wants to lead a life that resembles her own standard, neither masculine nor social ideals. This novel provides an opportunity to consider the representations of generational conflict, which has been a significant factor in mother-daughter relationships where a daughter criticizes the choices of her mother and vice versa. Women in this novel can be truthful and direct even in difficult situations, giving their utterance to have control or rights over their lives. They face challenges that reduce the status of a married woman and a single woman to an unimaginably low level. Women bear the brunt of the consequences of cultural attitudes and the impact of religion and politics, which influence individuals' definition and perception of themselves, leading to alteration. According to Arezoo Osanloo, "it becomes apparent that the scholarship on women's rights in Iran is part of

broader discussions about rights throughout the world” (20). Vafi emphasizes that the representation of a woman who must adhere to the separate sphere of domesticity particularly reflects a woman engaging in her own proper duties within her proper sphere. The root of these women's enigma in such stories is attributed to suppressive, unjust, and exploitive social conditions of the time. The story, at the same time, reflects the self in the context of the situation, with the possibility or at least a spark of hope for change to a more realistic level of an individual's impetus.

Theoretical Framework

Feminists regard women as the victims of the patriarchal system. In their eyes, it is a pernicious system that relegates women to an inferior status, reduces them to men's objects of pleasure, curtails their freedom, controls their fertility, stifles their creativity, and imprisons them at home. For the feminists, patriarchal hegemony naturalises women's exploitation, rationalizes their discrimination, and perpetuates inequality. They posit that male authors have not only reinforced their assumptions in their works but also promulgated them. For instance, Shakespeare, in his *Hamlet*, reiterates this misogynistic statement: “Frailty, thy name is woman.” This system, according to feminists, has highly policed rules; it expects women to abide by them. It demands women be obedient, docile, silent, sacrificial, caring, forgiving, family-oriented, and nurturing.

If they live up to these established expectations, they are revered as angels and heroines; otherwise, they are dismissed as deviants, monsters, witches, and social misfits. Feminists associate patriarchy with injustice, oppression, and the root cause of their plight because it has endowed men with power and prestige while depriving women of them. Thus, they avidly seek to fight against its tyranny, raise consciousness about its injustice, and discourage women from internalising its ideology. Indeed, feminism envisions an egalitarian society in which men and women are equal, not masters and slaves.

Besides battling patriarchy, feminism has other agendas as well. It strives to discover obscure and marginalised female writers whose works have received either no attention or scant attention. They also attempt to rehabilitate the representation of women by bringing to light alternative images, which are distinct from the negative and stereotypical ones prevalent in the realm of literature. Furthermore, they intend to expand the literary canon by including the works of female writers as classics in academia.

Discussion

The story centers on a woman who, after years of displacement, finally attains the stability of homeownership. Possessing a house becomes a symbolic act of belonging and self-affirmation for her. By cherishing this space, she seeks not only to inhabit it but to inscribe her identity in it. The

house thus emerges as a metaphor for the legitimization of her subjectivity within a society that has long denied women such autonomy and permanence. Conversely, her husband yearns to spread his wings and dreams of flying away. He thinks that this ownership, embraced by his wife, won't lead to any progress for them and will prevent their move to Canada.

To achieve his goal and convince his wife, Amir persists in belittling and diminishing her dreams and desires, even contemplating selling the house. Amir says, "I am selling the house" (Vafi 13) – the very house that has given his wife a new identity. Amir even seems to begrudge his love for his wife and children, feeling that staying here has clipped his wings and stifled his aspirations. Perhaps his wife's silence, which he sometimes finds grating, is the very obstacle to his flight. The story's protagonist, who has been bewildered in accepting roles, whether as a daughter in her father's house or as a wife in her husband's, refuses to go to Canada and desires to live as she wishes. "I don't want to move to Canada. I don't want to spend the rest of my days adjusting to life over there because by the time I find my way around, life will be all over" (57). Her silence signifies the discovery of her identity, yet at times, she grapples with a sense of guilt. It means that when she wants to seek her true self and become who she desires, not who others expect, she becomes disoriented and cannot defend what she wants or verbalize it. Instead, she converses

internally, within himself. It is ironically noted in the book, "I want to scream" (Vafi 42) and at the same time "She (her mother) wrapped me in an old sheet and left me crumpled up in a world of fear" (44). It refers to her participation in action, behavior, and language, which is a way of describing interlocking social systems of power. Her sense of self appears to align with her perspective, which inadvertently leads to behaviors that are detrimental to her.

Her husband tarnishes her identity because she immigrates to Canada, causing her to drift away from her true self. She even sees herself as a misled and aged woman. She contemplates why Amir seeks his dreams elsewhere. "Where was I the day Amir started thinking about a different kind of life?" (31). Why have his aspirations diverged from hers? Why must she pursue her identity or a second version of herself to please Amir? Why does Amir go to great lengths to leave, while she can only remain silent?"

In her childhood, she sought her identity in the basement of their house, despite being afraid of the darkness. It was a place where she could take refuge as a girl. Her beloved aunt had no children, and sometimes she would take her to her home with a new identity. Yet, upon returning, her identity would shift again, leaving her to wonder, 'Who am I?' One of her notable educational traits as a daughter in a traditional society was her silence, which was often praised. The silence of women in critical moments of life lays the

foundation for their lives, both in their single years and in their married lives. This characteristic has permeated her being; although she strives to change herself, she cannot fully control it.

She rejects a life of subservience and silence and claims her deserved life of autonomy as a woman. Her character is considered a unique creative voice and an invaluable female protagonist. Besides this, her character is an inspiration to modern women who have successfully challenged traditional domination in Iran. Her role has effectively helped bring due recognition to women, who have otherwise been ignored or misconstrued by social norms. Interestingly, as Vafi's main female character's endeavors truly commenced for the most part around the time that she made the notable decision to stay out of the traditional community of Iran. According to Farzaneh Milani:

The modernized, educated elite, who claimed to support change, also could not reconcile themselves to the changes affecting women's status. Changes of behavior were felt to be threatening, especially with regard to sexual mores and conduct. The old ways retained the upper hand even for the liberated elite, who championed women's rights (128).

She understands that it is the social construction of her reproductive power and the configuration of her relationships with her family members that are burdensome and overbearing, and not mothering

itself, then, she transforms the conditions as a mother, a wife, and a daughter through her power as a woman. She does not criticize herself as a mother; however, she notes the lack of social values and relations regarding the mother in society. As Tuula Gordon addresses that:

The way in which they challenge and criticize myths of motherhood; the way in which they consider it their right to work (in the labor force); the antisexist way in which they bring up their children; the way in which they expect fathers of their children to participate in joint everyday lives; and the way in which many of them are politically active (149).

She struggles with her husband, Amir. They finally buy a house that is neither big nor ideal. "We are not the tenants of any landlords. Landlords are not evil, but they can possess your soul just the same!" (Vafi 11). She tends to have a fear of controlling her life, her choices, and the way she lives. The book insists that her female subjectivity can be described through the character's distinct way of speaking.

Households are arguably the most fundamental unit of society. Furthermore, household decisions about children, migration, and many more are crucial to the development and position of women. The discussions about gender relations have been influenced by the experiences of women balancing their expanding public roles with their private responsibilities. This has led to a

complex approach to the concepts of home and motherhood. These issues have had a significant impact on society, promoting the acceptance of women's equal rights, freedom, and self-expression. Much of the time and energy of the female protagonist is devoted to running her house and organizing her family as the most important priority of a woman, accordingly. Furthermore, it can be seen that womanly behavior means attention to her husband, keeping her children neat and clean, and attending only to domestic arrangements. According to Musse:

It is a banal truth that an individual's sex role is the most salient of his many social roles. No other social role directs more of his overt behavior, emotional reactions, cognitive functions, covert attitudes, and general psychological and social adjustments.... Nor is the ascription of any role more fundamental for the maintenance and continuity of society. Activities, tasks, characteristics, and attitudes are assigned differently to men and women in all cultures (707).

She decides to continue living for herself and her children, who are clearly portrayed throughout the story. The character is represented as a housewife and a creative individual, highlighting a nuanced intersection between domestic responsibility and self-expression. The story is full of bright images and love for her daughter, Shadi, and her son, Shahin. At the same time, the story declares that

the established stereotypes of a housewife and a mother need to be radically changed. The author believes that her struggle for self-determination is associated with a woman's personality. It can be said that having control over her house is important for her. The house stands as a metaphor for her psyche. This ownership becomes part of her identity and how she continues to build her world, considering it as a practical challenge. For her, the private house and relationships create a stable family connection. Ownership of her home becomes central to her sense of stability and belonging. Having a house means she gets to have a family and be a part of one. In order to maintain a stable house, she can protect her children and family relationships. Her house is not an emblem of traditional rules that rely on societal norms to reinforce societal positions. Instead, it shows her ability to live beyond social norms.

Not surprisingly, the undeniable fact is that motherhood is a distinct and exclusively female experience. Said that, this article does not seek to argue that the function of motherhood necessarily serves to oppress women or to confine them within the dominant sociocultural structures of Iranian society. However, in certain situations, that prevent the central female character in this novel from developing as an independent and self-determined individual within the society she is a member of. In Johnston and Swanson's words: "Culture tells us what it means to be a mother, what behaviors and attitudes are appropriate for

mothers, and how motherhood should shape relationships and self-identity" (21). Tradition and social construction play a role in shaping people's relations to themselves as well as to others.

It can be understood that women are by nature destined to fulfill the role of passive embodiment and nurturer of family values, creating a cultural sphere of society and, above all, expect them to know how to be a good mother. However, marriage equality can help lessen those norms within all marriages. Therefore, as the main protagonist, she seeks to engage with him, not against him. She respects his thoughts and preferences, as he supports her in her choice of who she considers family. The main female protagonist, she says: "I don't enjoy the cool air of the air conditioning because Amir has to work in the hot sun...I don't socialize with my friends because Amir can't do it" (Vafi 38). Vafi does not depict the idealization of a feminine figure as a morally pure lady who should create a tranquil, clean, and comfortable home where men could escape from the competitive sphere of paid work. Vafi does not try to define marriage as either a bitter battle of gender conflict or the most coveted achievement of women; instead, she portrays the stresses and challenges of a typical woman's everyday life. "When we first moved to this house, I was determined to love it" (1). Her statements and behaviors serve as a true representation of her genuine aspirations, in contrast to the normative expectations dictated by her culture. One of the

most remarkable books about mothering, 'Motherhood in Literature and Culture', noted that "Maternal agency thus involves resistance to dominant discourses. Historically, mothers have been – and to a great extent still are – objects of others' injunctions, as expressed in ideological, political, and religious discourses" (4).

Her passionate self-assertion that contradicts contemporary gender norms represents a serious challenge to the social norms of the ideal woman. Despite all, she is not necessarily a revolutionary person; she holds both traditional and progressive views about women. "I feel a sense of freedom and talk about it" (Vafi 4) ... "This is my life, and these two kids belong only to me. Now I have all the responsibility to continue as I see fit... I feel I have become stronger" (85). Much of the controversy surrounding marriage is not about the fate of abandoned lives, but rather the impact of social constitutions and patriarchal concepts on men and women, as Ladan Rahbari states that "marriage itself, which remains fundamental to social identity especially that of women and the pressure to marry persists" (38), the marital status is considered the ultimate goal, both naturally and traditionally.

Amir seems to encourage her to stop suppressing her emotions, but from the moment she marries him, he begins to suppress her by his internalized patriarchal ideology, which clearly shows different dimensions of his character. Amir says, "When I married you, I told you I wanted a

life partner, not an obstacle on the road.” (32). At this point, Amir's description of his ideal wife reveals the oppressive characteristic of the marriage institution in traditional communities. He wants a wife who bows to his desires.

Her strong will to survive is described through her self-discovery and self-consciousness from childhood to adulthood. The relationship between her daughter, Shadi, and herself generates future power. “I sit Shadi in front of me and give her a little lecture” (Vafi 21) ... “if you don't make a sound, you are as bad as a doll without a battery, without a heart. Then it is possible to hurt you because nobody will even find out.” (21). As a mother, she places her identity in the capacity to raise her children. Although she has been shaped by the imposed influence of traditional discourse, she nurtures her children, varying significantly from the culture in which people live, especially women. Considering motherhood, the most important point for her, she tries to respect her children's struggle, especially Shadi, influencing her as a woman in her own family, to present the way Iranian women form their identity as women going through excruciating circumstances. The female protagonist of the story wants her daughter to be a mature and strong woman who can face the adversity, distrust, and threats that manipulate women's identity.

As Freidan states, “what women can become when they are finally free to become themselves. The time is at hand when the voices of

the feminine mystique can no longer drown out the inner voice that is driving women to become complete” (xviii). This quote explores how women's ability to talk and think freely can shape their structure of power and reproduce social norms according to their knowledge and attitude. As individuals, they attempt to understand how to give voice to themselves and to give life and importance to their own stories by recording them themselves.

She affirms that there is the possibility of retrieving her own self from obsessive maternal possession. She does not want to lose herself in exchange for love and a sense of belonging, and she was yet cast aside simply because she questioned things, which was not expected from women to do at that time. He blatantly shows his dominance over her. Vafi thoughtfully uses the character of Amir to describe how intelligent the main character, who questions things, felt in the patriarchal society of her time.

She sometimes defends herself, but at the same time, she subjugates her feelings and criticizes her life, especially during her childhood. It would be considered that everything is done with the aim of leveling the differences in living standards, for the joy of everybody participating together. She was still a child and had not yet fully adapted to the norms and conventions of the time. Therefore, she was not aware that deviating from society's norms would result in her being punished. “I was afraid of the dark, the basement,

and the shadows, afraid of Uncle Qadir, even Maman and Aunt Mahboub. That is why I kept silent” (Vafi 37) ... “I was scared to scream. I would bite the corner of the blanket and could not take my eyes off the wall” (40). Rachel Thomson and Lisa Baraitser suggest that “In fact, part of our argument is that mother and child remain opaque to one another, two adjacent positions of experience that simply cannot ‘know’ one another” (66).

While there are similarities and differences between the author's portrayals of their main female characters, there are many more differences in the treatment of all females in this book. Her mother, on the one hand, plays a foil to the moral and self-sacrifice. She wants to keep her place in society and sheds her veils and raises her voice. On the other hand, she occupies positions of religious and political power; family inheritance is passed down the female line. By modelling herself on traditional moral context, she inadvertently duplicates the hierarchical and masculinist bias inherent in this form of social and religious thought.

The novel attempts to demonstrate the view that human societies have not always supported male domination in social structure and religious practice. It has come to imply a social structure that mirrors the image of the traditional and religious system, which has led to female dominance. In its simplest terms, it can gain us further understanding into how dominant

discourse influences, shapes and constructs what is considered acceptable in society. At some point, she has been characterized by anger and domination. Her ignorance of her husband's death is severely felt, which contributes as the only escaping strategy from their confinement in patriarchal houses. “I half rose and got closer to Maman. Her eyes were closed. But I knew she was awake. I had seen her eyes gleam. I called her. She didn't answer... I shook Maman's shoulders. She turned her back to me and sobbed... Father died that same night, lonely, like a defenseless child” (Vafi 93).

Vafi emphasizes the important role of the configurations of power, society, or ideology in defining gender roles in a given time. In other words, women's role is socially constructed; thus, in the patriarchal society of Iran, Iranian women, being subjected to such marginalization, pursued different kinds of strategies to avoid traditional oppressions. There is evidence that she has the last word or rule over others, holding central roles. “I was afraid of the dark, even Maman (36) ... but my maman says it's better to at least have the name of a husband anyway” (Vafi 90). In fact, in terms of social and religious history, mothers are the foundation or the starting point of each living being that has evolved from traditional and religious patterns.

The literary representation of mothers is complex. Mother-daughter relationships, in fact, are accurately described in a quest for with their

own sense of self. In the past two decades, an increasing amount of research on motherhood and parenting, guided by feminist theory and politics, has emphasized the complexity of mothering experiences and created new theories of motherhood that go beyond the traditional view of motherhood as a purely biological obligation. As Samira Kawash observes:

Motherhood studies need the perspective and commitment of feminism as well as the institutional resources that feminism and women's studies have accumulated over the past four decades. At the same time, feminism cannot possibly hope to remain relevant without acknowledging motherhood in all its contradictions and complexities (1997).

This novel, then, threw new light on relations between the old mother and the new generation mother as crucial elements in comprehending in the formation of individual subjectivities and identities. The universality of maternal feelings and the possibility of black and white women's solidarity through their common maternal identity. Vafi, like other Iranian female writers, Zoya Pirzad's *We'll Get Used to It* (2004), Belgheis Soleimani's *Khaleh Bazi* (Girly Play) (2008), *Takin Hamzehloo Romantically for My Son* (2005), puts forward a different story, uses the concept of motherhood and maternal discourses to represent not only the reality of their time but also the traditional society of Iran. These female

writers center the theme of motherhood to their work, but the role of mother is seen in different ways. This novel interestingly presents evidence of mothering patterns in the form of social injustice and poses a challenge to a key strand of religious and traditional thoughts of society in Iran that holds mothers to be naturally and rightly selfless. Vafi is, above all, concerned about raising power and choice regarding the conditions in which mothering takes place. This view bears out Vafi herself makes clear that motherhood as an experience and as a dynamic, highlighting the constructed and changeable nature of maternity. Maternal practice, in this novel, ideally portrays the provision of meaning and identity, evolving out of social norms and contexts. Having said that, this study clearly rejects mothering on the perceived basis of its inherent oppression of women in society, where women remain powerless by maintaining the world of men.

Throughout the novel, Shahla speaks out, expressing herself more than the other female characters. Unlike the obedient traditional woman who suffered and was suppressed, Shahla, the woman of this generation, breaks the silence and share their complaints, emotions, and most intimate experiences with others. In addition, her self-sufficiency manifests as a person who finds out how to rely on herself in the very beginning. She audaciously shares her thoughts about marriage and relationships to men. "Shahla had announced her hatred of all relationships with the

male species” (Vafi 57). No surprisingly, she represents a struggle that women must exercise to break down the barriers that even today they are trying to impose. Unlike many women could only expect a good marriage, which could provide them with a better social position and economic security, Shahla tries to make a life of her own and breaks a conception which is hold among Iranian community that a woman should be a “a perfect lady, an Angel in the House, contentedly submissive to men, but strong in her inner purity and religiosity, queen in her own realm of the Home” (Showalter 14). She faces numerous obstacles when she steps out of the spheres by becoming an independent woman. The woman has a distinct preference in life: above all, she values tranquility. She does not like surprises and prefers to know exactly what to do and what to anticipate at any moment, and also does not surrender for a limited period.

All female character's experience self-sacrifices. The female protagonist's self-sacrifices include her motherhood: “Then your days pass wondering about the benefits of a C-section versus natural birth” (Vafi 57). or when her husband disregards her by calling her name like animal names, “You are a polar bear” (58), “You've become really fat, like a buffalo” (82). She sacrifices herself to this patriarchal era's social mores. Then, for love of the man who would have knowingly compromised her, she sacrifices herself to a life of caregiving. Amir, on the other

side, selfishly considers his desires and wishes before anyone, even his children, thinking and daydreaming of going to Canada. Living abroad comes first for him and stimulates his imagination, as portrayed in the book.

Regarding her routines, sometimes, she is depicted as exhausted with her must-do responsibilities and communal demands. In the context of traditional Iranian society, women are often expected to conform to prescriptive modes of conduct- most notably, to speak with measured pleasantness or to remain silent altogether. As the main female protagonist, however, she fails or refuses to embody these codified norms of femininity, thereby revealing both the rigidity of such expectations and the social tensions that emerge when women deviate from them. “The polar bear is bored, bored of constantly having to take care of the kids” (Vafi 59) ... “I cannot perform any of the roles that have been assigned to me” (60).

Though motherhood is often regarded as a joyous event that gives a woman's life purpose and meaning, the main female character instead depicts motherhood as a complicated event fraught with uncertainty and fear, but also with love and affection. Regarding this perspective, she must conceal her natural feelings and pretend to have different feelings. She pursues a fantasy of change. Her ideals are revolutionary, at least, on an individual level. The very possibility of happiness for this character is embedded in the

idea of self-satisfaction. Vafi successfully traces a woman's extraordinary progress through life in a patriarchal society.

Conclusion

My Bird is widely recognized as a novel depicting the journey of a passionate and determined young woman from precarious self-reliance and resourcefulness toward marriage, and, ultimately, motherhood. This paper examines the social and cultural background of traditional Iranian society and analyzes social conventions and norms that have prescribed the appropriate sphere for women. *My Bird* addresses many of the challenges faced by traditional society, especially those related to gender inequality. Through the novel, Vafi shows that women possess agency, passion, and intellectual depth, therefore challenging assumptions of female inferiority. Moreover, the novel offers a representation of women who resist prescribed gender roles and attempt to move beyond the boundaries that are imposed upon them. Vafi provides a detailed reflection on the conventions governing women's obligations as wives and mothers. Through her literary works, she develops an explicitly feminist perspective that questions established female roles and theorizes the condition of women. In doing so, she makes a significant contribution to feminist literary discourse in Iran and beyond.

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