

**IDENTITIES REFLECTED VIA FOODS IN SELECTED NOVELS:
*LIKE WATER FOR CHOCOLATE, THE PARTICULAR SADNESS OF
LEMON CAKE, AND ONE HUNDRED SHADES OF WHITE***

Fatma YALVAÇ

**December 2021
DENİZLİ**

**IDENTITIES REFLECTED VIA FOODS IN SELECTED NOVELS:
*LIKE WATER FOR CHOCOLATE, THE PARTICULAR SADNESS OF
LEMON CAKE, AND ONE HUNDRED SHADES OF WHITE***

**Pamukkale University
The Institute of Social Sciences
Doctoral Thesis
The Department of English Language and Literature
English Language and Literature
PhD Programme**

Fatma YALVAÇ

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Meryem AYAN

**December 2021
DENİZLİ**

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that as required by these rules and conduct I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Fatma YALVAÇ

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like to express my sincerest thanks and gratitude to my supervisor Prof. Dr. Meryem AYAN for her endless guidance and support from the beginning of my PhD education. In the process of writing this doctoral dissertation, she has become a source of inspiration with precious recommendations, valuable comments, helpful suggestions, and critical feedback.

Additionally, I would also like to express my deepest thanks to all the dissertation committee members Prof. Dr. Mehmet Ali ÇELİKEL, Prof. Dr. Feryal ÇUBUKÇU, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Şeyda SİVRİOĞLU, and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Atalay GÜNDÜZ for all their detailed feedback, valuable advice, and helpful guidance. I am also grateful to the professors in the Department of English Language and Literature of Pamukkale University for their support and contribution during my doctoral education.

Lastly, I would like to say that I am deeply indebted to my beloved parents and sister for their constant support and love, endless patience and understanding, and generous encouragement. And, I would also like to add my thanks to my teachers, friends, and relatives who always encourage and motivate me.

ABSTRACT

IDENTITIES REFLECTED VIA FOODS IN SELECTED NOVELS: *LIKE WATER FOR CHOCOLATE*, *THE PARTICULAR SADNESS OF LEMON CAKE*, AND *ONE HUNDRED SHADES OF WHITE*

Yalvaç, Fatma

Doctoral Thesis

The Department of English Language and Literature

The Doctoral Programme in English Language and Literature

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Meryem AYAN

December 2021, VI+156 pages

The popularity and prestige of female authors have increased all around the world. In their fictional works contributing to the formation of the female literary tradition, characters and stories are presented from the female perspective. Female authors have created fictional works including a great variety of themes that have a close connection to the lives of women. Accordingly, foods, cooking, culinary tasks, and kitchens have gone beyond their traditional functions in fiction with the creative intervention of female authors. Foods and food-related issues have come to the forefront as the key elements while experiences of female characters are narrated in literary works.

In this sense, the main purpose of this thesis is to carry out a gynocritical analysis of the relationship between food and identity development processes of female characters. The focus is on female poetics and critical comments related to the female literary tradition. In this regard, literary works of female authors are considered attentively in order to verify that food is rendered not only for nutrition but also for expression, sensation, and personal progress in the stories of female characters. The novels *Like Water for Chocolate* (1989) by Laura Esquivel, *The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake* (2010) by Aimee Bender, and *One Hundred Shades of White* (2003) by Preethi Nair are selected to be analysed within the scope of the study. The techniques used by the female authors of the selected novels are compared, contrasted, and then revealed through the examples related to the main argument of the study.

Key Words: Gynocriticism, Identity, Female, Food, Kitchen

ÖZET

LIKE WATER FOR CHOCOLATE, THE PARTICULAR SADNESS OF LEMON CAKE VE ONE HUNDRED SHADES OF WHITE İSİMLİ SEÇİLEN ROMANLARDA KİMLİKLERİN YİYECEKLER VASITASIYLA YANSITILMASI

Yalvaç, Fatma

Doktora Tezi

İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı ABD

İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Doktora Programı

Tez Yöneticisi: Prof. Dr. Meryem AYAN

Aralık 2021, VI+156 sayfa

Kadın yazarların popülaritesi ve saygınlığı tüm dünyada artmaktadır. Bu yazarların edebiyatta kadın geleneğinin oluşmasına katkı sağlayan eserlerinde karakterler ve hikayeler kadın bakış açısıyla sunulmaktadır. Kadın yazarlar kadın yaşamı ile yakın bağlantısı olan çok çeşitli temalar içeren eserler üretmişlerdir. Bu doğrultuda, kadın yazarların yaratıcı müdahalesiyle yiyecekler, yemek yapma, mutfakla ilgili işler ve mutfaklar edebi kurguda geleneksel işlevlerinin ötesine geçmişlerdir. Edebi eserlerde kadın karakterlerin deneyimleri aktarılırken yiyecekler ve yiyecekler ile ilgili konular temel unsurlar olarak ön plana çıkmaktadır.

Bu bağlamda, mevcut tezin temel amacı yiyecekler ve kadın karakterlerin kimlik gelişim süreçleri arasındaki ilişkiyi jino-eleştirel bir bakış açısıyla analiz etmektir. Çalışmanın odak noktasını kadın yazını ve edebiyatta kadın geleneği üzerine yapılmış eleştirel yorumlar oluşturmaktadır. Bu açıdan kadın karakterlerin hikayelerinde yiyeceklerin sadece beslenme için değil aynı zamanda ifade etme, hissetme ve kişisel gelişim için betimlendiğini doğrulamak amacıyla kadın yazarlara ait edebi eserler dikkatle incelenmiştir. Laura Esquivel tarafından yazılan *Like Water for Chocolate* (1989), Aimee Bender'ın kaleme aldığı *The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake* (2010) ve Preethi Nair'in yazmış olduğu *One Hundred Shades of White* (2003) çalışma kapsamında tahlil edilmek üzere seçilmiş olan romanlardır. Seçilen bu romanların kadın yazarları tarafından kullanılan teknikler karşılaştırılmış ve çalışmanın temel konusuyla ilgili olan örnekler ile gözler önüne serilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Gynocriticism (Jino-Eleştiri), Kimlik, Kadın, Yiyecek, Mutfak

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|------------------------------|-----|
| DOKTORA TEZİ ONAY FORMU..... | i |
| PLAGIARISM..... | ii |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS..... | iii |
| ABSTRACT..... | iv |
| ÖZET..... | v |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS..... | vi |
| INTRODUCTION..... | 1 |

CHAPTER ONE GYNOCRITICISM AND FOOD IN FEMALE LITERATURE

| | |
|---|----|
| 1.1. Female Literature: Literary Worlds of Their Own..... | 6 |
| 1.2. Gynocriticism and Female Writing..... | 23 |
| 1.3. Foods Becoming Words in Female Literary Texts..... | 37 |

CHAPTER TWO FOODS SHAPING IDENTITIES OF FEMALE CHARACTERS

| | |
|---|----|
| 2.1. Food: Constructor or Deconstructor of Female Identity..... | 47 |
| 2.2. Food: Voice or Voicelessness of Female Characters..... | 59 |
| 2.3. Food: Captivity or Freedom of Females in the Kitchen..... | 63 |

CHAPTER THREE GYNOCRITIC FOODS IN SELECTED FEMALE NOVELS

| | |
|---|-----|
| 3.1. Gynocritic Modelled Foods in the Selected Female Literary Works..... | 72 |
| 3.2. <i>Like Water for Chocolate</i> | 76 |
| 3.2.1. Tita's Expression of Feelings via Foods..... | 83 |
| 3.3. <i>The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake</i> | 90 |
| 3.3.1. Rose's Quest for Embracing Her Food-Related Ability..... | 91 |
| 3.4. <i>One Hundred Shades of White</i> | 112 |
| 3.4.1. Nalini's and Maya's Guidance and Empowerment through Foods..... | 114 |
| CONCLUSION..... | 137 |
| REFERENCES..... | 151 |
| CURRICULUM VITAE..... | 156 |

INTRODUCTION

The place and importance of female authors in world literature have become an issue to be considered attentively in academic contexts with the contributions of critics and researchers. In this process, evaluations of the female critics and researchers have come to the fore to attain much more objective outcomes regarding the details of female poetics. It is possible to get unbiased insights when the concept of *women as a writer* is analysed through considering gynocriticism and the comments related to the formation and development of the female literary tradition. Female critics contribute to a renewal in theoretical background, and female authors have passed through several steps that lead them to have the opportunity for creating autonomous works and consequently becoming active agents of forming a literary tradition that includes the fictional texts of women. Within this scope, it is possible to detect various common points between the experiences of the female characters portrayed in different fictional works. Moreover, it might not be surprising to find out experiences of fictional female characters resembling somehow to the ones experienced by female readers all around the world. The similarities encountered in the experiences of female characters and readers lead to the appearance of a collective consciousness which can be considered as an important element in the formation of the female literary tradition developed by female authors of different times and places. The framework of the female literary tradition which is rich in thematic concerns on the experiences of female characters offered a great range of opportunities for conducting academic research by focusing primarily on the representations of female characters.

The content of the female literary tradition specific to the female authors can be seen as a rich resource for performing academic investigations by comparing and contrasting the texts and detecting the similarities and differences found in various kinds of texts including novels, novellas, short stories, poems, memoirs, and so on. All of these texts form a frame while speaking about the features of female poetics deconstructing and going beyond the standards of the traditional literature dominated by male authors. In this regard, the common points preferred by female authors while producing fictional works that narrate the stories of female characters enable a critical perspective in the process of discussing female authors' techniques and strategies in representing the experiences of female characters.

In literary works, food and food-related issues have become recurrent subject matters while narrating stories of fictional characters. When the female poetics and the reflections of foods in literary works are considered, it can be claimed that foods go beyond their basic nutritional function with the creative intervention of female authors. The female perspective is the main component of the desired objectivity while representing the incidents experienced by female characters. These incidents can be a part of personal, familial, and social life and play an important role in the identity formation processes of these characters. The issues related to the identities of female characters can be as complex as the definition of identity as a term which can be influenced by various factors and consequently changes as per to the personal, social, cultural, and financial variables. Due to the diversity of these variables affecting the identity construction process of individuals, it is not easy to define identity as a concept. When the complex nature of identity is combined with the dynamic nature of foods in fictional texts, it can be possible to obtain a rich picture depicting the experiences of female characters.

Foods can partake as a vital element changing the flow of events and influencing characters' identity development processes. Thus, an interactive bond can be established between the characters and the foods that offer a great range of clues and evidences while interpreting literary works. Accordingly, food and food-related issues have become factors that can make a kind of continuity and integrity possible in literary works produced by female authors whose fictional creations build an interconnected framework for female poetics. It is noteworthy that "women's imaginations are experientially linked to food as inspiration for mimesis or metaphor since women are, after all, the infant's first food giver and customarily gendered as the family cook and meal arranger thereafter" (Blodgett, 2004: 263). In this regard, despite changing thematic and structural priorities of the female authors, foods and culinary tasks can be seen as crucial agents, which can play a determining role in the stories written by female authors who give a new impulse to the relationship between food-related issues and the female characters, unlike the traditional considerations.

Cooking and other culinary tasks might be seen as the issues limiting women within certain borders. However, this consideration has started to change with a renewed perspective brought by female authors to the fictional creations in which women can contribute to their identity development processes by means of engaging in

food-related issues. Kitchens are not represented as the places in which women feel imprisoned, isolated, or restricted. In contrast, kitchens of the domestic or professional environments offer opportunities of self-expression, physiological and psychological well-being, personal growth, professional development, and so on. Each step of preparing, cooking, and serving food can have an additional function when the issue is related to the fictional representations of women by women. Female authors have creatively interwoven the experiences of female characters with food-related issues through a female perspective. In this respect, the present study focuses on the interaction between food and identity development processes of female characters represented by the female authors of the selected novels. Three different novels belonging to three different female authors are selected in order to carry out a detailed examination related to the research topic. The selected novels are *Like Water for Chocolate* (1989), *The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake* (2010), and *One Hundred Shades of White* (2003) written by Laura Esquivel, Aimee Bender, and Preethi Nair, respectively. The role and importance of foods and food-related issues in the lives of female protagonists and also other female characters are the main points examined through the examples in the present study. When the reason behind selecting these novels was considered, it can be stated that *Like Water for Chocolate* (1989), *The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake* (2010), and *One Hundred Shades of White* (2003) could find a place in the syllabi of courses. Moreover, the selected novels can be listed among the most read novels of Laura Esquivel, Aimee Bender, and Preethi Nair. Considering the contributions of these authors to the female poetics, it can be underlined that Laura Esquivel, who received the American Booksellers Book of the Year Award, has written more than ten novels including *Like Water for Chocolate* which appeared on the New York Times Best Seller lists. Similarly, Aimee Bender, who won the Southern California Independent Booksellers Association Award for best fiction and the Alex Award, has written six novels including *The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake* which also appeared on the New York Times Best Seller lists. On the other hand, Preethi Nair, who won the Asian Woman of Achievement Award, has written four novels including *One Hundred Shades of White* which can attract the attention of great number of readers. It can be inferred that Laura Esquivel, Aimee Bender, and Preethi Nair contribute to the development of female literary tradition through these autonomous literary works in which they clearly and creatively portray the relationship between foods and female characters with a renewed perspective. This renewal allows

us to bring these novels together while analysing how female authors depict food-related issues in the stories of female characters. Although these female authors are from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, their female protagonists go through similar experiences in the kitchens where they use foods and food-related issues as efficient instruments during their identity development processes. So the detected examples are considered valuable for understanding and commenting on how female authors implement food and food-related tasks as crucial means while portraying female characters.

In the first chapter, the focus is on the criticism regarding the origin and development of the female literary tradition encompassing the fictional works of female authors all around the world. In line with the theoretical framework of this research, comments of critics related to the features of the female poetics and the fictional creations of the female authors are revealed as much as possible. Furthermore, the differences between the issues of *women as readers* and *women as writers* and the details related to the phases of *feminine*, *feminist*, and *female* in the establishment of female poetics are studied as the key points of gynocriticism. The critical comments of Elaine Showalter and also other feminist critics are stated. Another point included in this chapter is the place and importance of foods and food-related issues presented in the literary works belonging to female authors and depicting the stories of female characters. The function of foods, which are implemented as remarkable tools for self-expression, is analysed considering the fictional representations related to women. It is also underlined that foods cross the borders and gain deeper meanings through their dynamic natures, and thus, they can be put into the centre of stories in which the interaction between foods and females are narrated objectively.

In the second chapter, the reflections related to foods in the fictional works of female authors are studied. In this regard, the relationship between foods and the identity development processes of female characters is investigated. The comments of critics are included in this chapter while a comprehensive analysis is carried out on how foods and food-related events influence female characters' identity development processes. Moreover, the kitchen as a space dominated mostly by women all around the world is another point included in this section. It is also underlined that the status of the kitchen changes in the literary works of female authors who deconstruct the traditional descriptions related to the kitchen and the tasks performed by women in this place.

Furthermore, the issue of whether cooking and other food-related tasks performed in kitchens construct or deconstruct the female identity is meticulously evaluated.

In the third chapter, the selected novels are analysed considering the theoretical background of the research. The novels are examined one by one, and the findings supported with examples existing in the novels are reported in the subchapters. In the analysis process of the novels, the order is as follows: *Like Water for Chocolate* (1989), *The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake* (2010), and *One Hundred Shades of White* (2003). First, the role and importance of foods in Tita's life is investigated in *Like Water for Chocolate* (1989). Then the story of Rose is studied considering the influence of foods and food-related events in *The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake* (2010). Finally, the food-related journey of Maya and Nalini is examined in *One Hundred Shades of White* (2003). Together with the female protagonists of the novels, examples about the interaction between foods and other female characters are also provided. Through the examples obtained, a gynocritical framework is presented considering how female authors include foods and culinary issues in their fictional creations while portraying the experiences of female characters. The common points detected in these novels are emphasised taking the main argument of this thesis into consideration.

In the conclusion chapter, findings are revealed and interpreted briefly in accordance with the theoretical background of the research. Moreover, the main points of the thesis are summarised by considering the examples detected in the selected novels. Also, the contribution of female authors to the formation of female literary tradition is underlined, and a general discussion is provided on gynocriticism and the importance of a woman-centred critical analysis of fictional works. It is also presented that female authors deconstruct and reconstruct the traditional representations related to women with a female perspective in literary works. The differences found between male-authored and female-authored texts when the issue is related to the depictions of female characters are also emphasised. Furthermore, it is indicated that when foods and food-related issues are depicted from a female perspective, they gain deeper meanings about the female characters' experiences in both personal and social contexts. It is concluded that female authors contribute to the redefinition of both the image of female characters and the events which occur in the lives of female characters by means of their own techniques and strategies leading to gynocritic foods in the development of gynocritic female identity.

CHAPTER I

GYNOCRITICISM AND FOOD IN FEMALE LITERATURE

1.1. Female Literature: Literary Worlds of Their Own

Literature can be accepted as a mirror reflecting social occasions, attitudes, beliefs, habits, and traditions of societies. In the process of depicting these factors, literature takes the advantage of diversity in character types, behaviours, and incidents. These characters serve as agents for portraying human life by means of their words, experiences, and attitudes. While representing life stories in fictional worlds, literature enhances imaginative power of readers. It not only pleases readers but also gives information and conveys messages. Literature can be seen as one of the sites reflecting the experiences of characters from different cultural backgrounds. Since almost nothing remains similar, literary focus can also alter and different kinds of literary interpretations can be made starting from these alterations. The social, cultural, and political status of individuals can change in line with the developments affecting the social structure. When the fictional works are considered, the roles of males and females in realistic literary creations can be accepted as clues for evaluating the roles of individuals. Accordingly, the changing status of females in various sites reflected in literature from past to present can provide information about the transformation of women's position in real life. This may also be valid for the status female characters in fictional worlds across the years. In this respect, it can be stated that the purpose of the present study is closely related to how female authors depict female characters with a renewed perspective, and it is aimed to make a gynocritical analysis of the relationship between food and identity development processes of female characters in *Like Water for Chocolate*, *The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake*, and *One Hundred Shades of White* written by Laura Esquivel, Aimee Bender, and Preethi Nair, respectively. Through this detailed analysis, it aimed to examine how the experiences of female characters are reflected with a renewed perspective in the fictional creations of female authors.

The term *literature* is defined as “writing that is considered to be a work of art. Literature includes novels, plays and poetry” in the Oxford dictionary (1993). It can also be said that literature is composed of works that are accepted as the ones worth reading and studying. However, there are possibly other literary works that are ignored or

dismissed due to the fact that they do not appeal to the expectations of critics who have crucial roles in the formation of literary history. In this regard, one of the issues discussed is that literary creations of female writers have been overshadowed by the dominant male canon in literary history. In the social environment, the troubles that sometimes cause women to feel inadequate or confused have been more than gender-related reasons. Not only females but also males have been exposed to various kinds of oppressions of daily life. Thus, it is meaningless to judge or belittle women due to their gender. The case of discrimination has changed with the attempts of various female critics, and accordingly, literary criticism has started to include the works of female writers that have not been published or read previously.

As before, it is impossible to exclude females from the social, cultural, and literary structures of the twenty-first century. However, one can still confront the problems regarding the rights of females even in this age. Although there are a set of rules stating equality between genders, they may be ignored due to traditional practices around the world. Consequently, “by destroying the idea that literary criticism is a bounded entity, feminist literary critics move on from simply identifying the ‘facts’ of literary cultures to cultural transformations” (Humm, 2004: 56), and thus, new approaches have been developed within the scope of feminist literary criticism to examine the problems of women within the social life as they are reflected through literature. These new approaches of feminist literary criticism also affect the place of females in the literary tradition through examining the works created by female writers. It is clear that “feminist theory focuses on empowering women and helping them discover how to break the stereotypes and molds of some traditional roles and roots that women play that may be blocking their development and growth” (Yadav and Yadav, 2018: 59). The self-confidence of females can be supported by detecting the facts restricting them and by offering solutions for the problematic points. In this process, scientific methods and critical research techniques are needed to be implemented to obtain long-term solutions.

One of the important facts restricting females in the process of writing is emphasised in *A Room of One's Own* (1929) by Virginia Woolf who insists on the requirement of a personal space spared for women only. In this place, they can find opportunities for self-realization. This place is a space for women to express themselves in the men-dominated literary world. In *A Room of One's Own* (1929), Woolf “argues

that women's writing should explore female experience in its own right and not form a comparative assessment of women's experience in relation to men's" (Selden et al., 2005: 118). It can be inferred that Woolf's critical text "therefore forms an early statement and exploration of the possibility of a distinctive tradition of women's writing" (Selden et al., 2005: 118). When analysed and compared closely, common points regarding the issue of women as writers can be detected both in Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own* (1977). Although these two books with resembling titles focus on the issues related to women and writing, Showalter (1998) explains some points concerning the title of her book. This explanation reveals that Showalter does not aim to do a direct reference to Woolf. In this regard, Showalter (1998) mentions the source of the title *A Literature of Their Own* stating the fact that it is the revised version of the original title changed by the Titles Committee of the Princeton University Press after she sends the manuscript of the book to be published. She also states that the original title of the book is *The Female Tradition in the English Novel* (Showalter, 1998: 401), but it is converted into a new title which is in fact a phrase quoted by Showalter in the book. The quotation is from John Stuart Mill who comments about a possibility regarding the appearance of literature belonging to women. As cited in Showalter (1998), Mill claims that "if women lived in a different country from men, and had never read any of their writings, they would have a literature of their own" (401). The comments of John Stuart Mill regarding the relationship between literature and women can be seen as the starting point of Showalter's critical perspective reflected in the book titled *A Literature of Their Own* (1977). Considering these details regarding her own book, Showalter (1998) reveals that she appreciates the revised title stating that "this sentence from Mill's *The Subjection of Women* was my departure-point; it raised the issues of nationality, subculture, literary influence, and literary autonomy I had attempted to theorize; and, in the word "their," rather than "our," it emphasized my own cultural distance, as an American, from the English women I discussed" (401). Showalter also underlines the fact that this direct reference to Mill is ignored by reviewers of the book although Mill's statement is the main source of the title, and it is mostly seen as a reference to the title of Woolf's book *A Room of One's Own* (1929). Regarding this inclination, it can be stated that the common points reflected in these two critical books and similarities between the titles might be the cause of this consideration. It is obvious that "both critics are discerning in their analyses of that configuration of material, ideological and

psychological factors that situate the woman writer” (Eagleton, 2013: 7). Woolf (1929) focuses on some economic and educational factors that have been beyond women’s reach in those times and asserts that these factors are the main obstacles causing women to feel inadequate in front of the equipped male supremacy in the literary field. This is not related to any kind of deficiency in their abilities or their attempts but a consequence of lack of material resources. Woolf’s “attempts to write about the experiences of women, therefore, were aimed at discovering linguistic ways of describing the confined life of women, and she believed that when women finally achieved social and economic equality with men, there would be nothing to prevent them from freely developing their artistic talents” (Selden et al., 2005: 119). On the other hand, Showalter discusses the influence of the criticism made by male critics and reveals that women have not got a problem of inadequacy in creating literary works but they are affected negatively and suppressed due to the patronizing criticism of male critics (Eagleton, 2013: 7). Moreover, Showalter (1998) also speaks about the reasons for her inclination towards starting an investigation regarding women writers as a research topic for her Ph. D. dissertation. She reveals that “feminist criticism did not exist” (399) when she started doing the research for her dissertation on “Victorian women writers” (399) with limited and insufficient vocabulary that could be implemented terminologically while working on this critical issue. The reasons of the inadequacy in appropriate terminology and related vocabulary might be inferred from the comments of Showalter who underlines that “no one edited women’s studies journals, or compiled bibliographies of women’s writing” (Showalter, 1998: 399). This can be seen as an inevitable reason of the deficiency in related vocabulary and terminology which might become a barrier to the production of critical knowledge on female literary tradition. This can be considered as a problem that is encountered by most of the pioneers in literary criticism of the fictional works of female authors. Regarding the common problems of the pioneers in female literary history, it can be said that “what they are trying to do is precisely that which has never been done. Women’s literary history is seen as ‘subterranean’ or an ‘undercurrent’. In both the titles and introductions to numerous texts at this time, a vocabulary of ‘silence’, ‘absence’ and ‘hiding’ vies with one of ‘revelation’, ‘uncovering’, ‘discovery’” (Eagleton, 2007: 106). The revolution in the terminology used while analysing the works of female authors is an important step in the development of the female literary history. The process of altering the terms with new ones while commenting on the fictional works of female authors has been handled by

female critics. They have an important place in the development of the terminology that can meet the needs and can be preferred while evaluating the fictional works belonging to female authors. With the help of the new terminology, the female consciousness in relation to the features of female poetics can be enhanced. In this regard, it can be stated that there is a close relationship between the necessity of a new perspective related to the female poetics and the appearance of the critical book written by Showalter in 1977. In this regard, Showalter (1998) underlines that “*A Literature of Their Own* appeared during the first wave of feminist literary criticism which focused on re-discovery” (402). Consequently, it can be inferred that although they deal with the issues related to women writers from changing perspectives, the main argument of Woolf and Showalter stems from a common interest which is the place of women in literary history. As underlined by Showalter (1979), “in *A Room of One’s Own*, Virginia Woolf argued that economic independence was the essential precondition of an autonomous women’s art. Like George Eliot before her, Woolf also believed that women’s literature held the promise of a ‘precious speciality’, a distinctly female vision” (34). It can be inferred that Showalter re-evaluates Woolf’s argument almost fifty years later with a different critical point of view, and in *Towards a Feminist Poetics* (1979), “Showalter recommends that literary feminists should follow the example of their sisters in other disciplines and begin to study female literary sub-cultures” (qtd in Eagleton, 2013: 8). This can be regarded as a sign of the fact that women writers have been confronted with various problems hindering their progression in producing literary works, and it is underlined that “recuperating texts and voices is as important to the contemporary practice of feminist literary criticism as it was forty years ago when women academics first started looking for a ‘literature of their own’” (Plain and Sellers, 2007: 212).

Literature has become an opportunity for women to transmit their feelings, thoughts, and beliefs. The silenced women have been searching means for increasing their voice to speak about their own experiences, and in this regard, literary creations have become their voice to express themselves without any restriction of patriarchal norms. Literature also turns to be a chance for suppressed women, and it enlarges the perspectives of women who are free to speak about their lives without any restriction. Accordingly, women have written letters, autobiographies, diaries, short stories, poems, and novels whenever possible. They need to reclaim their own voice. While expressing themselves, they write about the daily lives of women. They depict the world from their

own perspectives and include various topics into their narrations. These topics can be political, cultural, social, religious, and financial. The point is that all of these topics are utilised for depicting details about women's lives. As underlined by Yadav and Yadav (2018), "the women writers wrote about the world, but they did so from women's perspective, the objects and events of the world pass through different filter priorities, perceptions, protests in the work of women" (63). The reason for filtering the events from changing perspectives is an expected outcome of the possibility that women and men have different considerations and expectations about life in general. Moreover, they have changing experiences which inevitably influence the thoughts about their own lives. These considerations, expectations, and experiences are beyond the frames drawn by males while forming a literary tradition in which women are depicted from a male-dominated perspective. Thus, rather than implementing the steps of creating fictional works with such a dominance excluding real and unique experiences belonging to women, female authors bring a novelty to the creation of fictional works through departing from the standards of traditional frames. This novelty has consequently led to the production of a great number of literary works prioritising females and their experiences by means of a female-oriented perspective. While interpreting literary works that are produced by female authors, bringing bits and pieces together might offer meaningful conclusions regarding the nature of female poetics. In this regard, it is possible that women writers "used fiction to explore their own world and to remedy some of the deficiencies of their exclusion and isolation" (Yadav and Yadav, 2018: 63). As an inevitable consequence of their marginalisation, exclusion, and isolation, female authors have written in very limited opportunities. In this regard, it is stated by Rich (1972) that "there is also a difficult and dangerous walking on the ice, as we try to find language and images for a consciousness we are just coming into, and with little in the past to support us" (19). Nevertheless, most of them have achieved success even without having a room for their own, and they have eventually proved their ability in creating effective literary works. The strongest proof of this success is that works of most of the female authors can pass the test of time and they can find potential groups of readers all around the world. As stated by Yadav and Yadav (2018), "women writers are enjoying an increasing popularity and prestige" (67). Furthermore, this success is not limited to only a particular society. The female authors have notable success all around the world which is a crucial factor in the formation of a female literary tradition.

The modernist and postmodernist literatures have been abundant in awakening female characters that do not fit into the traditional categorisations regarding womanhood. The awakening female characters are frequently aware of their own potentials for overcoming the encountered problems and restrictions. They have challenged against these troubles and also solved them skilfully in their familial, social, and professional environments. In her article, Rich (1972) speaks about the awakening of women from their sleeping consciousness and reveals her own experiences as a woman witnessing the attempts in line with this awakening. She is a female poet striving to create her poems by liberating herself from the “problems of contact with herself, problems of language and style, problems of energy and survival” (Rich, 1972: 20). Moreover, “she recounts the struggle to be a wife, mother and, specifically, a *woman* poet, the effort it took to loosen her style and to stop looking to male authorities for approval” (Eagleton, 2007: 116). In the past, it might not be an easy task to find out original techniques since female writers confronted with a large number of literary works produced mostly by males. There were a limited number of available literary works belonging to females that might become valuable sources for supporting the awakening women in the process of their contribution to the female poetics. However, Rich (1972) asserts that the awakening of women would lead them to revise and scrutinize the pre-established norms and expectations regarding a literary work. Refreshing the dictated knowledge through their own perceptions enables women to transcend the limitations drawn by male-dominated backgrounds. Regarding this, Rich (1972) states that “re-vision—the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction—is for us more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival” (18). This survival from the dominancy of male canon felt in the literary tradition is expected to be carried forward by the contributions of female authors creating autonomous fictional works and by the objective criticism of female critics. In this regard, Walton (2003) points that “the feminist poet Adrienne Rich believed that it was impossible for women to write at all if they did not revisit the traditions in which they are located” (91). The process of revisiting has a crucial role in the establishment of an autonomous female literary tradition. In order to have a clear picture of the frames drawn by males in the past and the ones to be drawn by females in the future, it is necessary for women to “‘remember what has been forbidden’, ‘question everything’ and ‘decode the complex messages left for us by women of the past’” (Walton, 2003: 91). Remembering, questioning, and decoding can enable women to

reach to a level of consciousness regarding the details of the available literary tradition constructed by males so far. Thus, they can increase awareness about the scope and content of the literary circles shaped by males while portraying female characters in their fictional works. It can be claimed regarding the attempts of women for ensuring reliable information on female poetics that the more they question the existing data, the clearer the picture in their minds. Pursuing the aim of establishing a female literary tradition could be a demanding one for the females at the very beginning of this process. Considering the possible reasons related to this issue, it can be stated that female authors and/or critics have endeavoured to uncover any detail related to female authors remaining hidden or unnoticed in the past.

McLean (2013) states that, until 1980s, the aim of the early feminist philosophy having a predominantly structuralist inclination was to reveal how the patriarchal social structure marginalised females and considered women as secondary to men not only physically but also intellectually and psychologically. In parallel with the theoretical move starting from structural thought towards postmodernism and postcolonialism, third wave feminist philosophy has abandoned the essentialist considerations that are the outcomes of the dualistic thinking for ensuring the equation between men and women. This essentialist thought has brought white women into forefront while disregarding the differences stemming from the race, ethnicity, class, and nationality of females. Rather than persisting this essentialist classification of early feminism, the third wave feminist thought take the dynamic and complex understanding of womanhood into consideration by paying attention to the variables of race, ethnicity, nation, and class. These variables take the monolithic definitions regarding womanhood a step further since each woman has changing experiences which need to be analysed individually while examining the literary works that contribute to the establishment of a literary tradition of female writers. In this regard, “Showalter takes the view that, while there is no fixed or innate female sexuality or female imagination, there is nevertheless a profound *difference* between women’s writing and men’s, and that a whole tradition of writing has been neglected by male critics ...” (qtd in Selden et al., 2005: 127). Thus, the awakening female literary tradition in which experiences of female characters are represented leads to multidisciplinary and innovative scholarly investigations.

The diversity of experiences has been spotted and met with fictional characters in literature through creative intervention of female authors. Rich (1972) underlines the

necessity for looking back to the previous works and analysing these works with a changing critical perspective. She includes herself also into the process of obtaining a refreshing attitude towards literary creations, and in this regard, she states that “a radical critique of literature, feminist in its impulse, would take the work first of all as a clue to how we live, how we have been living, how we have been led to imagine ourselves, how our language has trapped as well as liberated us; and how we can begin to see—and therefore live—afresh” (18). Since female authors have been crucial agents for the representation of female world through fiction, they have enriched the literature with numerous portrayals regarding the experiences of females. In this regard, “the most consistent assumption of feminist reading has been the belief that women’s special experience would assume and determine distinctive forms in art” (Showalter, 1979: 33). Definitions and redefinitions of female identity made by female authors have been the key factor in this enrichment process. Although “increasingly throughout the 1970s, the focus moved to literary representations of women, by women and for women” (Eagleton, 2007: 107), the quest for self-definition of female characters with a female perspective has a long historical background that can be revealed by tracing back both the known and unknown female authors. For this reason, as it is emphasized by Rich (1972), “we need to know the writing of the past, and know it differently than we have ever know it; not to pass on a tradition but to break its hold over us” (19). A stronger basis for the female literary tradition can be possible when preceding female authors’ techniques in producing literary works are reconsidered through a changing perspective.

Within the scope of the female literary tradition, one of the crucial questions is ‘why do women write?’ while analysing the literary works of female writers. The answer to this question may be that “women wrote for business, for pleasure and also for many reasons that man wrote” (Yadav and Yadav, 2018: 63), and these reasons can be multiplied in accordance with the personal and social experiences of female authors. Another important question is ‘what do they write?’, and it is seen that the genres preferred by women also offer diversity as their reasons to write. They write letters, diaries, poems, novels, and so on. It is not possible to limit the reasons of female authors and the genres found in the female literature since it is as colourful as the male literary canon. In this regard, Eagleton (2007) underlines that

simply asking the basic questions—where were the women writers, what did they write, how did they come to write—produced a mass of new material, complicated our understanding of literary history, impressed on

critics the significance of gender in the production of writing and revitalised interest in more private literary forms such as letters, diaries and journals (108).

In line with this statement, it can be inferred that the letter form is one of the most applied genres by female writers of the past who did not have much freedom to move across places as men did. In contrast to this freedom offered to men, “the mobility of women was restricted and there were reasons for these restrictions ... and therefore letter was one of the few means of communicating and was an important link to experience beyond the ‘here and now’” (Yadav and Yadav, 2018: 62). Letter writing can be accepted as a form initializing the process of women’s self-expression attempts. With this attempt, women writers could communicate with other people by representing their inner feelings. This initialization step might help female authors engage in creating literary works in different genres. Among these genres, novel can be regarded as one of the most preferred one when the issue is the female poetics, and “some reviewers, granting women’s sympathy, sentiment and powers of observation, thought that the novel would provide an appropriate, even a happy, outlet for female emotion and fantasy” (Showalter, 1979: 33). This literary genre can offer a great range of opportunities for female authors while they are creating their fictional worlds by means of including different types of characters and events reflected from a female perspective in contrast to the standards of traditional literature. After considering the diversity in literary genres preferred by female authors and discussing the reasons of why women write, we can also speak about the questions ‘why do women read?’ and ‘what do women read?’. It is certain that there are various answers to these questions. Nevertheless, we can say that women may also read for pleasure, for improving themselves, for moving away from daily restrictions, even for looking for female characters going through similar experiences with them, and so on. These reasons can be multiplied further in accordance with the experiences of females in changing times and places.

Considering the issue of *women as writer*, it can be said that eighteenth century can be accepted as the turning point for female writers because the attempts of female authors for writing various kinds of literary works started to appear in a considerable number in those times. As time passes, this development in female literary tradition has gone further, and the number of female authors and readers has increased in a directly proportional manner. As the female readers increase, the need for female authors also

increases; and the more female authors appear, the more female readers emerge (Yadav and Yadav, 2018: 62). Despite a great range of troubles encountered in the past, opportunities to be a reader, writer, and critic have emerged for females. Through seizing these opportunities, they have the chance for being seen more frequently in the literary world as time passes. This leads to the development of the female literary tradition by means of active participation of females into the production, consumption, and evaluation process of fictional works. Female authors have started to reshape not only the structural organisation but also the contextual scope of these works as per to their own innovative interventions. Together with the efforts of female authors and critics, the consciousness of female readers can be seen as an important topic to be examined critically as a sub-dimension of the female literary tradition. The reason is that female readers can play an active role by means of exercising their freedom to reject or select the literary rhetoric revealed in fictional works of both male and female authors. This freedom can further lead to the appearance of literary works belonging to female authors when female readers find out and continue to read objective representations of the issues related to women. The works of women writers bring along a continuous demand for representations of female characters whose lives resemble to the lives of readers, and this leads to a countless number of fictional works filled with changing thematic concerns. It can be claimed that “twentieth-century women writers have reflected intently on female roles and images” (Blodgett, 2004: 264) to demolish expectations proper to the narrative focus preferred by male writers. Moreover, there is a possibility that these writers produce literary works also for self-expression. When contemporary literary works are analysed, it can be obviously seen that female authors have produced a great number of works and their writing techniques have brought worldwide fame to most of them. Of these techniques, blending different genres with each other has been a frequently preferred one while creating literary works.

As in all fields of social, financial, and political structures, women have also acknowledged in the literary field that they are not inferior to males with regards to their skills in writing. They have increased their voices against any intervention that would restrict them in their journeys of creating autonomous literary works. The autonomy of the produced literary works has stemmed from the fact that female authors have not been expected to follow the rules applied by male writers and defined and approved by male critics any longer, and “gynocritics begins at the point when we free ourselves

from the linear absolutes of male literary history, stop trying to fit women between the lines of the male tradition, and focus instead on the newly visible world of female culture” (Showalter, 1979: 28). The opposition against the expectations for obeying these rules has initiated the movement of revealing the literary works produced by female writers in the past and also encouraging female authors to continue their attempts for contributing to the female literary tradition. Moreover, the role of female critics is also questioned by Showalter (1984) stating that “as women have been the second sex, so the feminist critic has been historically the second reader, not only of dissertations but also of texts” (41). It can be inferred that together with the attempts for increasing the recognition of female authors in the literary field, the importance of female critics has also been at the forefront of this movement. As it is underlined by Cixous (1976), “it is impossible to *define* a feminine practice of writing, and this is an impossibility that will remain, for this practice can never be theorized, enclosed, coded—which doesn’t mean that it doesn’t exist” (883). The existence and value of female authors’ works have been analysed and revealed by female critics who have not assumed male dominated critical perspective as the prerequisite for the evaluation of literary products since the “events and periods that are important to the development of male ideas and institutions may be negligible or irrelevant to women, and the temporal grid of men’s history may filter out women’s experiences, values, and achievements” (Showalter, 1984: 30). The literary works have long been under the shadow of male dominancy, “however, female novelists and their texts have paved a long way since their first step out of their private spheres, and have succeeded in proving that they are not the other of man and unthinkable by putting forward their stories and breaking the frames that caused their silence and ignorance for long years” (Ayan, 2011: 3). The accepted stereotypical considerations regarding the value of literary works have been demolished. Female authors have become visible more and more in world literature, and “many women writers have been recovered, yet much work is needed to bring to light more lost poets and novelists, as well as female playwrights, essayists, biographers, auto biographers, diarists, travel-and science-writers and women shaping genres and media in popular culture” (Gubar, 2007: 339). In accordance with the increase in the number of female authors, the critical perspective have also shifted from the place of female authors in the literary history to the features of the literary works produced by female authors all around the world. Detecting similarities and differences between these literary works and analysing the obtained results in line with related critical discourses

have a vital role in the revelation of the dynamics of the female literary tradition. The reformulation of female literary focus can be achieved through carrying out investigations about female experiences reflected by female authors. A female-centred analysis strategy can be considered as a reliable tool especially when it is utilised by females. The bias against the presence of females in the literary arena can be overcome with the active participation of female authors into the process of producing literary works with changing thematic and structural foci. The bias of a great number of literary works is due to the fact that they are about female experiences which are revealed and interpreted by male authors. Male authors have written female experiences from their own perspectives, and they have organised their narrative strategies in such a way that women are also required to look to the events in fictional works from a male perspective. This male perspective cannot be successful at narrating female experiences by disregarding the dominated patriarchal influence over literature. The indication of female experience as unbiased as possible can be achieved when female writers narrate female characters from their own perspectives.

As a feminist literary critique, Cixous also has an important place regarding the claims for the required renewal in the literary tradition in which the contribution of female writers has become a must to be taken into consideration. In *The Laugh of the Medusa* (1976), Cixous insists on the necessity of women's inclusion into the process of producing literary works that depict females from women's perspective and revealing the issues specifically experienced by females which have remained under the shadow of patriarchal social norms. Considering the females' inclusion into the literary tradition, Cixous (1976) remarks "woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies—for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal" (875). Women have enough power and talent to actualize what is necessary for creating a literary tradition through their own terms and ways without being dominated by the pre-established standards for writing *proper* texts. That is to say, "woman must put herself into the text—as into the world and into history—by her own movement" (Cixous, 1976: 875). Female writers can reach the desired level of creativity in writing texts focusing specifically the issues related to women's lives. In this process, "the future must no longer be determined by the past" (Cixous, 1976: 875). Namely, the writing tradition of females needs to be converted through a renewed attitude that is different

from the one existing so far. The existing attitude might have a blocking negative influence on the creative power of females who have enough potential for becoming outstanding writers. Potential female writers will inspire and encourage future generation females in the path for establishing an authentic literary tradition encompassing the creative literary works of females all around the world. The more the females join in this movement, the more the female experiences will be revealed in created literary productions. According to Cixous (1976), the feminist voice should be increased and the most appropriate way to achieve this is to develop a strategy for enriching literary works written by women and for women without feeling any kind of hesitation. She urges women to write by self-assuredly expressing her opinion as “write! Writing is for you, you are for you; your body is yours, take it. I know why you haven’t written. (And why I didn’t write before the age of twenty-seven.) Because writing is at once too high, too great for you, it’s reserved for the great—that is, for “great men”; and it’s “silly.” Besides, you’ve written a little, but in secret” (Cixous, 1976: 876). Cixous (1976) underlines the fact that women could not express themselves through creating texts and writing openly and freely by disregarding any possible intervention so far. In this regard, she also mentions the reason why she did not start writing until when she was 27 years old. It can be inferred that she was also one of those women who did not have enough opportunity to go beyond the pre-established standards for writing literary works. The perceptions, expectations, and acceptances appearing in the process of writing as the consequences of the male-domination in literary background should not discourage women from actualizing their own talent in writing. In this respect, she gives advice to women and emphasises that there should be nothing that may discourage females from writing. The number of female writers who can write qualified texts is open to debate, and Cixous (1976) claims that

it is well known that the number of women writers (while having increased very slightly from the nineteenth century on) has always been ridiculously small. This is a useless and deceptive fact unless from their species of female writers we do not first deduct the immense majority whose workmanship is in no way different from male writing, and which either obscures women or reproduces the classic representations of women (as sensitive—intuitive—dreamy etc.) (878).

Determined female writers have carried out their literary activities despite the troubles on their ways for literary success. Gilbert and Gubar (2000) emphasise that “indeed, even when we studied women’s achievements in radically different genres, we

found what began to seem a distinctively female literary tradition, a tradition that had been approached and appreciated by many women readers and writers but which no one had yet defined in its entirety” (XI). They have contributed to the pattern of the female tradition in a way that is coherent with the claims of feminist literary criticism. Moreover, “none of those early feminist critics had implied women lacked the talent to write well, only the opportunity, given their lack of economic independence, lack of status and lack of time” (Carr, 2007: 125). Now, the discussions regarding the difficulties that female authors have confronted so far leave their place to the comments about the success achieved by those authors despite difficulties. They have not remained in the margins, but they have enjoyed the possibility of a novel consciousness belonging to females. They have thoroughly handled the case of producing literary works and enlarged their artistic vision in accordance with the potential hidden within their own. They have put their experiences together like pieces of puzzles. Each piece has stood for an incident or a feeling that has been delicately handled by the female aesthetics. Fragmented identity representations related to females have reconciled by means of creative interventions of female authors. Together with such representations, fictional works reflect changing types of struggles experienced by female characters psychologically, physiologically, socially, and economically which might have a direct or indirect influence on identity development processes of these characters. Considering the identity struggle of female characters, Gardiner (1981) states that “the problems of female identity presented in women’s poetry and prose are rarely difficulties in knowing one’s gender; more frequently, they are difficulties in learning how to respond to social rules for what being female means in our culture” (359). Social rules and standards defined by males might be among the factors that cause troubles for female characters in a variety of ways. In order to overcome these troubles, females might have to search for solutions in fictional creations. Every detail of these representations which might be disregarded by males has been considered carefully by female authors. The misinterpretations related to females reflected in male authors’ works have been reinterpreted by female authors without depending on the standards of male literary tradition. Hereby, the stereotyped and biased representations related to females in classical literary tradition have been replaced by unbiased ones with the objective interpretations of female authors who have not been under the influence of traditional male domination in literature. Life and experiences of women are not same with males, and it is natural that their fictional discourses are not the same as well. Thus, rather than

following the standards of traditional literary background defined by males, pursuing a different framework is necessary for female authors while creating and analysing fictional works focusing on various experiences of women. Female authors are expected to be free from the influence of models and theories implemented by males in order to create autonomous literary works. They may have either negative or positive attitudes towards the standards defined by males in literature. However, “in contrast to this angry or loving fixation on male literature, the programme of gynocritics is to construct a female framework for the analysis of women’s literature, to develop new models based on the study of female experience, rather than to adapt male models and theories” (Showalter, 1979: 28). The pre-established concerns especially the ones framing the fictional portrayals of females can be rejected by female writers when they are not objective. Female authors can represent females’ experiences objectively by combining them with fictional stories. The combination of these two factors, objectivity and creativity, has frequently resulted in memorable literary works belonging to female writers. As a consequence of this combination, “by the end of the eighties, women’s writing was a significant part of the publishing world, as well as a firmly established academic topic of study” (Carr, 2007: 135).

The richness of female literary tradition allows female critics to handle a great number of issues related to females with changing perspectives. Female authors’ literary productions could be woman-centered in their main themes. In this regard, an epistemological construction could be established through clearly acknowledging the experiences and practices of women all over the world. This epistemological identification could allow readers and critics to examine closely the thematic and structural preferences of female authors whose literary productions have largely encapsulated woman-centred images that are reflected from a female perspective. The authenticity of these women-identified works has started from the point that they have not been interpreted considering solely the standards of male literary tradition. As a part of feminist movement, the history of female literary tradition has been discussed by feminist critics who have dealt not only with the literary works produced in this era but also the ones created in the past. It can be said that “from the beginning feminist literary criticism was keen to uncover its own origins, seeking to establish traditions of women’s writing and early ‘feminist’ thought to counter the unquestioning acceptance of ‘man’ and male genius as the norm” (Plain and Sellers, 2007: 2). Through the

examinations of female critics, the formulation of female poetics could be structured by addressing mostly to the points that are closely related to the experiences of women around the world. As it is also mentioned by Eagleton (2007), Showalter, as a female critic, endeavours to change the focus from “the female reader’s estrangement from male-authored texts to the female reader’s identification with female-authored texts” (108). The greater the number of experiences reflected in literary works, the clearer the picture appearing in the minds of readers. As such, female readers can find various common points between their lives and the lives of fictional female characters. These common points can also behave as agents in the construction of opportunities for female writers to create a collective consciousness regarding the experiences of women in general. Moreover, they can increase the validity of an experience or a practice since it can be experienced by other women from different times and places, and “although the emphasising of shared oppression remains an important political strategy within feminism, the history of contemporary feminism has made clear how crucial it is to pay attention to difference and location in understanding and contesting patriarchy” (Weedon, 2007: 283). Similarities and differences that can be detected within the scope of female literary tradition have been revealed by taking various points into account. Accordingly, Showalter (1981) underlines that “theories of women’s writing presently make use of four models of difference: biological, linguistic, psychoanalytic, and cultural” (186). These differences enable the opportunity to analyse the literary works of female writers in line with the altering conditions of literature and each of these models is “an effort to define and differentiate the qualities of the woman writer and the woman’s text; each model also represents a school of gynocentric feminist criticism with its own favourite texts, styles, and methods” (Showalter, 1981: 186).

The step of encompassing the works produced by female writers has a very strong relationship with gynocriticism which is a crucial part of feminist literary criticism because it is “a part of the process, of the praxis, through which the voices of the silenced are becoming heard. Not only is gynocriticism naming and identifying what has never been named or even seen before, it is also providing a validating social witness that will enable women today and in the future to see, to express, to name, their own truths” (Donovan, 1984: 108). Accordingly, the framework of the present study is built up by basing primarily on gynocriticism that aims to reveal the contributions of both known and unknown women writers to the establishment and development of the

female poetics through their autonomous fictional creations. Within this scope, contributions of Laura Esquivel, Aimee Bender, and Preethi Nair to the female literary tradition are discussed considering the examples found in *Like Water for Chocolate*, *The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake*, and *One Hundred Shades of White* which are selected for the present study because they could find a place in the syllabi of courses and they are listed among the most read novels of Laura Esquivel, Aimee Bender, and Preethi Nair who contribute to the development of female literary tradition through these autonomous literary works in which they depict identity development processes of female characters with a renewed perspective.

1.2. Gynocriticism and Female Writing

The inclusion of literary criticism as a discipline while forming up a background for literary knowledge is an indispensable step. Examining literary works with an objective critical lens means to evaluate the quality and importance of the analysed literary products. The objectivity of this criticism is a must and it should be carried out without discrimination due to the gender, race, or ethnicity of writers. However, within the framework of this study, it can be stated that this evaluation might not be as objective as it is expected when the gender issue is taken into consideration. The discipline of literary criticism has been dominated by the critical thoughts of male critics. These critics analyse the literary works of female writers from their own perspectives. The male point of view has been at the centre of literary criticism but this domination has started to be rejected by female critics claiming that female writers should not be exposed to the criticism of male critics who cannot carry out an objective critical analysis process, and in order to change this, gynocriticism insists on the necessity of development of female literary criticism made by female critics.

In line with this need, Elaine Showalter coins the term *gynocriticism* as a part of feminist literary criticism. One of the critical essays discussing this issue has been published in 1979 with the title *Towards a Feminist Poetics*. Showalter puts forward a division in which females are grouped as *women as reader* and *women as writer*. In the first type of feminist criticism in which females are categorised as *women as reader*, females are described as “the consumer of male-produced literature” (Showalter, 1979: 25). This group called as the *feminist critique* by Showalter deals with “the way in which the hypothesis of a female reader changes our apprehension of a given text,

awakening us to the significance of its sexual codes” (Showalter, 1979: 25). Regarding the details of this group, Showalter states that “its subjects include the images and stereotypes of women in literature, the omissions and misconceptions about women in criticism, and the fissures in male-constructed literary history”, and she adds that “it is also concerned with the exploitation and manipulation of the female audience, especially in popular culture and film; and with the analysis of woman-as-sign in semiotic systems” (Showalter, 1979: 25). In the second type of feminist criticism in which females are categorised as *women as writer*, females are described as the “producer of textual meaning, with the history, themes, genres and structures of literature by women” (Showalter, 1979: 25). Showalter (1979) details this group as “its subjects include the psychodynamics of female creativity; linguistics and the problem of a female language; the trajectory of the individual or collective female literary career; literary history; and, of course, studies of particular writers and works” (25). According to Showalter, there is not any appropriate term in English for representing the second group of the feminist criticism. Consequently, she expresses that “no term exists in English for such a specialised discourse, and so I have adapted the French term *la gynocritique*: ‘gynocritics’” (Showalter, 1979: 25). It is also emphasised that the focus of gynocriticism is the classification of *women as writer*.

The female poetics and the place of females in literature dominated by the male canon are among the issues analysed by gynocritics. Gynocriticism investigates females’ attitudes towards literary works. It reveals that female authors’ attitudes and methods regarding literary creations have changed. While some of them may prefer using pseudonyms to hide their real identities, some others may feel that their creations are worth reading. There might be various underlying reasons for these differences in attitudes towards having a literary identity. In order to reveal a comprehensive framework of female tradition, there are numerous points that should be analysed. Regarding the main concerns, Karmarkar (2014) claims that “there are two areas of study as far as woman writing is concerned: one is how women writers describe the male-dominated society in their literary works, and what kind of revelation or apocalypse they make about their own role; and the second is to study the way of their expression” (35). The conducted analyses have been either on the content or on the style of the literary works produced by women. Each of these two concerns has deserved to be examined closely in order to reach meaningful conclusions regarding the

organisational structure of female literary tradition. The reason of this need is that the content or the style has contributed to the formation of this literary tradition either separately or concurrently and gained functional insights with the creative intervention of female writers.

In her critical essay *Feminist Criticism in Wilderness* (1981), Showalter refers to the modes of feminist criticism regarding the place of women in the literary system. She speaks about two modes which are crucial in the process of theorizing the relationship between women and literature. Showalter (1981) points that “the first mode is ideological; it is concerned with the feminist as *reader*, and it offers feminist readings of texts which consider the images and stereotypes of women in literature, the omissions and misconceptions about women in criticism, and woman-as-sign in semiotic systems” (182). While this mode causes confusion about the abilities of women for creating successful literary productions, the second one progresses towards revealing creative potential of women in fiction. Considering this mode, Showalter (1981) adds that

the second mode of feminist criticism engendered by this process is the study of women as *writers*, and its subjects are the history, styles, themes, genres, and structures of writing by women; the psychodynamics of female creativity; the trajectory of the individual or collective female career; and the evolution and laws of a female literary tradition (184).

For her, the second mode is needed to be named since there is not any term available for this categorisation. As a consequence of Showalter’s analytical considerations on this mode, she invents *gynocritics* as a term that can be referred while speaking about the second mode of feminist criticism (Showalter, 1981: 185). This mode is not restricted to the theoretical framework of the feminist critique since the creative potential of the females leads to a range of topics that can be analysed from a changing perspective. With the lens of this altering perspective, feminist critics bring the female writers into the focus of their attention. The inclination of analysing the representations of female characters in the works of male writers leaves its place to the fact that female critics start to examine every detail related to female characters existing also in the works of female writers. The change in the mode of feminist literary criticism obviously leads to the alteration of females’ status in the literary history. The *female reader* in the margin of literary works belonging to male writers has become the *female writer* who puts female characters in the centre of her literary creation. Moreover, female critics are also in the front line of rediscovery and redefinition of the female literary tradition. Gardiner

(1981) states that “many women critics tell women readers how to read women writers; and they tell women writers how to write for women readers” (355). Female critics have become crucial guides in the process of the formation of a female literary tradition formed by female authors who create their works with a female perspective. In these works, female characters are at the forefront of the fictional compositions. Furthermore, their experiences are reflected from a female perspective with the creative intervention of female authors and criticised by female critics considering all the gender-related facts. In this regard, Gardiner (1981) underlines that “contemporary women’s literature promises that a sense of full, valued, and congruent female identity may form in the continuing process of give and take that re-creates both self and other in a supportive community of women” (361). In this process, female critics, authors, readers, and characters become outstanding components of the structure of the female poetics. Artistic creations and literary productions are implemented as functional instruments for reflecting female experiences during which females are united together. Considering this unity, Gardiner (1981) reveals that “this creation of a valid and communicable female experience through art is a collective enterprise. And we are its collaborative critics” (361). There might be various factors that help the readers reach relevant data about the tradition of female literature, “but we have the opportunity, through gynocritics, to learn something solid, enduring, and real about the relation of women to literary culture” (Showalter, 1981: 186). There are a variety of factors that can be associated with the theoretical analyses of women’s writing; however, a theoretical approach basing on women’s culture can supply the critical process with “a more complete and satisfying way to talk about the specificity and difference of women’s writing than theories based in biology, linguistics, or psychoanalysis” (Showalter, 1981: 197). A novel modelling related to the literary tradition of female authors is a necessity for reaching satisfactory outcomes, and “a cultural theory acknowledges that there are important differences between women as writers: class, race, nationality, and history are literary determinants as significant as gender” (Showalter, 1981: 197). In this regard, culture and culture-related factors are outstanding issues while analysing the literary works of female authors since culture can have a considerable influence also on the fictional productivity of female authors.

Female critics should change the ongoing procedures regarding the essential steps of the criticism of a literary work produced by female writers. As it is underlined

by Showalter (1984), “the interest in women’s writing ... that is crucial to gynocritics preceded theoretical formulations and came initially from the feminist critic’s own experience as a writer and from her identification with the anxieties and conflicts women writers faced in patriarchal culture” (38). In accordance with this claim, female critics should take their places as the ones who analyse literary works belonging to female writers. Appearing as a part of this attempt, gynocriticism strives to figure out the experiences of women with a female perspective. The body, soul, and mind of female characters in the literary works of female writers have become crucial criteria to understand the daily life of females that might be suppressed due to various reasons. These suppressed and covered experiences should be traced starting from the literary works of female writers who have been unknown to readers for a long time. These unknown female writers deserve critical attention and they should also be introduced to readers. This means the recovery of the lost or ignored literary productions leading to the establishment of a unique literary structure formed by the works of female writers. This process is really important since

the concept of a female substructure is an extremely useful one for the consideration of women’s literature, because it provides a coherent framework for studying the development of writers in a separable tradition, without either denying their participation in a larger cultural system or involving questionable assumptions of innately feminine modes of perception and creativity (Showalter, 1975: 445).

Through reading and analysing these works, it is possible to enlarge the knowledge regarding the experiences of women first of all as females and also as mothers, daughters, wives, sisters, and so on. As a result of this, women discover the common points shared by other women from all over the world with the help of these works. Similarities and differences in their experiences have been reflected and thus they might become more powerful due to the fact that they are not alone in facing their problems that considerably affect their lives. They can also detect their powerful sides as females and this common ground can increase their self-confidence in front of the encountered troubles of not only daily life but also professional life.

Gynocriticism rejects adopting solely the models and techniques used by male authors, and “the gynocritic dedicates herself to the female author and character and develops theories and methodologies based on female experience, the touchstone of authenticity” (Eagleton, 2013: 9). Rather than building its structure on male models,

gynocriticism aims to reconstruct the literary history by concerning with the issues regarding female authors and their literary works. The place of women in the literary world has been discussed for decades by literary critics and “like historians, literary critics both uncover the past in order to transcend it and interpret it teleologically in terms of the values and beliefs of the present” (Showalter, 1975: 437). Accordingly, feminist literary criticism examines the ways in which literature portrays gender related issues. The literary language is one of the preeminent factors informing us about how gender roles have been portrayed so far by authors, poets, and dramatists. The school of feminist thought “seeks to analyze and describe the ways in which literature portrays the narratives of male domination by exploring the economic, social, political, and psychological forces embedded within literature” (Yadav and Yadav, 2018: 57).

Feminist literary criticism has a long history and some of the prominent female critics marking their influence on feminist literary criticism are Virginia Woolf, Elaine Showalter, Helene Cixous, Sandra Gilbert, Susan Gubar, and Ellen Moers. It can be inferred that following the inclusion of female authors into the literary history, female critics have also started to take their places in the development of female literary tradition. They analyse the works of female authors and declare their critical thoughts. The books *A Literature of Their Own* (1977), *Literary Women* (1976), and *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) are among the primary sources while studying women's literary works with a gynocritical lens since “Ellen Moers’s *Literary Women* (1976) was a preliminary sketching in or ‘mapping’ of the ‘alternative’ tradition of women’s writing which separately shadows the dominant male tradition; but the major of this kind, after Elaine Showalter’s, is Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s monumental *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979)” (qtd in Selden et al., 2005: 126). Together with the mentioned ones, there are a great number of sources focusing on the female poetics. In this regard, it can be claimed that

providing analyses and interpretations of individual writers and works, these gynocritical works explore the specificity of women’s writing, inquiring into imagery, tropes, themes, and genres; recurring patterns and distinguishing structures; factors inhibiting or facilitating female creativity; and the problem of a language specific to women (Plate, 2016: 1).

It is important to remember the messages encoded by the female authors of the past. Accordingly, *The Madwoman in the Attic* is described as “an exhilarating affirmation to

its readers of their own possibilities of defying the patriarchal norms” (Carr, 2007: 130), and in this work, Gilbert and Gubar (2000) point that “reading the writing of women from Jane Austen and Charlotte Brontë to Emily Dickinson, Virginia Woolf, and Sylvia Plath, we were surprised by the coherence of theme and imagery that we encountered in the works of writers who were often geographically, historically, and psychologically distant from each other” (XI). By revisiting previous literary works, female authors can notice the considerable contribution that these works have made to widen the horizons of posterior writers. Regarding the place of *The Madwoman in the Attic* within the context of female poetics, Carr (2007) states that “it was a highly influential text, a good deal of its appeal lying in its repeated heroic tale of women writers’ ‘battle for self-creation’ against an overwhelmingly powerful patriarchal authority; chapter after chapter traces their hard-won success against the odds” (130).

Another important female critic is Ellen Moers who celebrates the female literary history in *Literary Women* (1976). Moers (1976) states that

every subject I have had to consider—Romanticism, opera, pronouns, landscape, work, childhood, mysticism, the Gothic, courtship, metaphor, travel, literacy, revolution, monsters, education—has broadened and changed in the light of some knowledge of the women’s issues and women’s traditions that have been shaping forces in all modern literature (XII).

Called as a pioneer in feminist literary criticism by Showalter (1975), Ellen Moers has contributed to gynocriticism especially with her book *Literary Women* (1976). Humm (2004) points that “*Literary Women* was one of the first texts of feminist criticism to give women writers a history, describe women’s choices of literary expression, and to make an identificatory celebration of the power of women writers” (48). Moreover, it is stated by Showalter (1975) that this book is about female writers’ experiences and the ways that these experiences have been reflected in their works. While analysing these writers, Moers has been a critic who should bring together the requirements of an academic investigation and a woman who has understood the psychology of women due to their oppressed position in society. Thus, she could both identify the problematic roots hindering female authors and also deconstruct the norms with objective assessments.

Feminist literary criticism prioritizes female experiences reflected in literature and it is crucial to mention that feminist critics have been pioneers making a serious contribution to the

development of poststructuralism, African American studies, queer theory, postcolonial and cultural and technology studies; however, the feminists positioned in all these areas, as well as their successors, need to sustain their work at making the methodologies of these fields sensitive to and nuanced about the problems and possibilities that women face (Gubar, 2007: 339).

In this regard, the most widely represented themes are related to the gender and social roles of women since “privileging women’s experiences is a response to these experiences being silenced and misconstrued” (Yadav and Yadav, 2018: 59). Gynocriticism comments basically about female authors and their places in literary history. Moreover, it also examines the ways how male and female characters are depicted in the novels and other genres written by male or female authors. Furthermore, it specifically deals with the literary works created by females and aims to reconstruct the literary tradition by exploring the features of the literary canon of female authors. In gynocriticism, the literary productions belonging to females are expected to elude from doctrines of male dominated literary structure. The language system of the male literary canon has systematically created a categorisation that has divided society as per to gender roles. These roles have been accepted as essential facts for sustaining the desired social order in which males are always and everywhere privileged as it is in literary histories of societies. Despite this consideration, gynocriticism endeavours also to detect the unknown female writers and to provide information regarding the contributions of these female writers to the female literary tradition. Thus, the known and unknown female writers can change the generalisations regarding the features of literary history. The more the literary works of females are read, the more the literary history will be reconstructed.

Showalter tries to answer the questions regarding the place of women in the traditional literary canon. She claims that women have mostly read the literary works of male authors so far. This canon is inevitably full of images depicted from the perspective of men. Most of the time, females are reflected as the ones weaker than male characters. Thus, they automatically remain in the margins. Female readers frequently confront with male authors’ creations regarding female characters, and the

narration of these characters is a particular form of male consciousness. However, “Elaine Showalter delineates woman as a writer - producer of her own text, in her own language, by her own thoughts which are combined by her own feelings and reactions” (qtd in Karmarkar, 2014: 36). With the attempt of gynocritics, female writers are expected to create their own stories created by male authors up to that time. Considering the pre-established myths of universal truths, Showalter (1984) emphasizes that “perhaps modern criticism, instead of graciously taking us into its historical embrace, will learn some lessons about itself from our anomalous movement, and will begin to question the myths of its own immaculate conception in the realms of pure and universal thought” (41). The stories told by males should be retold by females. Namely, literary *history* should regain a new perspective by becoming *herstory*. In accordance with the claims of the gynocritical approach, one of the reasons for this need is that there is almost no positive depiction regarding female roles in literature. Females “were either portrayed as selfless, sacrificing, complaint angles which were symbols of beauty and purity or she was ... a symbol of monster” (Yadav and Yadav, 2018: 61) in the past. This is the point that needs to be reinterpreted from primary sources of these experiences, and it can be claimed that only female writers portray female experiences without much controversy.

Moreover, Elaine Showalter insists on the fact that female writers also have their own literary traditions. The problem is that this literary tradition is overshadowed by the dominant patriarchal norms of societies. She states that a number of female writers remain unknown for the following generations. In *Literature of Their Own* (1977), she traces both the publicly known and also the unknown female authors starting from the era of Bronte sisters, and “reading Elaine Showalter’s critical works such as *A literature of their own* will provide us a descriptive view of the different phases in the literary output of women, and the way of asserting their rights in literature” (Karmarkar, 2014: 35). The historical process of literary tradition of female writers is a long one and Showalter divides this tradition into three periods in *Literature of Their Own* (1977) in which

Showalter at once outlines a literary history of women writers (many of whom had, indeed, been ‘hidden from history’); produces a history which shows the configuration of their material, psychological and ideological determinants; and promotes both a feminist critique (concerned with women reads) and a ‘gynocritics’ (concerned with women writers) (qtd in Selden et al., 2005: 127).

Basing her claim on relevant proofs from the works of female authors, Showalter calls *feminine*, *feminist*, and *female*, respectively, to the periods of the female literary tradition. The important point here is that these periods symbolically stand for the transformations in the literary values in female poetics. Showalter (1977) defines the first period as “a prolonged phase of *imitation* of the prevailing modes of the dominant tradition, and *internalization* of its standards of art and its views on social roles” (Showalter, 1977: 13). It is also stated by Showalter (1977) that this period is pursued by “a phase of *protest* against these standards and values, and *advocacy* of minority rights and values, including a demand for autonomy” (13). In addition to the first two phases, the final period is described as “a phase of *self-discovery*, a turning inward freed from some of the dependency of opposition, a search for identity” (Showalter, 1977: 13). With this phase, females have crossed the borders limiting them within the structure of the traditional literature. In this regard, Eagleton underlines (2007) that

Showalter’s three phases for women’s literature – the feminine, the feminist and the female – may start with imitation and the internalisation of the established tradition but they move to responses of protest and demands for autonomy and then to a phase of self-discovery that breaks free from both acquiescence to and rebellion from the social norms (110).

The transformation of the phases can be accepted as a requirement in the establishment of the female literary tradition. Accordingly, the final categorization of Showalter’s description can be interpreted as a starting point of the process during which women can discover the realities regarding their own identities, emotions, and limitations as females who are also the observers of these experiences (Karmarkar, 2014: 37). This final step has been expected to be far from the traditional literary acceptances towards the established rules for creating a literary work. The authenticity of the works belonging to female authors has depended mostly on the originality of themes and innovative stylistic features. It can be inferred that rather than the first two phases, *feminine* and *feminist*, Showalter focuses especially on the *female* phase. One of the possible reasons of this particular interest is stated by Karmarkar (2014) as “Elaine Showalter convinced herself in a rational and humanistic way and recommends Female (phase) writing as the genuine and original in the strictest sense for the woman writer to reveal her feelings and thoughts and inhibitions real and true” (37). Accordingly, Showalter (1981) points that “we must first go beyond the assumption that women writers either imitate their male predecessors or revise them and that this simple dualism is adequate to describe

the influences on the woman's text" (204). Imitation and rejection of male literary tradition leave their places to the creation of autonomous literary pieces established through considering cultural theories. In this regard, Eagleton states (2007) that "by naming a literary tradition as 'female', as Showalter does in the first chapter of *A Literature of Their Own*, she exposes the exclusivity of the dominant tradition and raises questions about the construction of literary history and the aesthetic values that have always seemed to find women's writing lacking" (109).

Literary critics might compare the male and female literary traditions while analysing the fictional works. In this regard, it is pointed that "whereas, male artists struggle in oedipal fashion to establish their individual creativity in relation to a powerful inherited tradition women in the past were deprived of a matrilineal lineage in which to locate their work" (Walton, 2003: 91). The crucial step for female authors is to have the desire for taking steps in the direction for strengthening the tradition of female authorship. One of the possible ways to overcome the taboos of the pre-established male tradition is to create objective literary products. While creating literary works, female authors are expected to look-back for the implementations of the antecedent female authors who put female experience at the forefront, and "feminist *criticism*, in all its many and various manifestations, has also attempted to free itself from naturalized patriarchal notions of the literary and the literary-critical" (Selden et al., 2005: 115). In this process, "artists and critics are clearly part of the same literary movement, stimulated by the energies released and identified by the women's movement, coming out of the same cultural matrix, and engaged in the same tasks of revision and rediscovery" (Showalter, 1975: 437).

Gynocriticism is the study of women as writers and "emerges in the context of the second feminist wave's recognition of sexual difference and the specificity of women's writing" (Plate, 2016: 1). With gynocriticism, the academic research conducted regarding female writers from a historical perspective has become a recognised attempt that attracts attention of scholars. It is an intensified field of study that puts the issue of women writers into its centre since "gynocritics has been linked from the beginning with the enterprise of getting women into print" (Showalter, 1984: 38). It underlines that females should believe in their talents for creating literary works since there are numerous female writers successful in the past. Consequently, contemporary females have many guides in their efforts for writing. Gynocriticism tries

to encourage women in order to make them create, defend, and print their own works; search for the unknown female writers and their works; and contribute to any process that will have a positive influence on the female literary canon.

However, gynocriticism is criticised for being essentialist and giving priority to female gender. It is claimed that gynocriticism makes the mistake of adopting a discriminatory approach by taking solely the works of female writers. In this regard, it can be stated that putting the literary works of a single gender to the forefront is exactly the issue that gynocriticism does not approve. As a response to these critical comments, Showalter (1986) underlines that “it is not the exclusive preoccupation with men’s writing that feminist critics have objected to in traditional criticism, but in fact the absence of awareness that what was being discussed as ‘literature’ was actually ‘men’s writing’; the failure to notice that universal statements were being posited on the basis of the writings of one sex” (223). She does not accept these negative comments and claims that women's literature combines the elements existing in the texts of both male and female authors. Moreover, Showalter (1986) emphasises the awareness of feminist critics and literary historians regarding the intertextuality of the created texts and adds one more feature specific to literary works of female writers by claiming that “women’s writing is a double-voiced discourse that always incorporates elements of the male and female traditions” (223). It is detected that she has the same attitude towards this claim even after twelve years, and her determination can be inferred from her comments that she makes in *Twenty Years On: A Literature of Their Own Revisited* in 1998. She states that

gynocriticism, as I named the study of women’s writing in 1979, has developed to offer a coherent narrative of women’s literary history. In relation to the mainstream, women’s writing has moved through phases of subordination, protest, and autonomy, phases connected by recurring images, metaphors, themes, and plots that emerge from women’s social and literary experience and from reading both male and female precursors (404).

Here, the attention is expected to be on the development process of the female literary tradition rather than on a possibility of being essentialist while establishing this tradition. In line with the claims of gynocriticism, it can be stated that female authors and critics pass through changing phases and they can overcome various challenges in order to accomplish the aim of revealing the female literary tradition. This process can be a challenging one since the issue comprises not only the rediscovery of the unknown

female writers but also the contribution of the known ones. Together with the unknown and the known female authors, the female critics are also in the foreground throughout this process. In this regard, Showalter (1998) also states that “in the early 1970s, I found it important to write about continuities between generations of women writers, and I deliberately foregrounded women critics as well” (402). It is obvious that gynocritics endeavour for bringing the female authors together in order to reveal the fact that these authors can fill an important gap in the literary history through their autonomous literary works. Together with the emphasis on the re-discovery of the female authors, female critics are also important within the frame of gynocritical perspective. Both the comments of female critics and the fictional creations of female authors can contribute to the development of the female literary history. However, Showalter (1998) adds that “but the emphasis on female literary lineage is partly rhetorical, for women’s writing is always at least bi-textual; as I wrote in “Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness,” it is a double-voiced discourse influenced by both the dominant masculine literary tradition and the muted feminine one” (402). It is also reminded that female poetics can have similarities and differences with the male-dominated literary canon which can be seen as a normal consequence of the process of creating autonomous literary works. Accordingly, it might be stated that each literary work can be regarded as a part of the whole body of literature encapsulating not only the fictional works produced by males but also the ones belonging to females. Such criticisms or accusations of essentialism cannot be the obstacles overshadowing the attempts of gynocritics to focus on the contributions of female authors and critics to the rediscovery and further development of female poetics. Namely, it is not acceptable to challenge the gynocritics’ efforts for making female writers seen more in literary history. In this respect, feminist literary criticism goes beyond the research area on sexual politics and involves also the restoration of the literary history, “the resurrection of the “lost” women writers; the reinterpretation of well-known women writers; the utilization of material from linguistics, psychology, anthropology, art history, and social history; and the incorporation of methodologies from Marxist and structuralist criticism” (Showalter, 1975: 436). According to Showalter, one of the essential steps for gynocriticism should be the rediscovery of minor female writers who have been overshadowed. It is necessary to perform both historical and also critical analysis on minor female writers and then place these writers’ works into a theoretical framework that would consider them worth reading. It is obvious that “feminist criticism and women’s literary history

do not depend on the discovery of a great unique genius, but on the establishment of the continuity and legitimacy of women's writing as a form of art" (Showalter, 1998: 411). Therefore, a literary tradition where these female authors are interconnected with each other should be established in order to enable continuity and integrity among the produced literary works since "with the globalization of culture ... the national boundaries of the novel are fading and disappearing" (Showalter, 1998: 411). It is understood that feminist literary criticism has widened its scope, and it is not possible to limit it to a narrow definition. Considering the tendency for interpreting the literary works of female writers, we aim to focus on literary criticism regarding female poetics, and in this attempt, critics' comments regarding women's writing guide us in the research process.

An important point criticised by Showalter (1977) is the crucial role of the ignored female writers who have not been included in the group of great writers classified according to the traditional considerations. These ignored writers have not found a place for themselves in anthologies, theories, or histories of literature. As a result of this ignorance, a healthy chain between writers of different generations cannot be built and "we have not had a very clear understanding of the continuities in women's writing, nor any reliable information about the relationships between the writers' lives and the changes in the legal, economic, and social status of women" (Showalter, 1977: 7). However, there has been a growing interest in figuring out the basic information about the language and history of female literary tradition in a more reliable and accurate form with a comprehensive multidisciplinary approach including "psychologists, sociologists, social historians, and art historians to reconstruct the political, social, and cultural experience of women" (Showalter, 1977: 8). The reconstruction process can be maintained with the help of the academic studies providing relevant data regarding the details represented in the literary works of female authors. Contemporary feminist criticism sheds further light on this process by examining the produced literary works and detecting the main points that will contribute to the development of valid insights into the female literary tradition. The validity can be increased when the criticism is done by getting over the influence of the criticism made by male critics. The more the criticism is made from a female perspective, the more the validity of the criticism increases especially when the issue is the literary works produced by female authors.

Accordingly, in the present study, the selected novels, *Like Water for Chocolate*, *The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake*, and *One Hundred Shades of White*, are examined through gynocritical lenses. In the process of the examination, a multidimensional perspective is implemented for discovering female strategies in coping with encountered problems. The gynocritical analysis enables us to see whether there are common points among these novels written by three different female authors. This investigation combined with the theoretical background regarding the female literary tradition supplies us with relevant information about female authors' strategies while portraying their characters. We look for common points in women's experiences in these novels. Female characters' identity formation processes are also examined by focusing on their strategies for coping with the difficulties that they face as females. Moreover, we try to reveal whether the female protagonists can overcome the problems that deeply disturb their well-being. By structuring the analysis of the selected novels around a gynocritical focus, we reveal the identity construction processes of female characters.

1.3. Foods Becoming Words in Female Literary Texts

Although there are differences between the thematic and structural priorities of female authors all around the world, there are also lots of common points that connect these authors while creating their literary works. As Showalter (1981) states that "women's culture forms a collective experience within the cultural whole, an experience that binds women writers to each other over time and space" (197). In line with this claim, the common points binding women universally have been considered as the agents that form the thematic background of female literature. In order to catch the similarities that connect women from different cultures, times, and places, the focus can be on the daily experiences of women. In the framework of daily experiences, "the gynocritic discovers in her authors and characters an understanding of female identity - not that she expects her authors and heroines to be superwomen, but the essential struggle will be towards a coherent identity, a realization of selfhood and autonomy" (Eagleton, 2013: 9). Each woman has unique experiences but these personal experiences can also become agents building a continuous chain of communality with other women, and "women as a group were seen to share fundamental oppressions on which feminists everywhere might ground ideas of universal sisterhood and feminist political action"

(Weedon, 2007: 283). However, it is crucial that this cultural community among women should not be defined as per to the traditional patriarchal norms. It is essential to be aware of this cultural reality and redefine it with a woman-centred perspective. While doing this, it is not reasonable to reject the male-dominated social structure totally. The point is that female authors have been a part of a huge literary structure and they reinterpret the experiences of females in a way independent from the ones previously described by males. Furthermore, “one of the great advantages of the women’s-culture model is that it shows how the female tradition can be a positive source of strength and solidarity as well as a negative source of powerlessness; it can generate its own experiences and symbols which are not simply the obverse of the male tradition” (Showalter, 1981: 204). The relationship between culture and female authors’ creative power is detailed by Showalter because this interaction leads to a more satisfactory data about the interpretation of female experiences. Rather than the models highlighting solely the role of either the body or the psyche of females in literary representations, gynocriticism draws attention to the cultural elements in the lives of females. Accordingly, “the insights of feminist literary criticism will help us, even require us, to think about cultural identities in new ways and feminist border crossings are not simply metaphorical but grow out of a strong belief that criticism can help bring about a more equitable world” (Humm, 2004: 46).

As it is stated by Walton (2003), “Elaine Showalter’s early critical texts sought to establish the objective existence of a *women’s literary tradition*” (90). Showalter investigates literary works of female authors, most of whom have left unknown to the public, and claims that female writers have been limited and marginalised due to traditional patriarchal domination in literature. Despite these restrictions, female authors have become successful in the creation of a body of literature in which the centre is occupied frequently by the experiences of females. This body of literature in which cultural issues about female characters have been portrayed from differing perspectives enables contemporary female writers and readers to “uncover significant truths concerning their own identity and inheritance” (Walton, 2003: 90). In this regard, feminists have taken the responsibility to unveil the nature of women and interpret their experiences considering the essence of the females, and “no longer ‘silent’ or ‘hidden’, women characters and authors take on life and energy and are conceived of as heroic, passionate, subversive” (Eagleton, 2007: 110). Thus, it has offered an opportunity to

women to make their voices heard through literary works. Literature has a very close relationship with the feminist movement since it can be accepted as a medium for reflecting experiences of females. These reflections have been interpreted by feminist literary critics who have enlarged the vision regarding females' status in changing social environments since "the task of feminist critics is to find a new language, a new way of reading that can integrate our intelligence and our experience, our reason and our suffering, our scepticism and our vision" (Showalter, 1979: 39). With this renewal in the literary circles, the trend of reading fictional works produced by female authors can reveal the strategies of women characters in front of patriarchal social norms. Through the production of literary works with changing thematic concerns, self-expression of women can lead to the self-discovery of women. The more they produce, the more they reveal unspoken facts related to the female nature. The awakening of women is a crucial topic in literature, and female writers clearly depict the outcomes of this renewal in the lives of female characters. Producing literary works can empower women in their struggle against any kind of oppression subordinating them socially and psychologically.

Females' experiences have been depicted with the help of a kind of language that has revealed the female world as it might be conceived by women of changing cultures. In order to be a valid interpretation, the preferred language is required to encompass a wide range of experiences from all over the world. It is not proper to put a limitation regarding these experiences while portraying female characters that can be at the centre of a narration process while providing themes related to different class, race, ethnicity, or cultural background of the fictional worlds created. There is a strong relationship between literature and language, and language is also a key factor providing a meaningful link between the contemporary female authors and the antecedent ones. Language can create harmony between the authors from different generations and cultures as well. Thus, the preferred language should be as fruitful as possible since the details of a language used have been clues for detecting the unity among the produced literary works. Showalter (1993) claims that

women's writing should be rule breaking ... women should remake language and write in the Mother Tongue. Yet if women choose a literary career, they cannot afford to renounce tradition, the formal resources of language, the rules of the marketplace, the test of aesthetic standards. The metaphors of the matriarchal tradition, which were necessary to inspire

scholars and critics working against the critical tide, can now be historicized themselves as the literature becomes established (115).

Moreover, Showalter (1977) writes also about the fact that there is an increase in the number of critics who have detected the common points between female writers and they “are beginning to agree that when we look at women writers collectively we can see an imaginative continuum, the recurrence of certain patterns, themes, problems, and images from generation to generation” (11). Accordingly, one of the issues detailed in the present study is the continuum of some specific themes, images, and models that can be detected in *Like Water for Chocolate*, *The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake*, and *One Hundred Shades of White* within the scope of the current study. In these novels belonging to different female authors of changing times and places, foods and food-related issues have become crucial and recurrent determinants in the lives of female characters. The relationship between foods and female characters and their identity development processes has been put at the centre of the events in the stories of Tita, Rose, Nalini, and Maya. The striking point is that foods and culinary tasks have been utilised as agents influencing the development of events in each of the novels. Moreover, female authors have changed the dimension attributed to these matters in traditional norms. Accordingly,

in their nimble, provocative, and inventive investigations of how gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and nation are constructed through food, the authors of such scholarship provide one model for future feminist food studies—one that, refusing to be bound by field or methodology, enjoys a deep familiarity with the interdisciplinary fields of food, gender, and post-colonial studies as well as an expertise in the myriad ways they overlap (McLean, 2013: 256).

Food has been a subject matter for academic research for decades, and “an abundant body of literature has firmly established that the study of food is imperative to understanding social phenomena” (Brady, 2011: 323). It is obvious that it offers an advantage of sustainability in creating myriad thematic analyses while performing innovative and striking studies in the fields of literature, women’s studies, psychology, sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, and gender studies. Food is a subject that is suitable for an interdisciplinary research focus with its dynamic nature, and thus, it can be considered as a practical and beneficial subject matter while performing research in various fields of humanities and social sciences including literature, food studies, cultural studies, and even gender studies. It can be inferred that food functions as an

instrument for understanding the details of the written literary works by becoming more than a simple theme that lacks deeper meanings. In line with this dynamic nature, the functional status of foods has enabled a kind of unity while analysing the selected novels. In each novel, it is seen that foods are beyond nutrition and gain deeper meanings reflected through the interaction between foods and female characters. The authors' techniques of adding functional properties to foods and culinary issues in their fictional works have been significant for proving this claim.

Food is necessary for all beings for survival; however, conducted studies inform us about food's power in influencing not only the body but also the psychology of individuals. In this respect, "people may very well continue to believe that food is an immediate reality (necessity or pleasure), but this does not prevent it from carrying a system of communication; it would not be the first thing that people continue to experience as a simple function at the very moment when they constitute it into a sign" (Barthes, 2013: 25). Namely, food has abandoned to be only an item of nutrition for the living beings. That is to say, food can be considered also as a part of a universal language which is implemented consciously or unconsciously by the authors of world literature while creating fictional works. Together with the remarkable contribution of writers around the world, food crosses the borders of imagination and provides deeper meanings that can be interpreted through a multidisciplinary lens in fiction. Fitzpatrick (2013) claims that "much of the literary criticism concerned with food in later twentieth-century women's fiction, written mainly by female, feminist critics, focuses on women's problematic relationships with food, for example not eating enough, eating too much, the preparation of food as a feminine endeavour, and the kitchen as a feminine space" (127). Although, the focus of scholarly investigations was substantially "on women's eating problems as symptomatic of cultural constraints on female appetite and on the kitchen as a site of women's oppression, within the last 15 years feminist food studies has revalued women's considerable appetite—for food, for knowledge, for power, and for creative self-expression—reclaiming women's hunger as a source of empowerment" (McLean, 2013: 252). The combination of feminist concerns and foods is one of the possible issues that attract attention. Feminist literary criticism pays utmost attention to the interaction of woman, gender, and food, and "much of the criticism scrutinizing how women use food references dates from the 1980s as do many pertinent literary works, probably because of contemporaneous changes in feminist focus"

(Blodgett, 2004: 264). The processes of preparing, cooking, and eating food have been focused by scholars of sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, and women's studies. Among these food-related processes, "cooking as inquiry builds on the existing foundation of food scholarship by offering a methodological approach that understands food not simply as an *object* of study, but makes foodmaking the *means* of garnering understanding about food, identity, and the body" (Brady, 2011: 323). Each step of a cooking performance might be considered as a clue for obtaining various kinds of information related to females' lives including their efforts for establishing a sense of self and having a body image that also contributes to their identity development processes either separately or as a whole. It can be inferred that the changes in feminist focus and the complex nature of foods enable female authors to create fictional works in which intricate relationships between foods and females have been presented. Moreover, as a consequence of the dynamic nature of foods, a great number of critical essays and books have been published and these critical publications offer various perspectives for reconsidering foods and food-related routines reflected in literary works. It is not surprising that these publications analyse the concept of food from various angles. In academic discourses, food-related researches have gained an outstanding place, and foods can be a matter of discussion for the scholars of changing backgrounds since they offer a rich source of data for academic and critical investigation. Despite its importance for survival, "it is only in the past 20 years or so that a critical mass of professional academics have devoted a significant proportion of their energy to questions of food supply, patterns of eating, in fact, all aspects of food culture or foodways" (Albala, 2013: XV). As a consequence of its multifaceted nature, foods allow the researchers to perform a great range of analyses related to its chemical, physical, biological, and nutritional properties. Together with these scientific foci related to foods, a great range of interpretations related to foods have been appeared also in fiction all around the world. This appearance is not a current matter since "food has long been a part of literature, with food-related themes being common among all types of writing from narratives by and about women to children's literature, memoir, poetry, and critical analysis" (Williams-Forson and Walker, 2013: 284). Thus, it is not possible to draw borders while examining foods and their reflections also in literary works. It is obvious that female authors take the advantage of this diversity in food imagery and symbolism and implement it while writing about social, political, religious, ethnic, national, and cultural issues.

It is evident that food is important not only for nutrition but also for psychological, economical, and social well-being of individuals. Nevertheless, food-related issues were seen as a much more feminine task to perform in domestic environments, and thus they might not receive critical attention of scholars or critics in the past. Food is a daily requirement for survival but this fact should not lead to an attitude that underestimates other features of food for human beings. Food is not only a part of simple daily routine but an agent that has a complex nature to be examined closely in academic environments. Foods and food-related issues might not get the deserved critical attention so far. Furthermore, they might be belittled or marginalised and might not be valued as subject matters deserved to be analysed in academic environments. However, they can be considered as outstanding issues to be investigated critically in literary works considering the themes related to females and the claims of feminism and also gynocriticism. In this regard, it can be stated that

feminism, understood as comprising both the refusal to countenance devaluation and abuse of women and the valorization of female traits and attitudes, shifted in the western world at about that time from an emphasis on combatting injustice, inequity, and social conditioning to an essentialist lauding of women's inherent qualities and the roles they empower, such as in their kitchen kingdom (Blodgett, 2004: 264).

Through the critical analyses performed considering the relation between foods and female characters reflected in the literary works written by female authors, it is revealed that food goes beyond its basic purpose of nutrition and has become an important instrument that can be utilised while the matters related to females are demonstrated in fictional works. It is surrounded by a great range of meanings with its cultural and social aspects appearing in the process from its production to consumption. Each step of this process might have unique symbolic or metaphorical messages hidden between the lines of the fictional productions belonging to the female literary tradition that gives place to foods and food-related routines frequently when the issue is related to women. The complex relationship between foods and the experiences, feelings, thoughts, desires, physiology, and psychology of female characters needs to be examined in detail while conducting academic studies. There is a strong possibility that authors may assign deeper meanings to foods and culinary tasks in their works. Namely, “when authors refer to food, they are usually telling the reader something important about narrative, plot, characterization or motives; we can also explore significant current issues that are connected to food in subtle or complex ways, for example gender, religion, poverty and

empire” (Boyce and Fitzpatrick, 2017: 4). In this regard, foods and experiences of female characters may lead readers to decipher the potential messages that are conveyed using a simple daily reality as a powerful instrument for establishing complex narrative frames. In fictional works, it can be observed that female characters can consciously or unconsciously develop a special communication tool in order to resist restrictions that are imposed upon them. This resistance can be possible through expressing themselves by means of verbal or non-verbal communication tools. Considering the selected novels, it can be inferred that the voiceless and/or marginalised female characters can express themselves with the help of foods and food-related events that work as communication devices implemented skilfully in the narrative frame of the stories. The coded and hidden messages are mostly related to the inner feelings, thoughts, and desires of the female characters who cannot express themselves verbally due to various reasons. Foods and food-related events can offer Tita, Rose, Lane, Nalini, Maya, and Ammu various opportunities for resisting the restrictions, expressing their feelings, thoughts, and desires without any hesitation, and coping with the problems of daily life. These food-related matters reflected in the narrative flow of the novels can include various messages to be deciphered by the readers.

The frequent usage of foods in fiction leads to a structure in which the issues related to gender, ethnicity, psychology, sociology, anthropology, religion, and nutrition intermingle with each other. Thus, this complex structure creates notable representations in the fictional works of world literature. The production of a meal requires not only necessary flavouring ingredients but also a creative intervention while producing and serving delicious meals. In a similar way, an author needs not only words but also power of imagination while creating literary works. In this regard, many authors combine these two processes with each other and implement lots of references from kitchen and the culinary arts while writing. Accordingly, it can be underlined that Laura Esquivel, Aimee Bender, and Preethi Nair creatively combine these processes in *Like Water for Chocolate*, *The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake*, and *One Hundred Shades of White*. Foods and words create a complex mixture and convey messages hidden between the lines in fictional works. Apart from being ingredients for culinary products, foodstuff has been utilised for a different mission in the hands of authors. In the *Afterword* of the book *Food and Literature* edited by Shahani (2018), Goldstein claims that

literature further offers something unavailable to most other fields within food studies: a sensorial, and often sensual, experience of the world. Both language and food offer immediate entry into the sensorium, involving as they do the tongue, the organ of production for language as well as the receptor for food. Words and foods engage our senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch, mediating our encounters with the material world and allowing us to experience not only the present but to travel via memory or fantasy through space and time. Both are, in their analogous ways, primal (357).

Furthermore, foods are frequently used in literary works because “evocations of food in literature enrich the reading experience, providing a tangible link to the imaginary world of the text” (Boyce and Fitzpatrick, 2017: 292). The combination of real and imagery increases the fascination of readers while reading a literary work. An ordinary food can be converted into a material leading to extraordinary events in a fictional world.

Keeping notes related to preparation and cooking steps of foods and also writing professional or domestic cookbooks are widespread experiences for women in many cultures. In line with this popularity,

prevalent in all of the cookbooks is a discourse that continues traditional gender roles of women being predisposed to care, cook, and serve others. At the same time, alternative discourses of achievability, self-fulfilment, and femininity are offered with ‘easy’ and ‘delicious’ recipes, enabling women to be competent in the kitchen, and by extension, in life (Matwick, 2017: 532).

Furthermore, these cookbooks include not only information about the ingredients or key points for cooking dishes but they may also include various autobiographical information or personal notes about their writers. That is to say, women may write something personal or even fictional while taking notes on their cookbooks. Thus, two productive deeds are combined consciously or unconsciously in a single domain. It can be inferred that “cooking-as writing-is a metamorphic (and therefore magical) experience that involves a creation of something new out of a set of ingredients ...” (Andrievskikh, 2014: 146). These productive deeds are writing and cooking performed by women. Private personal information and also imaginary creations can be mingled with recipes in these cookbooks. Therefore, these books deserve critical attention when the issue is to analyse the place and importance of foods and culinary tasks in the literary and non-literary works produced by females. As it is pointed by McLean (2013), “scholars not only claimed domestic and community cookbooks as rich sources for academic investigation but also established women’s culinary autobiography as

essential to the study of contemporary women's literature" (250). Writing and cooking have a surprising parallelism with each other since both of them are open to productive interventions. The secret of good writing and the secret of good cooking are connected to the skill of the author and the cook, respectively. The ingredients are put together in order to cook food while words are lined up for creating literary works including novels, poems, stories, diaries, and so on. This productiveness of creating literary works is handled professionally by female writers all around the world. Female writers have created female characters for whom foods and culinary routines have an outstanding importance in identity development processes. Any detail related to foods and food-related tasks can be confronted as an influential instrument for revealing messages to be found out while reading or analysing the fictional works.

CHAPTER II

FOODS SHAPING IDENTITIES OF FEMALE CHARACTERS

2.1. Food: Constructor or Deconstructor of Female Identity

As it is known, literature is the term used to describe the body of written and spoken works. It embodies numerous types of artistic creations including novel, novella, poem, legend, play, and so on. Since the shortest definition states that literature is any written work, the list of literary works can be an immense one. All of these works are composed of words that are creatively interwoven. Words are the vehicles for expression while composing a literary work. The composition process of fictional works includes the fusion of words with imaginative power. There is a wide range of topics discussed related to the issues frequently reflected in literature. Some of these issues can be listed as war, racism, gender, body, and equality. Literary critics make comments on these points found in the literary works published so far. Utilisation of foods in fictional works is also one of the issues that deserve the attentive investigation since “the history of food in literature is an extensive one” (Boyce and Fitzpatrick, 2017: 3). Investigations regarding eating habits, eating disorders, food preferences, cooking practices, calorie counting, and healthy nourishment have been carried out by researchers to detect the influence of the mentioned points on the body image, psychology, and general condition of the characters. It is obvious that food is an indispensable part of our lives, and accordingly, any detail related to foods such as selecting ingredients, preparing and cooking foods, serving and eating meals can also be reflected creatively in most of the literary works. In this regard, the relationship between food and identity is one of the central issues that are worth a critical examination.

One of the issues examined in this study is the identity construction process of the female characters. Identity is a personal reality and changes from an individual to another. The reason of this instability is the fact that identity is a delicate matter and it is affected from a lot of factors including culture, society, religion, and so on. Despite the fact that identity does not have a stable definition which is valid for everybody, the word *identity* is frequently used in daily life in changing socio-cultural contexts. It is a contradictory situation that “even though everyone knows how to use the word properly in everyday discourse, it proves quite difficult to give a short and adequate summary

statement that captures the range of its present meanings” (Fearon, 1999: 2). The formation of selfhood and identity is a process that requires time to establish, evaluate, and change or reconstruct it. Identity is an unstable matter which can always be in a state of continuous flux. This instability might be the main reason for the fact that identity remains as an issue that is hard to define through using some certain expressions. It is affected from various factors and these factors can be accepted as the major reasons of the problem of instability that identity has as a term. At this point, it can be inferred that the self might be regarded as the most important factor determining the essence of identity. Since the self is not limited but open to ceaseless alterations as per to the changing conditions, identity is inevitably affected from this unsettled context of the self. Because of the fact that self has the potential for shifting from one identity to another, identity might consequently diversify in accordance with the diversity that is pursued by the self.

The development of the sense of self and its expression may take a long time, even the whole life of an individual. It can be claimed that a number of factors get involved in the process of selfhood formation of individuals all around the world. Some of these factors can be stated as gender, family, friends, working environment, social environment, level of education, and so forth. Each of these factors can separately have dominance over the development of a sense of self. However, the mentioned factors can also become a complex entity with an outstanding influence over this process. As a result of this possibility, the details regarding these factors are required to be analysed carefully while an investigation is performed for demonstrating identity and selfhood formation of individuals. It might not be an easy task to carry out when the complex nature of identity is considered. At this point, regarding the complexity of identity as a term, Friedman (1996) underlines that

identity is constructed relationally through difference from the other; identification with a group based on gender, race, or sexuality, for example, depends mostly on binary systems of “us” versus “them” where difference from the other defines the group to which one belongs. Conversely, *identity* also suggests sameness, as in the word identical; an identity affirms some form of commonality, some shared ground. Difference versus sameness; stasis versus travel; certainty versus interrogation; purity versus mixing: the geographics of identity moves between boundaries of difference and borderlands of liminality (15).

As it is seen, identity formation is a very critical issue affecting from numerous factors and providing a great range of information about individuals. The aim of identity formation process would be an individual's exploring his/her own potentials. Then he/she can draw a route for his/her personal life by searching for moments that will enable self-realisation and dignity. This is a frequently handled issue in literary works reflecting the identity and selfhood formation processes of fictional characters which might be under the influence of changing factors ranging from the gender to the nationality of these characters. This process can also be reflected as a crisis for the characters in literary works. In these works, the identity crisis experienced by characters can either be solved in time or it remains as a permanent problem that cannot be solved. The complex nature of identity has been revealed through the stories related both to males and females in fictional works created so far. These fictional works can belong either to male or female authors. Since the focus of the current study is on the female characters of the literary works produced by female authors, it is much more appropriate to continue by revealing the points related to identity and selfhood formation phases of the female characters that have been portrayed meticulously by female authors. It is obvious that female characters' identity formation processes reflected as the main themes of the fictional works can enrich the literary background of the female poetics to which female authors contribute through their creative interventions.

As a debatable term, *identity* has been the focal point of studies conducted in research areas including literature, culture, psychology, and sociology. It is a complicated concept and does not have a single certain meaning. Despite the debates about its essence, *identity* as a term has been detected specifically in two different forms in social sciences. It can be said that identity appears in changing domains as per to the distinguishing features attached to it. Among these domains, social identity and personal identity might be the most frequently encountered themes that attract attention while performing academic studies. Fearon (1999) mentions about the categories related to identity as "two linked senses" and also arranges these two senses as social and personal, respectively. Regarding these two senses, Fearon (1999) points that "in the former sense, an "identity" refers simply to a *social category*, a set of persons marked by a label and distinguished by rules deciding membership and (alleged) characteristic features or attributes" (2). In this sense, a kind of collective consciousness related to distinguishing features uniting people together is the point that can be seen as a

necessary component of social identity. On the other hand, “in the second sense of personal identity, an identity is some distinguishing characteristic (or characteristics) that a person takes a special pride in or views as socially consequential but more-or-less unchangeable” (Fearon, 1999: 2). The second sense can be regarded as the most important factor in the process of attaining self-worth and personal dignity. The features specific to an individual can become influential means which are crucial components of the identity formation process of this individual.

The unclear nature of identity leads researchers also to perform studies related to the interpretation of this concept. In postmodern world, the meaning of the word *identity* has been interpreted in a way affected from a wide range of social structures and “scholars working in a remarkable array of social science and humanities disciplines have taken an intense interest in questions concerning *identity*” (Fearon, 1999: 1). Identity formation is an ambivalent process and cannot be fixed to a single precise description. Moreover, there is not a final step in identity formation since identity is a dynamic fact which may require an extended assessment. Certainly, there are many studies regarding the evaluation of identity formation process of individuals. It is also an outstanding research topic in analysing literary works. Literature enables us to see portrayals of characters’ identities. It provides changing issues about the identities of characters in fiction. These issues can be connected to personal identity, social identity, ethnic identity, cultural identity, and religious identity. It is clear that the interaction of them in the identity formation process enriches the depictions in literary works. Gender, ethnic, national, cultural, and also professional identities and the issues related to food and daily kitchen routines as a part of changing identity categories have become components of thematic investigations on literary works produced all around the world. The universality of the concepts of food, feeding, and culinary tasks gives way to do extended examinations by comparing and contrasting food-related themes, images, and symbols reflected in literary works. The wide scope of scholarly research on food and food-related routines and their impacts on fictional characters enables the researchers to enlarge their perspectives while performing critical literary studies. The “literary critics who write about food understand that the use of food in novels, plays, poems, and other works of literature can help explain the complex relationship between the body, subjectivity, and social structures regulating consumption” (Fitzpatrick, 2013: 122). Stories of fictional characters have gained more dynamic narrative textures when food is

regarded as an issue that goes beyond nutrition and when the notions related to identity are considered in detail. Namely, the dynamic nature of foods and food-related issues and the debatable definition of *identity* as a term offer a great range of meanings in fictional works that can be analysed through changing critical perspectives. Furthermore, as it is stated by Gardiner (1981), “the concept of female identity provides a key to understanding the special qualities of contemporary writing by women” (348). Thus, it is important to evaluate identity as a delicate issue while analysing the literary works of female writers. It can enable us to reveal the characteristics of female poetics which is composed of autonomous fictional works produced by female authors who deconstruct the literary standards specified by male authors. In this regard, it can be underlined that “because the concept of identity includes a number of variables, it can explain the diverse ways in which writing by women differs from writing by men more fully than can a theory that poses any single opposition as the explanation” (Gardiner, 1981: 348). Consequently, the combination of these two matters, namely food and identity, in the narration of stories focusing on female characters is one of the frequently encountered techniques implemented by female authors from all over the world.

When identity is considered, the problem of fragmented or split identities is one of the most crucial issues in the postmodern era, and individuals search for the ways to develop a sense of self and personal autonomy in this era. In this regard, it is stated by Shahani (2018) that “in the wake of postmodern tenets that our identities are fragmented and tenuous, food becomes the only remaining marker of selfhood” (10). At that point, while analysing the connection between food and personal and cultural identity, food studies get involved into the research process since this field examines the interrelation between foods and individuals. Moreover, this interrelation has been depicted in literary works from changing perspectives when the issue is fragmented or split identities. For example, in fictional works, food-related routines can either be a complex task to be fulfilled professionally or a much more relaxing one to be handled as a pastime activity for the female characters having an identity crisis. As a practical solution to this problem, women may engage in lots of activities during their lives, and they participate in these activities in order to develop a sense of dignity and self-worth most of the time. Therefore, these activities can be named as hobbies or pastime activities by means of which identity development processes have become much more meaningful for the ones who are in search of discovering their own potentials. In this frame, cooking and

dealing with food-related activities come to the fore among other types of hobbies or pastime activities of daily life performed by females. The reason is that “cooking sheds light on identity, bodies, and knowledge that other activities such as gardening, dance, or sport do not” (Brady, 2011: 323). These activities may also have an obvious influence on women’s emotional and psychological well-being and contribute to their identity development processes. However, cooking is ahead of such activities and preferred frequently by women all around the world. The universality of foods and food-related tasks for physiological needs has shown itself in a much more different perspective by becoming an artistic means for satisfying not only the nutritional needs but also the emotional, psychological, and spiritual needs of females from any cultural background. In this respect, there are various depictions related to these issues in the stories of female characters narrated in *Like Water for Chocolate*, *The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake*, and *One Hundred Shades of White*.

Together with the hobbies and pastime activities closely related to foods in fictional works, the eating habits and cooking techniques may also inform the readers about the identity features of fictional characters. In this regard, food studies make readers concentrate on the eating habits of people acknowledged as an ordinary task of daily life. This concentration can provide for deeper meanings. Almerico (2014) states that “food choices expose a group or a person’s beliefs, passions, background knowledge, assumptions and personalities” (4). In accordance with the conducted researches on this issue, studies related to foods and daily food-related routines inform us with the findings related to culinary preferences and their outcomes. Food is a vital factor in the process of identity formation of anybody from any culture. Nevertheless, “if food related symbolism is complicated, then the relationship between food and identity is no less problematic” (Jones, 2007: 139). The nutritional importance of food from the very beginning of life cannot be discussed. However, as stated by Fischler (1988) “food is central to our sense of identity” (275), and construction of any personal identity with regards to biological, psychological, and social dimensions depends on the combination of the food preferred by any individual (Fischler, 1988: 275). The saying “you are what you eat” is possibly an accepted generalisation. An individual’s eating habits and food preferences may become signifiers of this person’s personality and identity. The place where a person consumes food, what type of food is selected by this person, and who prepares and serves food to this person may be considered as important

references about the established personal identity and selfhood. The reason of this importance is that these preferences gradually become habits. They may inform us about details of multi-layered complex identities of characters in literary works. Moreover, it is seen that these routines reveal not only the personal identities but also ethnic, cultural, and social identities of individuals.

“Under the influence of postmodernism and debates over multiculturalism, the late 1980s and 1990s found historians, anthropologists, and most of all humanities scholars relying ever more heavily on “identity” as they explored the cultural politics of race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, citizenship, and other social categories” (Fearon, 1999: 36). Accordingly, when we look closely at the published literary works, we possibly see that main themes and plots in most of these works have been related to women’s search for self-definition, self-discovery, and consequently, an autonomous identity. It is pointed that “identity is also socially constructed, thus how women talk about food also reveals how they are situated in relation to their families and communities, within a specific socio-politico-economic locus” (Vallianatos and Raine, 2015: 371). In this locus, a woman as an individual may have multiple identities. Namely, she may be a daughter, mother, wife, sister, friend, and so on. She may also have an occupational identity if she has a job. Each of these identities has private meanings and requirements to be fulfilled. The internalization of the expectations is a crucial step in the identity formation process. These identities are related either to social norms or to the choices that a woman makes all along her life. It can be claimed that female identity is one of the central problematic points reflected in fictional works. The identity construction of females has been represented from a variety of angles by authors all around the world. As we mentioned, the extent of identity is a complex one and even “the word “identity” is paradoxical in itself, meaning both sameness and distinctiveness, and its contradictions proliferate when it is applied to women” (Gardiner, 1981: 347). This proliferation includes a great range of variables related to race, culture, social and cultural background, ethnicity, and nationality that might intersect with each other during the identity formation process. As a result of this diversity, “the self is not singular; it is multiple” (Friedman, 1996: 17), and this fact also leads to a multiplicity in the character types reflected in the fictional works in which females are at the centre of the narrated events. Moreover, considering the multiplicity of the self as a crucial factor in this process, it is revealed that “the location it occupies

contains many positions within it, each of which may well depend on its interaction with the others for its particular inflection” (Friedman, 1996: 17). In this regard, it can be stated that these issues are handled by means of considering any possible detail when the subject matter is related to females and to the issues of self and identity. As mentioned, females can assume different identities through which they have a social status as a mother, daughter, wife, sister, and so on. Thus, it requires focusing each detail attentively while commenting about the selfhood and identity matters related to female characters of the fictional works. The reason of this requirement is the fact that there is not a single uniform identity definition encapsulating females as a whole. This reality of diversity in female identities might be reflected through fictional works created by female authors all around the world. Regarding the mentioned requirement, Showalter (1977) speaks about the female authors’ considerations about female identity and its scope which can also have a close interaction with gynocriticism and female poetics. It is underlined by Showalter (1977) that “while they have been deeply and perennially aware of their individual identities and experiences, women writers have very infrequently considered whether these experiences might transcend the personal and local, assume a collective form in art, and reveal a history” (4). It can be inferred that the diversity in female identity can bring along changing perspectives in line with the identity development processes described in fictional works belonging to female authors. These fictional works can enrich female literary tradition through their contributions with objective descriptions related to identity formation processes of female characters. As time passes, the female literary tradition has become a fertile ground for carrying out objective investigations in order to detect and criticise the issues related to female identity. These investigations can reveal important clues regarding the identity development processes by means of the examples found in fictional works produced by female authors.

Female identity and food-related matters can be accepted as one of the most frequently encountered issues when females are described in fictional works. It can be stated that food-related matters have either directly or indirectly have an influence on identity development process of female characters portrayed by female authors. In most of the cultures, women have been seen as the food providers of a family. In daily life, women feed new-born babies, prepare food for the whole family, and carry out most of the duties regarding cooking. Thus, “cooking, broadly conceived as female context,

appears to offer some persuasive explanation why women may be drawn to food imagery” (Blodgett, 2004: 263). The image of women as food providers is an internationally accepted case, and this archetypal configuration may be directly related to female authors’ preferences for using foods frequently in their literary works. The comments regarding the implementation of foods and food-related issues in the female poetics show that female authors have not superficially mentioned about food, nutrition, or cooking. In fact, they might give messages by means of their literary creations and “use food imagery for diverse purposes: to speak of personal and social behaviours and psychological problems, art, sex, sexual politics, poverty, nationalism, murder mysteries and more, especially domesticity” (Blodgett, 2004: 262). For this reason, we should read between the lines in order to catch these messages that can be related to identity development process of female characters depicted by female authors through creating various types of narrative frames. It is observed that using foods as an instrument for reflecting females’ experiences in particular and their identity development processes in general has become one of the most frequently preferred techniques in female literary tradition. Thus, the issue of close interaction between food and female identity reflected in fictional works of female authors deserves critical attention while conducting academic studies related to the features of female poetics by taking gynocriticism into consideration.

The diversity in the interaction between food and female identity offers a great range of fictional frames which can differ thematically in line with the main themes of these frames. Thus, it can be said that *Like Water for Chocolate*, *The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake*, and *One Hundred Shades of White* can be analysed through taking different points into consideration while focusing on the experiences of the female characters in these novels. Accordingly, apart from the relationship between food and female identity in general, another specific point attracting attention in this study is that foods have an important role in the identity search of immigrated females. It can be claimed that foods and foodways provide opportunities for immigrant women to go beyond the borders and to establish connections across time and place which can be exemplified by the story narrated in *One Hundred Shades of White* analysed within the scope of the present study. Since “human beings mark their membership of a culture or a group by asserting the specificity of what they eat” (Fischler, 1988: 280), incorporation of the foods and foodways creates a sense of collective identity formed

among members of specific cultures. This culinary incorporation can be regarded as the most durable factor that is sustained by immigrated women in their new destinations. They may change something about their own culture while living in a foreign country. However, culinary preferences cannot change easily, especially when immigrant women try to keep in touch with their own culture.

The marginalisation of immigrant people due to the differences in race, ethnicity, national identity, and cultural traditions can be overcome through foods and foodways. Sharing food with other people has a symbolic meaning in fictional works depicting immigrant females and identity formation processes of these women before and/or after their immigration to a foreign land. When the characters share food with each other, they establish a food-related bond that is a sign of a common identity frame to which these people belong. Food choices and preparation techniques are valuable factors for keeping the immigrants' memories regarding their hometowns alive and sustaining their own identities in the immigrated country. Since sustaining national and cultural identities has been a crucial fact for most of the immigrant women, they have paid utmost attention to the chances for keeping in touch with their hometowns. One of these opportunities is their own cuisine. Thus, traditional food preparation increases the importance of culinary works carried out by women. The double oppressed females immigrating to a foreign country sustain a sense of self through their abilities in food-related practices. Moreover, the preparation and consumption of the food cooked by women bring not only family members but also members of a group, in a broader sense, together. In this regard, D'Sylva and Beagan state (2011): that "foodwork, otherwise thought of as an oppressive and limiting practice for women, may develop into a source of power and transactional arrangement; food skills may become currency, culinary capital, a resource in the construction and maintenance of gendered ethnic identities" (287). As it is seen, the culinary activities have manifold effects on the lives of women.

Since there is an increasing tendency to place foods and food-related issues in literary works, it is a natural outcome that a field of study, food studies, focuses its attention to the ways in which foods have been represented as items beyond their nutritional facility. Food studies has not been a field of research investigating only foods but it has been a field examining "the intricate relationships among food, culture, and society from a number of disciplines in the humanities, social sciences, and sciences" (Almerico, 2014: 1). There are a great number of researches in food studies

about “self and food choice in relation to, for example, ethnicity, class, and religious affiliation” (Jones, 2007: 142). Accordingly, a multidisciplinary investigation related to foods can also be carried out for examining the ways through which immigrants, especially immigrant women, cope with the obstacles that may appear after their arrival to a foreign country. The reason for giving priority to women in this regard is that “immigrant women value their habitual cuisines, and through continuation of their culinary practices, evoke and connect with “home”” (Vallianatos and Raine, 2008: 371). Despite a number of changes altering their lives, these women still have the power stemming from their culinary abilities. The necessary strength to cope with emotional, social, or economic problems can be found during the culinary journeys made in the kitchens as reflected in *One Hundred Shades of White*. Immigration to a foreign land cause lots of challenges and changes both socially and economically in the lives of immigrant people. These changes and challenges are reflected through foodways since they can be accepted as the most influential representations of connections with the hometown.

In academic essays regarding the importance of foods and foodways for immigrant women, cultural and national aspects in foreign environments are also included into the analysis process of fictional works belonging to female writers. These writers can represent the feeling of belonging to a national and cultural background that can be sustained through foods and habits of consuming certain types of foods which become significant culinary references existing in the memories of female characters. Cooking and eating certain type of food are the options for females who can create a sense of belonging through maintaining their own culinary habits in their new homes abroad. The feeling of belonging to a national and cultural background can be a very important matter for immigrant people, and the simplest formula of being surrounded with the sense of belonging to the hometown while living in a foreign land includes foods and culinary habits. The smell, taste, ingredients, recipes, and appearance of foods can evoke memories related to the missing moments and spaces that remind the immigrant women the experiences related to their lives in their motherland.

Culture is composed of a set of learnt values transmitted to the participants of a society. It is not inherited but gained as a result of the interaction with other people in the same society. It can be “defined as the beliefs, values, and attitudes practiced and accepted by members of a group or community” (Almerico, 2014: 6). Food has a crucial

role in the transmission of cultural values through generations. With this facility, food conveys people who they are and who they become while living in a particular society. With regards to cultural identity portrayed through food preferences, it can be said that “analysis of complex symbolic meanings and associations of food and foodways provides a window into understanding how individuals construct subjectivity, and how various kinds of sociocultural boundaries (e.g. based on class, caste, religion, etc) are demarcated” (Vallianatos and Raine, 2008: 356). Furthermore, food creates a mystical bond among people and connotes a sense of belonging or not belonging to a certain place. Namely, an emotional void and emptiness may appear when immigrants do not prepare and consume food of their own cuisine. The reason is the possibility that foods can somehow fill the void that immigrant people may experience in their new settlements. Some valuable factors including nationality, family, religion, and ethnicity are closely related to the preferred foods and foodways of individuals. As a result of this fact, it is natural that immigrant women try to preserve their culinary habits and consume foods from their own cuisine. Within this frame, another point that attracts attention is the differences in food preferences of the first and second generation immigrants. Immigrant women confront the problem that their children might refuse to eat what they prepare following their immigration to a foreign land. For these women, the issue is not that they have to do extra work in the kitchen but that their children prefer to consume the foods belonging to a foreign cuisine. Due to the significance attributed to foods and foodways, when the children refuse to consume traditional food, it may symbolically mean to reject their own national values (Vallianatos and Raine, 2008: 367). This can be a really delicate issue for the immigrant women. Thus, foods cannot be accepted simply as a necessity for nutrition for immigrant women since they may also “serve to connect with oneself, and to recall the foods, tastes and people of “home”” (Vallianatos and Raine, 2008: 369). Another important point to be considered is the question why immigrant females spend too much time, money, energy, and ingredients while preparing meals. The reason may be the fact that “every social group is bound by an interrelated system of food production, rituals, and ideology” (Xu, 2008: 8). Reconstruction of the self in a new country can be achieved easily when women stick to their cooking abilities, and “by means of menu planning, grocery shopping and cooking, women assert their individual connotations of womanhood and ethnicity” (Vallianatos and Raine, 2008: 371). It is evident that all these efforts for preparing meals can be a recurrent issue and valid for all cultures, despite changing patterns.

Moreover, it can be expressed that “food is memory, food is irony, food is drama, food is symbol, food is form” (Shahani, 2018: 3). It is possible to decipher a great range of meanings via foods due to their multi-faced natures. Foods for consumption or culinary practices enable characters to express themselves, and “by examining the what, where, how, and why of our food choices and food habits, we develop a better understanding of ourselves and others” (Almerico, 2014: 1). In this study, we aim to reveal the ways in which foods are utilized while narrating the stories and revealing the psychological states of characters. Accordingly, we focus on the relationship between foods and female identity, and we try to detect how foods are represented as a tool for questioning and also resisting the social norms. We also examine food practices and financial empowerment of female characters going through hardships due to various reasons.

2.2. Food: Voice or Voicelessness of Female Characters

The concept of food voice is a valuable tool while interpreting literary creations of authors. Foods have eluded from their main and basic purposes and replaced words in the expression of the unspeakable and unexpressed concerns in fictional works. Listening to the food voice will guide us in the way of deciphering personal experiences of the characters in fiction. This voice turns to a treasure of information since “food choices tell stories of families, migrations, assimilation, resistance, changes over times, and personal as well as group identity” (Almerico, 2014: 4). As Long (2004) states, food speaks about multiple issues and “our cultural, ethnic and regional identities are displayed through our selections of dishes, ingredients, spices, and ways of eating” (119). When it speaks, it reveals not only the matters related to one particular case or moment, but it also speaks about the present experiences, past events, memories, relationships, desires, plans for the future, and so on.

Additionally, listening to the food voice is an influential way to study power relations between genders particularly when females do not have a chance for giving voice to their feelings, desires, and thoughts. Moreover, food voice can be accepted as a powerful vehicle for the representation of inner worlds of individuals in the postmodern era. It is known that one of the most significant problems of this age is the communication gap among people. This is an issue growing up day by day. People neither listen to each other nor pay attention to the feelings, problems, or even joys of

other people most of the time. As the smallest core of societies, families have also affected from this problem. Family members cannot establish a healthy communication in the same house. Thus, expressing oneself turns to be a trouble that requires a special talent to be solved personally. In this regard, cooking and food-related tasks can be placed among the ways through which people may give voice to the unspoken thoughts.

Female authors use foods as a literary medium through which female characters speak about their feelings, beliefs, thoughts, desires, and so on. With the implementation of issues about foods and cooking in literary works, female authors inform the readers about the unrevealed facts related to females. Accordingly, Counihan (2012) claims that “food provides a rich voice especially for women to talk about their experiences, their cultures, and their beliefs—making available to the public lives that would otherwise go unnoticed—the lives of ordinary women” (2). Although we have a close relationship with many forms of food and food preparation in daily life, it is not an easy task to hear the food voice. Investigations regarding the messages conveyed through foods should be carried out attentively because “while sometimes the food voice is loud and clear, in many instances, that voice is unheard, drowned out in a din of louder messages, or simply not perceived as carrying the power to communicate” (Long, 2004: 119) in literary works depicting the experiences of female characters.

Both the type of the consumed food and any detail included in its preparation attract attention while commenting on the identity of an individual or a group of people. “Substances, techniques of preparation, habits, all become part of a system of differences in signification; and as soon as this happens, we have communication by way of food” (Barthes, 2013: 25), and individual food preferences and food-related routines of a particular group help us interpret the messages given through food. This is obviously a complex process and composed of a variety of inputs. The reason is that “the foodways model addresses the range of activities surrounding eating and food: product, performance, procurement, conceptualization, preservation, preparation, presentation, consumption, and clean-up” (Long, 2004: 121). The critics and readers may need to follow up each step to reach necessary information about unspoken feelings and thoughts which are also closely related to the identity formation processes of fictional female characters.

Finn (2004) establishes a correlation between confession and culinary practices taking place in kitchens and speaks about the obsession to food which is culturally valid

in most of the societies around the world. This is reflected from the fact that people enjoy talking about eating and when, where, and with whom they consume food. This obsession can be seen in various literary works, and Finn (2004) asserts that “some (but certainly not all) of these works represent a particular and specific kind of literature in which food is a particular kind of voice—that of the confessional—and concerned with a particular set of cultural issues—the intersection of gender, power, and food” (86). The disclosure of the repressed feelings of characters specifically takes place in the kitchen when female characters are the focal point of the narrations, “oftentimes however, the food voice is female and domestic as well as every day, so tends to be overlooked” (Long, 2004: 120). Nevertheless, the related literature has shown that the issue of foods and food voice is more than what is considered in traditional patriarchal contexts especially when the focal point is women. Barthes (2013) questions the meaning of food in general terms and speaks about its references specific to personal and cultural agents. Regarding the definition of food, he states that food is “not only a collection of products that can be used for statistical or nutritional studies. It is also, and at the same time, a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations, and behaviour” (Barthes, 2013: 24). As a result of this fact, it is expected that cooking and other tasks related to foods should not be overlooked anymore. Both foods and culinary tasks and also the individuals participating in food-related routines have gained a status of respect and authority.

Food is an indispensable aspect of our daily lives and it also shows itself clearly in fiction. The fictional world has a huge treasure of creations “in which the author *talks* about (or gives voice to) food, about the senses and experiences that surround buying, preparing, eating, and then remembering it” (Finn, 2004: 86). Any one of these steps is likely to refer to the significant relationship between foods and gender. As a result, food has become a beneficial clue about the gender identities and experiences portrayed in literature. Culinary deeds including eating, cooking, and food preference signify masculine or feminine gender roles and also the power relations between man and woman, husband and wife, mother and daughter, and so forth. Female characters mostly gain their power through their ability in cooking in front of male dominated societies. The reason is that the food prepared by female characters is not only for nutrition but it is also used fictionally for revealing the unspoken inner feelings and thoughts. It can offer an alternative way for self-expression for these characters when they cannot

express themselves verbally due to various reasons. Food is a natural phenomenon in origin but it is also a cultural and social reality that is fundamental for the formation of personal consciousness. The meals and also their ingredients substitute for the emotions that cannot be expressed freely due to various reasons stemming especially from patriarchal oppression. Thus, food gets out of its traditional role for nutrition and becomes a literary vehicle and also a fictional character in literature. One can get information about the hidden feelings of a female character through paying attention to her culinary products which substitute for the unspoken words since foods can be implemented as a means for reflecting the psychological, emotional, and social states of the cook in fictional works such as *Like Water for Chocolate*, *The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake*, and *One Hundred Shades of White*. Considering the examples collected in this study, it can be said that the taste, smell, and sight of foods convey the meaning of the female language preferred by female characters of the literary works belonging to female authors. In this regard, Shahani (2018) points out the importance of “the tradition of the food epigraph” (2) mentioning about a crucial link between foods and words which is reflected in a great number of literary works. Shahani (2018) adds that the frequent presence of images related to foods in written texts “whether in work on food and children’s literature, food and Asian American literature, or food and early modern literature, might be treated as a call for an overarching method for thinking about food in relation to the literary text” (2).

Moreover, kitchens are not places for preparing foods solely for the individual and familial feeding requirements fulfilled by females in their laboratory-like domestic places. In contemporary fictional works, the status of kitchens is also changed, and they become more than domestic workrooms of female characters. The traditional considerations related to kitchens have been reorganised, and these places are transformed into social areas where females can perform cooking and other food-related tasks as creative artistic activities, not as an obligation. As it is emphasized by Matwick (2017), “the kitchen offers women a place to exercise the virtue of femininity and also to grow as an individual with increased confidence that comes through cooking success” (540). It is no more a place for carrying out food-related obligatory duties for fulfilling the responsibility to feed other people, but it is a domain for voluntarily performing culinary tasks which offer opportunities for self-expression and self-realization. Female characters can either conceal or confess their intimate desires,

hopes, or beliefs mostly in a kitchen where women spend most of their time by performing culinary tasks. In this regard, kitchen voice can be heard in autobiographies, cookbooks, memoirs, short stories, novels, novellas, and poems in the female poetics. Writers can choose any of these genres while placing food voice either at the centre or margin of a literary work. No matter which genre is chosen, the transformation of kitchen from a place of imprisonment to freedom is actualised with frequent connotations regarding the powerful influence of culinary deeds on personal and social concerns.

From this point, we analyse three different novels written by three female authors from changing cultural backgrounds. Our focus is on the relationship between food and identity development processes of females reflected through food-related issues in these novels. We also try to detect whether foods substitute for words when the female characters cannot express themselves and their inner feelings. Moreover, the financial power and self-confidence gained through culinary abilities are other points that are investigated in the current study. The changing status of kitchen from a limiting place to a place of freedom for the female characters is also examined in the selected novels. This selection enables us to see whether female characters from changing living conditions have similar experiences in relation to foods and food-related issues. The investigation on food which has been represented as a powerful agent altering the lives and experiences of female characters is one of the points that will shed further light on the literary analyses which are about the relationship between food and identity development processes of the female characters.

2.3. Food: Captivity or Freedom of Females in the Kitchen

In accordance with the abundance in the types of foods consumed all over the world, food-related fictional themes also have a substantial diversity in world literature. The foods consumed can change from one geographical region to another or they can be the same for all regions. Similarly, foods and food-related themes, images, and symbols can either be universally accepted ones or change as per to some variables including cultural, ethnic, social, economic, and religious factors. The reason for encountering a huge number of food-related representations in literature, magazines, newspapers, journals, and academic studies can be the diversity of themes related to foods. There is also another crucial diversity which is related to females and their lifestyles,

experiences, preferences, emotions, and thoughts that can also differ from one culture to another or from one generation to another. All of these variables are significant components to be considered while analysing the role and place of foods in the lives of female characters in fictional works.

Since ancient times, the frames of gender performances have been the determining factors between social, familial, and personal relations and foods and also food-related issues. At first glance, the responsibility of cooking and providing food for others has still been ascribed to females in most of the cultures around the world, and accordingly, women have incurred the responsibility of fulfilling the requirements for caring the people around them through engaging in culinary tasks not only physically but also mentally. This responsibility might be considered as an obligation for females who have to involve in the process of food provision as a part of their duties and identities as women according to traditional social norms. Even though, on the surface, cooking is seen as a daily routine to be carried out by women as demanded by social norms, performing food-related deeds has a much more complicated function in the lives of females. This issue has further details since the interaction between foods and females leads women to consciously or unconsciously develop identities as individuals, mothers, daughters, wives, employers, and workers as per to their involvement in these tasks. During this process in which food is at the centre, women's identities are formed through complex and contradictory steps united together in a food-related framework. From the traditional perspective of the patriarchal societies, cooking may be seen as a low status daily activity that does not deserve much critical attention. The reason of this consideration may stem from the misconception that cooking is not a complex task and it does not require any theoretical knowledge or any mental activity. Namely, cooking is considered as a practical daily activity performed manually without requiring any complex knowledge. These thoughts about the simplicity of cooking are the barriers preventing food-related deeds from being accepted as a creative art performed proficiently by women. However, "cooking is a way for women to exert power" (Matwick, 2017: 541) since they use their hands skilfully and participate wholly into food-related activities by engaging in each step using their minds, hearts, thoughts, and emotions. The misconception regarding the status of cooking is demolished with the creative intervention of women who may also perform culinary tasks in professional environments with great enthusiasm. The reason of this enthusiasm can be regarded as

the fact that food-related issues which are carried out successfully by women have offered them various chances for self-realization and empowerment. Thus, they can acknowledge their own self-worth and dignity.

In fictional works, cooking as a demanding activity is handled by women who can express their hidden feelings and thoughts by means of the culinary details employed by the authors while narrating the stories of female characters whose identity development processes have a close relationship with foods and food-related issues. Considering the relationship between food and female identity, it can be stated that “food is an important expression of identity, and the making and giving of food is closely related to gender-identity, specifically to femininity, and the experience of being a woman” (Matwick, 2017: 543). However, whether women feel oppressed or liberated in the kitchen can be seen as one of the most debated issues in the related field. In this regard,

feminist food studies has locked onto the domestic sphere as a conflicted site, one that simultaneously reproduces patriarchal values and, hence, the physical, intellectual, and ideological subordination of women *and* that serves as a space where women enjoy an amount of power and control far surpassing that which they exert over the public and political realms (McLean, 2013: 250).

The feeling of responsibility can also be considered as an issue to be discussed since this feeling may affect females either in a negative or a positive way. The responsibility of meeting the nutritional needs of other people may lead to a sense of entrapment within the borders of the kitchen. In the distribution of traditional household tasks, females’ role is expected to be the nurturer of the family, and thus preparing, cooking, and also serving food have become obligatory works of females. Most of these tasks are fulfilled in the kitchen where women spend most of their time. Due to the fact that women have to stay within the borders of a kitchen while fulfilling these duties, this place may be seen as a source of entrapment for females. While men as the breadwinners of the family are free to go everywhere, women have to stay at home and should devote themselves to culinary issues most of the time in line with traditional expectations of societies. However, this may not be a negative experience for females since

the housewife is immersed in the daily world of concrete realities in a way that most men are not, and the qualitative nature of her products—that they have been personalized by her touch—gives women an avenue to the sacred

that most men, immersed as they are in the profane, alienated world of exchange or commodity production, do not have (Donovan, 1984: 103).

It can be seen as a kind of oppression on the surface but kitchen offers a great number of opportunities for women to be creative and to express themselves in fictional works. Females may turn this duty into a creative art that reassures their self-confidence, self-worth, and dignity. The ceaseless culinary duties in the kitchen can also be accepted as a negative archetypal imagery, but “reinforced by archetypal awareness, women’s domestic experience has inspired their imaginations to transmute the basic necessity to eat into a matter of art” (Blodgett, 2004: 291). As a consequence, an ordinary daily work can be transformed into an artistic creation process in the hands of women in literary works. Critics from differing fields can still debate over the question of whether or not food-related tasks empower women no matter how they are oppressed by patriarchy. On the other hand, another discussion can be made on a totally opposite possibility of the confirmation of females’ subordination due to their gender when they perform culinary tasks. Even though there are two different perspectives that can be preferred while analysing the relationship between females and foods, a positive inclination regarding the empowering feature of foods and food-related issues comes to the fore in contemporary literary works belonging to female authors. It can be stated that female characters can seize the opportunity for empowerment that will be provided by foods and food-related tasks, and “this interpretation of cooking as empowerment goes against the mainstream feminist critique of kitchens as a sexist space” (Andrievskikh, 2014: 147). The close link between women and culinary issues that take place in the kitchens can be seen as an outstanding reason leading to further insights into the role of foods in the identity development process of females portrayed in fictional works.

In this regard, the spatial details portrayed in literature while revealing the food-related experiences of the female characters suggest the importance of kitchen as a place of empowerment and self-realisation in accordance with the purpose of the present study. Salvaggio (1988) examines the details about the space of females in the formation of theories in academic discourses. In this regard, Salvaggio (1988) points that “while theories produced by men take on certain gendered spatial contours, theories written by women—especially those generating from the last decade and a half—bring women’s actual experience of space to discourse” (262). The female point of view

comes to fore when female theorists become more visible through their objective contributions to the construction of theory. The objectivity in theory can be possible when the female theorists can express themselves, and thus, “instead of shaping masculine space into something feminine, these women bring feminine space to life by writing from, through, and about the spaces women themselves have occupied” (Salvaggio, 1988: 262). As the female theorists have transformed the space of females in theory, female authors have brought a renewed perspective related to the spaces which are considered as the domain of female characters in fiction. This transformation is vividly seen in the representations related to the kitchens where female characters are empowered through their activities related to foods and any other culinary issues. Considering the interaction that takes place between foods and females in the kitchens, it can be stated that

the recent scholarship on women and food conclusively demonstrates that studying the relationship between women and food can help us to understand how women reproduce, resist, and rebel against gender constructions as they are practiced and contested in various sites, as well as illuminate the contexts in which these struggles are located (Avakian and Haber, 2005: 2).

With the function of offering various opportunities for female characters, kitchen has become one of these sites to be examined critically. In the Oxford dictionary (1993), kitchen is defined as “a room where food is prepared and cooked”. Even though a kitchen can be seen as a place only for carrying out cooking-related tasks, it can be more than this. On the surface, female characters that spend most of their time in the kitchens through engaging in various food-related issues may be seen as being restricted or limited within the borders of these places in line with the traditional patriarchal considerations. However, when their experiences, preferences, thoughts, and feelings are examined meticulously, it can be found out that female characters do not feel limited or entrapped within the physical borders of the kitchens. Cooking or performing any other food-related task in the kitchens are not considered as a burden by these characters, but in contrast, such activities carried out in the kitchens can be valued as opportunities for self-realization, self-improvement, and self-expression which will eventually contribute positively to their identity development processes. In this regard, spaces reflected in fictional works deserve academic attention since they can be sources of deeper meanings to be deciphered carefully. Related to this issue, Gaston Bachelard published *The Poetics of Space* in which the focus is on the exploration of spaces

through an analytical perspective correlated with the poetic imagery found in literature. It is stated that “space that has been seized upon by the imagination cannot remain an indifferent space subject to the measures and estimates of the surveyor. It has been lived in, not in its positivity, but with all the partiality of the imagination. Particularly, it nearly always exercises an attraction” (Bachelard, 1994: XXXVI). Bachelard (1994) studies the image of house from changing perspectives, and it is revealed that the importance of a house for an individual cannot be overlooked, and “as has often been said, it is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the world” (Bachelard, 1994: 4). Within the scope of investigations performed by Bachelard (1994), one of the underlined issues is that “the house, quite obviously, is a privileged entity for a phenomenological study of the intimate values of inside space, provided, of course, that we take it in both its unity and its complexity, and endeavour to integrate all the special values in one fundamental value” (Bachelard, 1994: 3). It can be inferred that each part of a house can be a source of inspiration for the authors who can create changing scenes in which the spatial references come to fore. In this regard, kitchens can be accepted as the places which are frequently described in literary productions. In fictional works, kitchens are generally portrayed as the heart of houses. A kitchen can be the very centre of a house, and it is also frequently seen as the domain of females all around the world. This tendency might stem from various reasons including the social and cultural ones. No matter what the source of this tendency, it can be stated that kitchens have a special importance in the lives of female characters, and “some women’s studies scholars have discovered that food practices and their representations, interwoven as they are into the dailiness of life, can reveal the particularities of time, place, and culture, providing an excellent vehicle to contextualize women’s lives” (Avakian and Haber, 2005: 7). By means of female authors’ imaginative power, kitchens go beyond their traditional spatial features and lead to various interpretations when they are portrayed in fictional works. Most of the female authors break the pre-established definitions and considerations related to kitchens and attribute a great range of meanings when the issue is the kitchens as places in which female characters spend so much time by performing food-related tasks voluntarily and with enthusiasm. It seems that the frequency of this tendency in portraying kitchens as the places of empowerment for the female characters can increase, and female authors can reveal a great range of scenes in which kitchens are transformed into the places where women can improve themselves and contribute positively to their identity formation processes.

In this regard, “it was reasonable to say we “read a house,” or “read a room,” since both room and house are psychological diagrams that guide writers and poets in their analysis of intimacy” (Bachelard, 1994: 38). Here, our focus is particularly on kitchens which are read and/or analysed while interpreting the experiences of the female characters, and “just as the kitchen is no longer off limits for women’s studies, some of the latest work in food studies is beginning to recognize that food practices are gendered” (Avakian and Haber, 2005: 7). For this reason, reading kitchens can be seen as an influential strategy while gaining detailed information about these fictional characters spending most of their time in the kitchens by engaging in a great range of food-related issues. The interaction that occurs between these issues and female characters in the domestic or professional kitchens can be considered as a crucial component of identity development processes of these characters. With the transformation of the kitchens into the places where women can pursue and actualise their dreams, female authors frequently depict the renewed image of kitchen in fictional creations. Thus, the female poetics is rich in depictions of kitchens created by different female authors from various cultural backgrounds. Accordingly, Laura Esquivel, Aimee Bender, and Preethi Nair can be regarded among these authors because they also depict kitchens with a renewed perspective in *Like Water for Chocolate*, *The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake*, and *One Hundred Shades of White*, respectively. Here, it is noteworthy to state that the kitchens reflected in the fictional works can be a part of domestic and also professional environments. As spatial entities, these kitchens in different places can have a very crucial role in the issue of female characters’ identity development processes. Within the body of kitchens, female characters can interact with various materials related to foods and used in cooking, and these materials can be significant instruments valued by female characters while they are engaging in food-related issues. In women’s domain, which is kitchen here, females hold the control and males are not included in culinary processes most of the time, and “perhaps predictably so, food symbolism carries a particular importance for women due to the culturally determined association of women with cooking and nourishment” (Andrievskikh, 2014: 137). Depending either on obligatory or voluntary basis, culinary duties encapsulate females. In this regard, Counihan and Van Esterik (2013) claim that “without a doubt, feminism and women’s studies have contributed to the growth of food studies by legitimizing a domain of human behaviour so heavily associated with women over time and across cultures” (2). Accordingly, female writers also use this fact professionally

while creating plotlines from different cultural backgrounds, and they combine foods and words resulting in impressive artistic creations in which “when authors refer to food they are usually telling the reader something important about narrative, plot, characterization, motives, and so on” (Fitzpatrick, 2013: 122).

Forming up an integral part of daily life, foods have been associated with cultural, social, psychological, and physiological connections. Through these connections, foods take their places in literary works. Foods and foodways can signify either oppression of women, when reflected with a traditional perspective, or the empowerment or freedom of women gaining a social status by being an authority through preparing meals, when they are portrayed in the fictional creations of female authors with a renewed perspective. Culinary duties in families have been carried out mostly by women. This responsibility undertaken by women has been criticised severely when it turns into an agent of oppression of women in terms of gender equality. It is not a simple task to analyse the interaction of food and gender because this issue converts into a much more complicated one when the factors such as ethnicity, race, culture, and social life are included in the analysis of literary works. On the other hand, “food has been a double edged sword—tying women to the home yet also enabling them to cross the production-reproduction boundary and use domestic food knowledge to achieve social and economic power outside the home and to influence the public political arena” (Counihan, 2012: 5). Additionally, food is the most important agent of interaction “between inside and outside of our bodies” (Xu, 2008: 2) and it “organizes, signifies, and legitimates our sense of self in distinction from others who practice different foodways” (Xu, 2008: 2). Although cooking and other housework are sometimes seen as obligatory duties urging women to spend most of their time to complete these daily tasks, cooking also has a positive aspect. The positive nature of cooking and other food-related issues stems from the fact that these duties of preparing, cooking, and serving meals have the potential of satisfying females’ desire for self-expression. Namely, cooking is not an obligatory duty that should be performed by women every day. It is clear that cooking turns to be an art through which females pursue their creative power. This creative power of females is connected to their ability in the culinary deeds. Thus, kitchens turn into places of innovation and creativity. Most women accept kitchen as their domains and they do not question or criticise this fact. The reason of this case is that elaborate meals have become the artistic products and

also vehicles for self-expression for many women. The role and importance of foods and cooking is a complex matter which can be exhibited in a wide variety of ways in most of the literary works through implementing various kinds of foods and food-related matters. The omnipresence of food bears numerous meanings, and “understanding how messages are conveyed through culinary behaviour requires an examination not only of victuals but also of the preparation, service, and consumption of food—for all are the grist for the mill of symbolization” (Jones, 2007: 129). In order to figure out the hidden meanings conveyed through foods, literary products should be attentively read and analysed. Keeping the importance of foods in mind, we examine whether culinary duties oppress women in the domestic atmosphere of kitchens or enable them the opportunities for self-expression especially by the help of food voice in the selected novels. Considering the negative aspects mentioned above, we also try to understand whether female characters desire to get rid of the duties in their kitchens or they adhere to these tasks in the selected novels. Here, another point attracting attention can be the place of men in the kitchen and their interaction with foods and food-related issues. Considering this, we also look whether male characters take part in any culinary step while women preparing and serving food in these novels.

CHAPTER III

GYNOCRITIC FOODS IN SELECTED FEMALE NOVELS

3.1. Gynocritic Modelled Foods in the Selected Female Literary Works

Theoretical background of the present study is discussed by basing mainly on the critical perspectives detailed by Showalter while comparing and contrasting the selected novels because “gynocritics is, roughly speaking, historical in orientation; it looks at women’s writing as it has actually occurred and tries to define its specific characteristics of language, genre, and literary influence, within a cultural network that includes variables of race, class, and nationality” (Showalter, 1984: 36). In these novels, the common points that are specifically put at the centre of the events are the clues for developing a sense of coherence while carrying out an interpretation regarding the thematic framework preferred by three different female authors. Moreover, these novels can become an outstanding part of the feminist canon in the literary realm since they combine food-related details with the experiences of female characters that are reflected clearly with a renewed perspective.

Female writers have achieved a considerable success in working on various genres. In the past, “while traditional narrative dynamics led to problems for women writers, they were also developing their own modes” (Showalter, 1993: 122), and thus it can be stated that they have not felt themselves restricted in some basic forms or genres in the process of producing their works any longer. They have produced literary pieces that portray female heroines with a great range of variation in their experiences. There have been similarities and differences in these experiences revealed through the creative intervention of female writers, and “the striking coherence we noticed in literature by women could be explained by a common, female impulse to struggle free from social and literary confinement through strategic redefinitions of self, art, and society” (Gilbert and Gubar, 2000: XI). This is an indicator of the fact that the diversity in female experience has increased the richness of thematic concerns in literature. Accordingly, “Showalter’s project, like that of the other gynocritical writers, was the creation of a female literary tradition which would offer new ways of understanding representations of women” (Eagleton, 2007: 109). Moreover, the preferences of female authors related to the form and style of literary works have also displayed distinguishing properties.

These features have led to the appearance of a literary culture uniting female authors under the umbrella of the female literary tradition.

A frequent preference of using foods in literature is one of the remarkable characteristics of the female literary tradition. Within this frame, foods should not be considered as a fact only about eating. Accordingly, it is obvious that "... in contemporary women's bestsellers, imagery of cooking allows for expression of female experience in contexts of transformation, creation, and empowerment" (Andrievskikh, 2014: 147). Thus, it should be kept in mind that foods have multidimensional functions. All the steps of food preparation and eating might have symbolic meanings, and details in the narration might give information about characters and their place in a society. Their physical and psychological conditions have been influenced significantly by a particular food-related intervention that evokes associations between foods and identity. It can be stated that "who prepares the food, serves it, and cleans up; where people take their meals; the shape of a table; and who sits where and talks about what—all these convey roles, values, and ideas about gender, hierarchy, and power" (Jones, 2005: 130). For this reason, it is crucial to consider every detail related to food and culinary issues reflected in female poetics in order to obtain an objective basis for evaluating the relationship between food and identity development of female characters. In this regard, during the discussions over the main theme of the study, Meryem AYAN who is the supervisor of this study calls "gynocritic foods" to the relationship between food and female identity reflected in the fictional works of female authors. Moreover, she adds that "the information obtained can be labelled as gynocritics of food in female novels in which female authors use food's ingredients as their ink and the cooked food as their texts via which they express their emotions and moods without using words but foods".

As it is stated by Boyce and Fitzpatrick (2017), "as well as a wealth of individual essays and articles exploring eating and drinking in specific texts and contexts, the last thirty years have seen the publication of various book-length studies on food and its associated practices in works of literature" (4) due to the extensive use of foods in literary works. Foods in literature give us the opportunity to analyse the relationship with foods and personal and also cultural identity. Moreover, literary works giving place to foods and food-related issues involve disclosure of information regarding people in accordance with their culinary habits. "Food has a constant tendency to transform itself into situation" (Barthes, 2013: 29), and as a result, it is not a

simple task to reach to a final conclusion about the messages conveyed through foods in fiction. There is a fact that “every food is believed to have an effect on the body” (Fischler, 1988: 280). Moreover, it is also obvious that food is a kind of instrument transferring information about people and their personal backgrounds including their gender, culture, religion, age, and ethnicity. Consequently, it can be inferred that food has been a significant component of fictional creations, and thus, it has been among the most discussed topics in literary criticism. Literary critics comment on foods and food related issues from various points of view by focusing on different theoretical backgrounds. In this regard, it can also be said that foods and cooking practices even turn into fictional characters. The reason is that foods change the order of the events, have a remarkable influence on characters’ psyche and attitudes, and reveal the suppressed thoughts and feelings of characters in fictional works. In a single study, it is not possible to mention all of the symbolic meanings conveyed through the representations of foods in literary works. However, we should pay attention to how authors implement foods and food-related issues and also how these issues take part in the development of events in fictional works while reading and analysing the literary texts belonging to the female authors. This may ensure the creation of various scenarios in the minds of readers and fosters critical thinking. Foods offer a unique perspective for decoding the deeper messages hidden within the complex narrative structure of a story in which the central focus might be on gender, ethnicity, race, power, class, or history. This unique perspective offered allows us to build an inextricable link between foods and these variables that is open to critical examination while discussing the role of foods on identity development processes of female characters.

Literary criticism regarding foods in fictional works may focus either on a single work of a single author or all literary creations of an author as a whole. Another possibility is that literary works of more than one author can be compared and contrasted in order to find similarities and differences. These similarities and differences can be interpreted considering gender, ethnicity, and culture of authors. These factors have been primarily affective in how food-related events are represented in fiction. Due to the fact that the symbolism of foods, cooking, culinary tasks, and nourishment is a complex one, reflections from female perspectives should be examined in order to collect data regarding the manifold usage of foods in female poetics. Food “functions as a conduit for something else, signalling wealth or poverty, cultural difference or a sense

of belonging, status and identity in terms of rank, gender and moral standing, and sometimes (but never simply) fashion” (Boyce and Fitzpatrick, 2017: 3). It is clear that there will be numerous outcomes about the reasons of why foods have become a predominant image and the ways how female authors mingle foods and literary devices with each other in their works. In the present study, we perform an analysis by focusing on three novels written by different authors in changing times and places. The selected novels are examined by considering the literary background related to our research topic. Of these novels, the first one is *Like Water for Chocolate* (1989) written by Laura Esquivel, the second one is *The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake* (2010) by Aimee Bender, and the third one is *One Hundred Shades of White* (2003) by Preethi Nair. When foods are considered as codes in which personal or social messages are encoded, the interpretation of these messages should be done by considering different variables including personal, familial, social, cultural, religious, and traditional values. We should not overlook the possibility that “the message is about different degrees of hierarchy, inclusion and exclusion, boundaries and transactions across the boundaries” (Douglas, 1972: 61). Inevitably, the process of deciphering the meaning conveyed through foods is also an extremely complicated one. The moments of food preparation or the person preparing it increase the significance of food voice and the message transferred through it, and “the common, everyday foods that may seem mundane and generic to most of us frequently carry memories specific to an individual, making them powerful expressions of one’s past and present” (Long, 2004: 120). Consequently, the final product gains meaning after the process of completing complex structure of preparation which might be combined with thoughts and feelings of the cook in fictional worlds. For this reason, we should carefully examine the selected novels in order to reveal and identify how foods are used to be able to detect the essential similarities among these novels. In this regard, the everyday meaning of daily food consumption, the traditional attitude towards kitchens and women’s role in the kitchens, and the impact of food-related activities on people’s moods are the issues that have been represented through a gynocritical lens in this study. Thus, it requires a renewed perspective while analysing the narrative frame of these novels and detecting examples which can be related closely to the *gynocritics of food*.

3.2. *Like Water for Chocolate*

Like Water for Chocolate (LWFC), with the subtitle, *A Novel in Monthly Installments, with Recipes, Romances, and Home Remedies*, written by Laura Esquivel was published in 1989. The novel was originally written in Spanish, and its original title is *Como agua para chocolate*, and its original subtitle is *Novela de entregas mensuales con recetas, amores y remedios caseros*. It was first published in 1989 and has achieved great popularity since then. Saltz (1995) stated that “gaining international attention with translations into 18 languages, it has appeared on the menu of New York Times best seller list and has been shown in its movie version in 34 countries; its release as a video will augment its distribution even further” (30). The novel may owe this popularity to the fact that it is in a collage form uniting different genres under the umbrella of its structure. Moreover, the story also comprises various thematic concerns that increase the richness of points to be analysed by the critics and researchers. In this regard, the subtitle of the novel provides crucial clues regarding the narrative frame of the story. Each of the mentioned items is vital for the establishment of an influential narration process. They add specific features to the plotline, and “as a narrative stew of “recipes, romances, and home remedies,” its morsels retain their individual flavour even as they comprise part of the whole dish” (Saltz, 1995: 31). All of these elements are brought together with their own features by the author, and thus, a combination of various literary and culinary details comes up as an original literary work belonging to the female literary tradition. *Like Water for Chocolate* (1989) has become an outstanding literary piece and it may be regarded as the source of inspiration for other female writers. This novel has the potential to provide the inspiration for creating a literary work that includes foods and food-related details with a fusion of various genres.

The novel is about the life of De la Garza family. The protagonist of the novel is Tita who is the youngest member of the family. The story is narrated by Tita’s great-niece. The chain of events takes place in Mexico and Mexican Revolution is the political event occurring at the beginning of the novel. It can be seen that domestic concerns have the primary importance and the author does not focus on the Mexican Revolution that is the political incident of the period during which the events take place in the novel. Rather than the revolution in the country, the lives of family members and their experiences form the general framework of the novel. In this study, the focus is on the relationship between foods and Tita’s identity formation process. The feelings are

conveyed through the foods prepared with powerful emotional impulses experienced by the cook that is Tita in this novel. There is a parallel correlation with Tita's mood and the way it impacts the people eating the foods prepared by her since "the main character, Tita, can express her feelings through cooking so that her dishes have a powerful emotional effect on anybody who tries them" (Andrievskikh, 2014: 147). A mystical communication is occurred between the cook and other people whose emotions are also transformed into a state which the cook is in while preparing meals. Thus, food has been utilised as an important fictional character that has the potential to alter the storyline and to contribute to the development of the events in *Like Water for Chocolate*. In this regard, it can be said that food is a universal reality and necessity, and thus, it can be easily integrated into various aspects of life from literature to other arts for ages. Food is an essential necessity, and it is not surprising to confront with food symbolism, food imagery, and any other food-related issues in a great number of literary productions that have been created from the beginning of the literary history to the contemporary era. In literary works, foods can substitute for words especially when character(s) might not have the freedom for expressing their feelings and thoughts verbally. In accordance with the frequency in the combination of foods and words in literary works, "from beginning to end, *Como agua para chocolate* foregrounds parallels between culinary and literary creation" (Jaffe, 1993: 220).

Laura Esquivel puts Tita in the kitchen where she becomes a master in cooking Mexican food. Although the protagonist is put in the kitchen which is a stereotypical place of females for ages, Laura Esquivel redefines this place and the culinary skills through a fictional lens with the story of Tita. She is born in the kitchen prematurely and this symbolizes the most important fact related to her life. She opens her eyes in a place where she will spend her whole life, and "Tita, born on the kitchen table into such a world, learns the secrets of life in the kitchen from Nacha, who feeds her as an infant and entertains her through childhood by inventing games related to cooking" (Jaffe, 1993: 202). Nacha is the cook working in the kitchen of De la Garza family for a long time. When Tita is born prematurely in the kitchen, Nacha is there and spends her life in this kitchen with Tita:

Nacha, who knew everything about cooking ... offered to take charge of feeding Tita. She felt she had the best chance of "educating the innocent child's stomach," even though she had never married or had children.

Though she didn't know how to read or write, when it came to cooking she knew everything there was to know (*LWFC*, 1995: 6).

Nacha is more loving and caring towards Tita who does not have such an interaction with her mother, Mama Elena. Nacha has a vital role in Tita's ingenuity in cooking different kinds of Mexican food in a proficient manner. That is to say, Tita spends most of her time in the kitchen either by playing cooking-related games or by cooking dishes under the supervision of Nacha who "became her playmate ... Together they made up all sorts of games and activities having to do with cooking" (*LWFC*, 1995: 8) and "this explains the sixth sense Tita developed about everything concerning food" (*LWFC*, 1995: 7). Laura Esquivel's creative intervention in the narration of the novel in which foods and the identity construction process of a female protagonist can be revealed at the very beginning of the novel where "the protagonist, Tita de la Garza, is born prematurely onto the kitchen table amid the ingredients of her art" (Jaffe, 1993: 220), and she becomes a perfect cook and prepares delicious food. In contrast to the classical representations and "thanks to her unusual birth, Tita felt a deep love for the kitchen, where she spent most of her life from the day she was born" (*LWFC*, 1995: 6). The author puts the protagonist in the centre of the kitchen from the moment of her birth and "... for Tita the joy of living was wrapped up in the delights of food" (*LWFC*, 1995: 7). Kitchen is an indispensable place for females in most of the cultures; however, the novelty of this novel is that putting the protagonist in the kitchen does not result in a traditionally described voiceless woman figure. Namely, "rather than reducing meal preparation to an innate knowledge divined by all true women, the kitchen becomes a veritable reservoir of creative and magical events, in which the cook who possesses this talent becomes artist, healer, and lover" (Dobrian, 1996: 60).

Utilised from the very beginning of the novel, foods and food-related tasks are recurrent issues in the narration of Tita's story. First of all, the title of the novel includes a symbolic meaning related to foods and it is stated regarding the title that "Like Water for Chocolate- a popular Mexican expression meaning to be very upset or "boiling mad"-expresses, then, very candidly Tita's anger and resentment at being confined to the kitchen and house while she struggles to overcome the seemingly insurmountable barriers to her own happiness" (Spanos, 1995: 32). Moreover, even the first sentence of the first chapter is an advice of the narrator to be followed while engaging in a culinary task that includes the process of chopping an onion. The narrator, who is the great-niece

of the protagonist Tita, warns the readers to “take care to chop the onion fine” (*LWFC*, 1995: 5). She speaks about the influence of onions that may cause ceaseless flow of tears and adds that she is so sensitive to onions which is a resemblance between the narrator and the protagonist. The reason and source of the tears appearing when she chops onions are explained by the narrator stating “Mama used to say it was because I was especially sensitive to onions, like my great-aunt, Tita” (*LWFC*, 1995: 5). Tita is also very sensitive to onions even before her birth and this sensitiveness causing a great amount of tears is given as the reason of Tita’s premature birth in the kitchen. It can be inferred that Laura Esquivel implements foods and food-related issues vividly in the novel, and thus, food becomes a major part of the story.

When the title and its probable reference to Tita’s food-related experience mentioned above is considered, the most influential reason that causes the sadness and anger of Tita may be seen, on the surface, as her entrapment in the kitchen, however, a deeper and nuanced analysis may reveal the fact that being in a kitchen does not cause a feeling of restriction for Tita. She becomes angry due to the fact that she cannot get married to her lover Pedro since she is the youngest daughter of her mother. This is a really vital detail in Tita’s life. Tita is the youngest daughter, and as a result of this fact, she has the responsibility of looking after her mother, Mama Elena, during her old age according to the traditions that Laura Esquivel represents while creating the plotline of the story. In order to fulfil this task, Tita is not allowed to get married. This restriction causes lots of crises in the De la Garza family. Through her cooking ability, Tita copes with the limitations ordered by social norms. She becomes a talented cook and prepares various dishes from the Mexican cuisine. She is the only female figure in the De la Garza family who can prepare and cook foods not only for her family but also for a large number of people on special occasions.

A female perspective is implemented in the narration of Tita’s story. The narrator of the story is Tita’s great-niece, and through to her narration, it is seen that Tita is a protagonist who can reflect her attitude towards the society’s rules oppressing her. Her criticism cannot be realized verbally but she reflects her feelings through her talent in the kitchen. In this place, she gradually forms her identity by challenging the rules that do not allow her to continue her life freely. Tita is imprisoned in the kitchen by her mother who desires Tita’s submissiveness in front of her dominance. However, this imprisonment leads to a totally different personal development because Tita

becomes a self-confident woman protecting herself from the danger of being annihilated by traditional rules. Although these rules order her to be an invisible voiceless person, she unconsciously raises her voice through the food-related activities that she carries out in the kitchen. She does not have much opportunity for overcoming the troubles and she has to continue her life within the borders of her house, especially in the kitchen of the house. However, she can go beyond the borders of this place through her talent in cooking. As a result, the patriarchal social norms represented by Mama Elena cannot cause the defeat of Tita while she is struggling unconsciously for forming up her autonomous identity.

The narrative frame of the novel is constituted with twelve chapters which are titled with the names of recipes involved in these parts. Each of these chapters is labelled as a monthly instalment and these monthly instalments cover a full cycle of a year. With this cyclic order of recipes of each month, Laura Esquivel portrays Tita's personal development while pursuing true love and struggling for her independence. The novel is a hybrid one because it combines the elements of a novel, cookbook, and diary. It includes recipes of various Mexican dishes and each chapter starts with a recipe on which the storyline is set up. Starting from January, the recipes are placed in a chronological order of a year. For each month, there is a specific recipe followed with the ingredients, and the names of the recipes are lined as *Christmas Rolls*, *Chabela Wedding Cake*, *Quail in Rose Petal Sauce*, *Turkey Mole with Almonds and Sesame Seeds*, *Northern-style Chorizo*, *A Recipe for Making Matches*, *Ox-Tail Soup*, *Champondongo*, *Chocolate and Three Kings' Day Bread*, *Cream Fritters*, *Beans with Chile Tezcucana-style*, and *Chiles in Walnut Sauce*. This novel can be categorised as a collage of different literary genres. In this regard, Dobrian (1996) states that "it is all-in-one a novel of the Mexican Revolution, a cook book, a fictional biography, a magical realist narrative, a romance novel, and serial fiction" (56). This richness of genres combined in a single literary work can be regarded as an approach adopted by female authors in the process of creating fictional works. Female authors of the literary history have obviously contributed to this approach for producing original literary pieces, and they can change the pattern of the traditional literary approach by parodying the elements of realistic fiction. Accordingly, this novel can also be accepted as a parody of a romance novel and even a cookbook. In this novel, Laura Esquivel portrays Tita's yearning for forming up her identity despite the restrictions of patriarchal norms

defining the roles and places of women in society in general and in family in particular. Tita's fight for her own identity can be analysed as a parody of features of a popular romance novel in which the readers observe the portrayal of "the transformation of an insecure adolescent into a mature woman who fulfills her potential through the socially prescribed domains of marriage and motherhood" (Dobrian, 1996: 57). Tita does not experience the steps of such a romance with regards to marriage and motherhood. The conditions regarding the life and identity development of the protagonist revealed in the novel do not fit to the requirements of a traditional romance novel. As stated by Ibsen (1995), "a close reading of Esquivel's text reveals that, in fact, although the novel replicates popular forms on the surface, a deliberate inversion of roles has been effected that allows the author to appropriate this genre and challenge it at the same time" (141).

Food is a fundamental necessity for sustaining life, and for this reason, it is crucially important for the living beings. However, its significance is more likely to increase when humanity is taken into consideration. The reason is that food can convey information about people who prepare or consume it. It can be said that food is a vehicle for understanding not only people's preferences for nutrition but also their identities, cultures, and lifestyles. Moreover, as it is known, kitchens are the domains of women in most of the cultures and in these places, women can create their own arts, and thus culinary products can be considered as the instruments transmitting women's inner feelings through the art of cooking. Accordingly, in the novel, the author "asks for a reassessment of female community, the ties formed among women based on interests in common, here centering on roles in the kitchen around which women have built a culture of shared recipes and other lore and conviviality" (Blodgett, 2004: 276). Thus, the author represents the interaction between kitchens and female experiences from a renewed perspective. The reason of this renewal can be the fact that kitchens have been portrayed as marginalised places where women have to carry out culinary duties in the literary works belonging to the classical literature. According to the traditional perspective, the devalued kitchens might be considered as places limiting women physically and psychologically. However, Laura Esquivel deconstructs this patriarchal imagery and transforms the invisible kitchens and food-related duties into visible concepts which automatically increase the visibility of the females spending most of their time in the kitchens while preparing, cooking, and serving food in an artistic way.

All around the world, there are millions of women exposed to different kinds of problems such as the verbal, psychological, and physical ones. While some of them do not have enough power to resist these troubles, there are also others who can cope with the oppressions and can find changing strategies to increase their voices. One of these strategies that enable women to reveal their feelings and thoughts is constituted by culinary abilities. It can be claimed that expression of suppressed and invisible emotions can be easier in the process of producing something visible. In this regard, it can be said that Laura Esquivel creates a combination of two different forms of production in a single narrative framework, and it is the combination of “two supposedly incompatible companions for women today, the kitchen and writing” (Jaffe, 1993: 218). In the novel, it is seen that Laura Esquivel mixes culinary and literary matters in a creative way, and thus, it is possible to say that there is an undeniable relationship “between cooking and loving or living and cooking and writing” (Glenn, 1994: 45). Laura Esquivel’s literary work includes recipes of different Mexican dishes. It is neither a cookbook nor a novel created in a traditional manner but it is a hybrid one including personal feelings and experiences and also explanations regarding the recipes prescribed in the story.

It can be said that with the help of the taste and appearance of dishes, people can figure out the messages of ‘voiceless’ women in fictional creations. Moreover, it can be added that foods turn to be an instrument for women’s self-expression since they are not allowed to state their opinions when they are under the control of some more dominant figures including fathers, brothers, husbands, and even mothers. In the kitchen, women actualize a kind of ritual through which they can exceed the limits of these oppressors while carrying out “ancient feminine values and traditions” (Fernández-Levin, 1996: 110) through cooking. In that sacred place, they do not have to stay within the borders of societal rules although they may frequently experience a great amount of troubles in life in general. It can be said that creating female figures spending most of their times in the kitchens is one of the best strategies to be used by female writers to represent an alternative way of liberation from the cases restricting the potentials of women. Accordingly, the conventional and accustomed concept of kitchens is demolished by Laura Esquivel through the creation of a kitchen the borders of which cannot limit a female figure with stereotypical depictions. Through this revolution in the depiction of the kitchens, the author can transform the portrayal of a female protagonist from a weak character to a strong and self-confident one.

3.2.1. Tita's Expression of Feelings via Foods

From the beginning till the end of the novel, the tension between Tita and her mother has continued. Mama Elena oppresses her daughters for not rebelling against her rules because, for her, the traditions of the family cannot be questioned. Among the family members, Tita is the one who has to bear the oppression of her mother most of the time since she wants to get her freedom from her mother and the traditions of her cultural background. Mama Elena behaves “like a stepmother, mistreating her youngest daughter verbally as well as physically and denying her the right to lead a life of her own and to love” (Glenn, 1994: 45). Tita is urged to obey the rules of her mother representing the social traditions regarding the marital status and the duties of the youngest daughter of the family portrayed in the novel. As the youngest daughter of Mama Elena, Tita has to look after her mother in her old age. In order to be able to carry out this obligatory duty, Tita is not allowed to marry her lover, Pedro. As a result of these restrictions, at first, she keeps silent and obeys the orders of her mother without questioning them. However, as time passes, she starts to show up her talent in the kitchen and becomes the excellent cook of the latest generation of the De la Garza family. The reason of this talent is the fact that “Tita’s childhood in the kitchen, including her play and conversation with Nacha, constitutes an apprenticeship in an artist’s studio, which Tita directs after Nacha’s death” (Jaffe, 1993: 222). With the help of this talent, Tita tries to gain her self-autonomy within the borders of her domain, kitchen. She does not have much sphere to struggle against the powers oppressing her, and she unconsciously converts her kitchen as a place for artistic expression through the foods that she prepares despite the fact that kitchens are regarded as ordinary places of lots of daily work restricting women most of the time. It can be stated that

Tita creates a magical world for herself in the kitchen where she becomes a healer of all by expressing her true self and feelings through the tastefully prepared foods and meals ... The foods that she prepares ... tell her intense feelings that she is forbidden to express. The recipes she applies become the physical and emotional needs of the body serving for the female psyche. Namely, she uses foods to express her intense feeling and reflect her hidden moods (Ayan, 2011: 72-73).

In the novel, Tita’s feelings change the taste of the meals prepared by her, namely, whenever she is very happy or very sad the taste of food changes as per to her mood. Furthermore, there are observable changes in the feelings and behaviours of people who eat the meals cooked by Tita, and these alterations are also in line with the

emotional state that Tita is in. So it can be claimed that the preparation process of different types of Mexican food has been utilized as a vehicle for establishing the plot line of the story that has a very close relationship with the personal feelings of the protagonist. There are several examples of this condition, and one of them is the event that causes a great sadness for Tita. The reason of her sadness is the fact that she is betrayed by her sister, Rosaura, since she will get married to Tita's lover, Pedro. Moreover, she has to bake the wedding cake of this couple which is a punishment imposed by Mama Elena. The reason of this punishment is that Tita feels a very deep sadness due to this marriage, and Mama Elena reminds Tita that she cannot have a romantic relationship with Pedro. Although Pedro desires to marry Tita, Mama Elena does not allow this marriage. She does not approve this desire, and she utters that a marriage can only be possible if Pedro agrees to get married to Rosaura rather than Tita. All of these events cause a deep sorrow and grief for Tita who ceaselessly cries while preparing the wedding cake of Pedro and Rosaura. She is unaware of the fact that her tears mixing into the cake batter can lead to extraordinary events during the wedding ceremony of Pedro and Rosaura. It is seen that as a punishment of her mother, "Tita has to prepare the wedding cake, our heroine's tears in the cake batter inspire a disastrous eruption of nostalgic weeping and vomiting among the wedding guests" (Jaffe, 1993: 221). Since she cannot raise her voice for reflecting her sadness, she cries for many days, and her tears dropping into the cake batter have turned to be the vehicle for showing her powerful agony affecting the guests badly. Considering this event, Andrievskikh (2014) who likens Tita's story to a fairy tale states that "in Esquivel's universe ... a teardrop in the wedding cake batter casts deep sadness on all the guests" (147). Due to the fact that her mother punishes Tita and does not give a chance for self-expression, Tita's sadness is reflected through the wedding cake. Considering the observed influence of the cake batter on Nacha even before the guests taste the cake, it is narrated that "when she finished beating the meringue, it occurred to Nacha to lick some of the icing off her finger to see if Tita's tears had affected the flavour. No, the flavour did not seem to have been affected; yet without knowing why, Nacha was suddenly overcome with an intense longing" (*LWFC*, 1995: 35). Nacha longs for her fiancé with whom she could not get married since "the mama of Mama Elena had sent him packing" (*LWFC*, 1995: 36). When she prepares this cake for the wedding ceremony of Rosaura and Pedro, Nacha is eighty-five years old and she is aware of the fact that it is meaningless to feel sadness about the possibility that she could get married

to her fiancé in the past. However, she can prevent neither her tears nor the “terrible aching in her heart” (*LWFC*, 1995: 36). Following the narration regarding Nacha’s sadness, the events occurring after the guests take the first bite from the wedding cake are narrated as:

The moment they took their first bite of the cake, everyone was flooded with a great wave of longing ... But the weeping was just the first symptom of a strange intoxication—an acute attack of pain and frustration—that seized the guests and scattered them across the patio and the grounds and in the bathrooms, all of them wailing over lost love. Everyone there, every last person, fell under this spell, and not very many of them made it to the bathrooms in time—those who didn't joined the collective vomiting that was going on all over the patio. Only one person escaped: the cake had no effect on Tita ... Rosaura, retching, abandoned her place of honor. She struggled to control her nausea, but it was too much for her! Her only concern was to keep her wedding dress from being fouled by the degradations of her relatives and friends; but as she crossed the patio she slipped and every inch of her dress ended up coated with vomit. She was swept away in a raging rotting river for several yards; then she couldn't hold back anymore, and she spewed out great noisy mouthfuls of vomit, like an erupting volcano, right before Pedro's horrified eyes (*LWFC*, 1995: 39-40).

Both Mama Elena and Rosaura believe that Tita adds something extra to the cake in order to ruin the wedding ceremony. No matter how hard Tita tries to explain that the only extra thing mixed unintentionally into the cake is her tears of sadness and grief, she cannot convince them. Due to this event, Tita is severely punished by Mama Elena.

Tita continues cooking as the cook of the ranch after her sister’s marriage to Pedro who convinces Tita that he still loves her even though he has to get married to Rosaura. However, when Pedro stops raving about the meals prepared by Tita, she feels that Pedro is not sincere about his words regarding his faithfulness to their love. She becomes suspicious because of the alterations in Pedro’s behaviours. In order to hear Pedro’s ravings “Tita took elaborate pains to cook better meals each day. In despair, at night ... she would invent new recipes, hoping to repair the connection that flowed between them through the food she prepared. Her finest recipes date from this period of suffering” (*LWFC*, 1995: 69). Under the influence of the suspicion that she experiences, Tita tries her best to be sure about Pedro’s feelings and his loyalty, and “just as a poet plays with words, Tita juggled ingredients and quantities at will, obtaining phenomenal results, and all for nothing: her best efforts were in vain. She couldn’t drag a single word of appreciation out of Pedro’s mouth” (*LWFC*, 1995: 69). No matter how hard she

tries to prepare delicious recipes, Pedro does not say anything about these meals. During this period, “what she didn’t know was that Mama Elena had “asked” Pedro to stop praising the meals” (*LWFC*, 1995: 69). While Tita tries her best to cook excellent meals and hear Pedro’s comments, she is not aware of the fact that Mama Elena stops Pedro from commenting about the meals prepared by Tita.

Tita does not want to be put into the borders of traditional roles of women. Moreover, she has to compete against her mother’s authority in order to gain her personal autonomy. She desires to gain the right for establishing her own identity as an independent woman; however, Mama Elena does not allow Tita to be a woman who can continue her life without obeying the family rules. Since Tita does not have the opportunity to increase her voice and reflect her inner feelings, she expresses her choices and emotions unconsciously using her culinary abilities in the kitchen all along the novel. However, it is seen at the end of the novel that she turns to be a self-esteemed woman rebelling against her mother’s ghost, by directly uttering her real feelings including her hatred about her mother. Tita is no longer under the influence of her mother, namely her past. This case is implied through the disappearance of the mother’s ghost, and Tita is free to continue her life as a self-autonomous woman. All of these events prove that Laura Esquivel’s protagonist can break the limitations of the society using her abilities in culinary issues. She can cope with the troubles restricting her and she does not complain about the duties that should be carried out in the kitchen. She assumes full responsibility in the kitchen since “Tita was the last link in a chain of cooks who had been passing culinary secrets from generation to generation since ancient times, and she was considered the finest exponent of the marvellous art of cooking” (*LWFC*, 1995: 48). After Nacha’s death, Tita becomes the cook of the ranch, and in the kitchen of the De la Garza family, Tita starts controlling and organising any process of preparing meals. She is the one who is primarily responsible of the steps of selecting ingredients and mixing them proper to the recipes that are used traditionally in this kitchen. As a result, “naming her official ranch cook was a popular decision with everyone” (*LWFC*, 1995: 48). When Tita takes the control in the kitchen, her mother does not have much to say about Tita’s deeds performed in the kitchen. Since Nacha’s death, “Tita was the best qualified of all the women in the house to fill the vacant post in the kitchen, and in their flavours, smells, and textures, and the effects they could have been beyond Mama Elena’s iron command” (*LWFC*, 1995: 47). The culinary tasks can

be handled in a talented way by Tita without any interference. Through her creative literary intervention, Laura Esquivel represents foods and food-related tasks carried out by women in the kitchen as important factors affecting the identity formation processes of females. She deconstructs the descriptions related to function of foods and culinary duties performed in the kitchen through a fictional lens. The descriptions related to foods are reconstructed in the fictional world. As a result, it is seen that the creative mixture of the facts belonging to the real world and the images of the fictional world can be resulted in outstanding literary works belonging to the female literary tradition.

As it is mentioned by Bilbija (1996), it is a well-known fact that Virginia Woolf claims for “a room of one’s own” for the oppressed women in order to be more productive within a patriarchal society in which women do not have any opportunity to express themselves (147). While Virginia Woolf points out “a room” for women, Laura Esquivel provides them with “a kitchen” where women are free to make their feelings known through culinary practices. The kitchen has become a place enabling a chance for liberation from the dominated societal formations. In the novel *Like Water for Chocolate*, it can be expected from the readers to figure out Tita’s messages through paying attention to the outcomes of her cooking. People may consider that kitchen is a place belonging only to women who are symbolically restricted and marginalized within the borders of this place. However, Laura Esquivel flouts the taboos by creating Tita who takes her power from her kitchen, and thus cooking turns to be an exact opportunity for going beyond the limits of society which does not allow Tita to raise her voice. One of the most important features increasing the novelty of the novel is the kitchen that “becomes a mystical abode in which the protagonist is empowered and permitted to re-create reality in order to avoid social and spiritual annihilation” (Fernández-Levin, 1996: 106). Laura Esquivel combines the place and protagonist’s attempts in such a manner that the kitchen is not reflected as a monotonous place. Furthermore, the culinary deeds and the protagonist’s struggles move through in a parallel configuration, and “because Tita is besieged with interruptions, like the women writers Virginia Woolf describes in *A Room of One’s Own*, each recipe’s narration is inevitably suspended to incorporate the incidents which intrude upon her cooking” (qtd in Jaffe, 1993: 220). The interaction between the events and the preparation process of the recipes given at the beginning of each chapter continues from the beginning till the end of the narration. In each chapter, “the anticipated meal necessarily returns to pre-

empt other activities and their narration” (Jaffe, 1993: 220). Even though the recipes are interrupted by the events, there is an ongoing transition between the preparation process of the recipes and other events.

Thus, each one of the twelve recipes given in the novel has a connection with the identity formation process of the protagonist. Another example related to this process is the meal, *Quail in Rose Petal Sauce*, which affects the people consuming it after its preparation with love and passion of Tita. This meal includes the rose petals of a bouquet of roses, a present of Pedro for Tita. She prepares this meal with the great love and passion that she feels for Pedro and thus each bite has a powerful influence on the consumers. In this regard, it can be said that “Tita’s cooking controls the pattern of living of those in her household because the food she prepares becomes an extension of herself” (De Valdés, 1995: 81). It is seen that although she cannot express herself verbally, people can share Tita’s feelings through the meals prepared by her. Together with this, an important point regarding the recipes is reflected in the preparation process of this meal. Recipe narration in an oral form is converted into a written form after the death of Nacha. Tita learns the recipes in the kitchen under the supervision of Nacha who prescribes the details of the recipes orally while they are cooking in the kitchen. However, the death of Nacha means that Tita is alone in her task to cook for her family and she starts to write down the recipes. The recipes that are not recorded might be forgotten, but this risk decreases when they are recorded. Since she learns cooking practically in the kitchen under the guidance of Nacha without writing down the recipes, Tita has some troubles in remembering the details of some of the meals. In such cases of the difficulty in remembering recipes, Tita sometimes hear the voice of Nacha who recites these details that Tita forgets. In this regard, the recipe of *Quail in Rose Petal Sauce* can be given as an example. At the very moment that she cannot decide what to do with the roses given to her by Pedro, Nacha helps her. It is narrated that Tita “seemed to hear Nacha’s voice dictating a recipe, a prehispanic recipe involving rose petals. Tita had nearly forgotten it because it called for pheasants, which they didn’t raise on the ranch” (LWFC, 1995: 49). As a qualified cook, she can revise this recipe after she hears Nacha’s voice informing her about it. The recipe of this meal is converted into a new one since “the one bird they did have was quail. She decided to revise the recipe slightly, just so she could use the flowers” (LWFC, 1995: 49). It can be

inferred that Tita writes down this recipe after realizing the fact that there is a possibility of forgetting the recipes of traditional meals.

The importance of both cooking and writing, two productive deeds successfully performed by female characters, is emphasised by means of the cookbook belonging to Tita and found by Esperanza after Tita's death. The cookbook becomes a valuable familial inheritance which descends to Tita's great-niece who is the narrator of Tita's story. Considering this cookbook, she states that "when Esperanza, my mother, returned from her wedding trip, all that she found under the remains of what had been the ranch was this cookbook, which she bequeathed to me when she died, and which tells in each of its recipes this story of a love interred" (*LWFC*, 1995: 246). Tita keeping this cookbook is the last person who has the knowledge of each detail regarding the food consumed in the De la Garza family. The people around the ranch is aware of this fact, and, in an occasion, "eyes closed, Gertrudis offered up a silent prayer, asking that Tita be granted many more years in which to prepare the family recipes. Neither she nor Rosaura knew how to make them; when Tita died, her family's past would die with her" (*LWFC*, 1995: 179). With all her heart and soul, Gertrudis prays for Tita's well-being because Tita is the only person who can cook the traditional recipes of the De la Garza family. In this regard, since Tita writes down the recipes as monthly instalments, her cookbook can become a valuable source for the future generations of the De la Garza family. It is seen in the novel that, for one of her birthday celebrations, the narrator prepares a meal recited in the cookbook that can be entitled as the *gynocritics of food* belonging to Tita which becomes recipe narration of foods via Tita expresses her feelings and moods. She concludes her narration with a reference to one of the recipes found in this cookbook stating that she prepares Christmas Rolls for her birthday celebration. She states that

my father Alex ... is going to come to my house to celebrate my birthday. That is why I am preparing Christmas Rolls, my favorite dish. My mama prepared them for me every year. My mama! ... How wonderful the flavor, the aroma of her kitchen, her stories as she prepared the meal, her Christmas Rolls! I don't know why mine never turn out like hers, or why my tears flow so freely when I prepare them—perhaps I am as sensitive to onions as Tita, my great-aunt, who will go on living as long as there is someone who cooks her recipes (*LWFC*, 1995: 246).

As a conclusion, it can be pointed that Laura Esquivel brings an additional dimension to the steps of food preparation and cooking in a kitchen in which the female

protagonist, Tita, can form up an autonomous identity by means of the food-related details in her life. Tita's feelings, thoughts, desires, and beliefs are reflected through the meals prepared by her, and thus, the voiceless female cook unconsciously makes her voice heard via a mystical form of communication between herself and other people. Food preparation and culinary steps are transformed into a form of self-expression enabling the female protagonist to express herself freely. This self-expression occurs by means of foods rather than words due to the fact that she is not allowed to speak up and pour out her feelings and thoughts verbally. This restriction leads to the substitution of words by foods prepared by Tita. Here, Laura Esquivel represents foods and food-related issues with a renewed perspective by redefining not only the culinary tasks handled by the female characters but also the kitchens where these characters spend most of their time. It can be stated that Laura Esquivel implements foods and culinary details frequently while narrating Tita's story, and thus, foods can be considered as a major part of this story. Furthermore, kitchen which is as the domain of females is portrayed as a place for developing self-autonomy through dealing with food-related issues. Laura Esquivel deconstructs the traditional considerations and descriptions about kitchens and food-related tasks performed by females, and these issues are reconstructed with the creative intervention of the author in the fictional world portrayed in this novel.

3.3. The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake

The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake (TPSLC), divided into four parts and formed up by a total of forty-seven chapters, written by Aimee Bender was published in 2010. The novel is about the story of Rose Edelstein and her family. It is possible to analyse the novel from various angles by considering the family members one by one. However, the outstanding portrayal of a young girl, Rose, with her extraordinary ability related to the foods and feelings deserves a critical attention. In line with the research topic of the present study, foods and food-related tasks implemented in the novel are the focal point of this part. Although Rose's interaction with foods is the main issue while analysing the novel, the food-related events revealed in the novel is investigated from a double perspective including the experiences of the protagonist and the ones belonging to her mother, Lane. The reason of focusing mainly on Rose and Lane is the fact that there is a direct relationship between foods and feelings of these two female characters. By implementing foods as a crucial agent while building up the plotline of the story, the

novel enables the readers to question the accuracy of meaning and to deduce different meanings from a single text. The patriarchal consideration regarding the place of foods and kitchens in the lives of women is also deconstructed by Aimee Bender. The kitchens and food-related issues do not imprison the female characters, but, in contrast, culinary tasks lead a wide range of occasions resulting in temporary or permanent relief for the female characters. It is also seen in the novel that there are also lots of food-related events caused trouble for the young protagonist of the novel. However, these troubles are not directly related to foods, but they are the outcomes of an interaction between foods and feelings of people preparing the foods consumed by Rose. She has an extraordinary ability of deciphering the unspoken or even unknown feelings of other people by tasting the foods prepared by these people. Here, foods become an agent for transmitting the feelings. Regarding the relationship between senses and foods, Jones (2007) points that

few activities involve so many senses: we hear stomach rumblings and suffer hunger pangs; see the food, smell it, and salivate in anticipation of eating it; sense its weight and density as we lift it on a utensil; and feel its heat or coldness as it enters the mouth. We detect an item's sweet, sour, salty, bitter, spicy, or bland qualities on the tongue. We enjoy the feeling of satiety after consuming food while also perceiving renewed physical and mental energy (132).

These senses lined up by Jones (2007) can also be experienced by Rose, however; foods have an additional function of revealing the feelings that are not communicated through words in her story. This extraordinary relationship between foods and feelings is tried to be revealed in line with the main aim of the present study. Apart from disclosing the role of foods and food-related tasks while examining the experiences of Rose and Lane, other minor characters are also considered in the process of analysing the novel including an outstanding number of incidents reflected through a close connection with foods.

3.3.1. Rose's Quest for Embracing Her Food-Related Ability

The protagonist of the novel is Rose Edelstein and one of the main thematic concerns of the story is the extraordinary interaction among Rose, the foods that she tastes, and the people who prepare the foods. Rose becomes aware of the fact that there are some important changes in her life immediately after her ninth birthday. These alterations have a close relationship with the foods that she tastes resulting in

psychological, emotional, and physiological effects on her life. As it can be understood from the title of the novel, everything begins with a slice of lemon cake that she loves. This particular lemon cake is prepared by Lane, and Rose eats a piece of the cake immediately after it is ready, and it is narrated by her as:

the room filled with the smell of warming butter and sugar and lemon and eggs ... I pulled out the cake ... The bowl of icing was right there on the counter, ready to go, and cakes are best when just out of the oven, and I really couldn't possibly wait, so I reached to the side of the cake pan ... and pulled off a small warm spongy chunk of deep gold. Iced it all over with chocolate. Popped the whole thing into my mouth (*TPSLC*, 2010: 6).

It is not easy for her to stop the desire for eating a piece of cake which looks delicious, and she enjoys the moment of eating it. However, she has a strange feeling in the aftermath of eating the first bite from the cake. For Rose, it is not a usual experience which is told as “as I finished that first bite, as that first impression faded, I felt a subtle shift inside, an unexpected reaction. As if a sensor, so far buried deep inside me, raised its scope to scan around, alerting my mouth to something new” (*TPSLC*, 2010: 9). This unknown and new case is hidden underneath the delicious taste of the cake and it dominates over it, and she thinks that “the goodness of the ingredients—the fine chocolate, the freshest lemons—seemed like a cover over something larger and darker, and the taste of what was underneath was beginning to push up from the bite” (*TPSLC*, 2010: 9). Rose scares and tries to understand the reason of this case. She tells that “I was hoping I'd imagined it—maybe it was a bad lemon? or old sugar?—although I knew, even as I thought it, that what I'd tasted had nothing to do with ingredients ... and with each bite, I thought—mmm, so good, the best ever, yum—but in each bite: absence, hunger, spiraling, hollows” (*TPSLC*, 2010: 10). The taste of chocolate is mixed with an unaccustomed feeling defined by Rose as “I could absolutely taste the chocolate, but in drifts and traces, in an unfurling, or an opening, it seemed that my mouth was also filling with the taste of smallness, the sensation of shrinking, of upset, tasting a distance I somehow knew was connected to my mother” (*TPSLC*, 2010: 10). Rose concludes that this oddness caused by a piece of lemon cake might tell something about her mother, Lane. This conclusion has a shocking influence on Rose who desires that everything is merely a product of imagination. She cannot accept the possibility of experiencing such a complicating incident and states that “I ate the whole piece, desperate to prove myself wrong” (*TPSLC*, 2010: 11). Nevertheless, it is seen that Rose takes a step in a food-related journey surrounded with feelings through tasting the lemon cake which is

prepared for her birthday. Since she loves it, Lane cooks this cake for Rose's ninth birthday. All the steps of selecting the best recipe and preparing the ingredients are carried out with enthusiasm by Rose and Lane. At the beginning of the novel, it is revealed that Lane quits her job and has a growing interest in cooking different foods for her family. In this regard, Rose states that "my birthday cake was her latest project because it was not from a mix but instead built from scratch—the flour, the baking soda, lemon-flavored because at eight that had been my request; I had developed a strong love for sour" (TPSLC, 2010: 9). She adds "we'd looked through several cookbooks together to find just the right one, and the smell in the kitchen was overpoweringly pleasant" (TPSLC, 2010: 9). Although everything goes well for the mother and daughter while preparing the cake, Rose experiences this indefinable reaction after eating a piece from the appetizing lemon cake. She thinks over and over in order to reach a meaningful conclusion regarding the reason of this extraordinary case. It is a kind of hollowness which is hard to define for little Rose, and she cannot figure out the reason of this strange taste. In order to identify the reason of this bizarre taste, she eats another piece from the cake but it is still an indefinable experience for her. She thinks that the ingredients might cause this shocking influence and checks them carefully. Since there is nothing abnormal regarding the recipe or the ingredients, she has the suspicion that this unusual taste might be associated with her mother's feelings. She feels that "the lemon and chocolate were just surrounding a hollowness" (TPSLC, 2010: 10) and this hollowness might be related to her mother and her emotions. In despair, she thinks that "my mother's able hands had made the cake, and her mind had known how to balance the ingredients, but she was not there, in it" (TPSLC, 2010: 10). She shares these feelings with her mother, however; Lane cannot figure out the strange experience that Rose has gone through. When Rose states that "it tastes *empty*" (TPSLC, 2010: 12), Lane surprises and asks "is it that bad? Did I miss an ingredient?" (TPSLC, 2010: 12). Rose cannot express herself clearly since she cannot find out even a single word to reflect her thoughts regarding the taste of the cake, and for this reason, Lane cannot understand Rose. It is obvious that the words selected by her do not help Rose articulate her extraordinary experience. She is confused and her words startle Lane as well.

Rose is very anxious and tries to think some other things in order to rescue from the disturbing thoughts occupying her mind while her mother is preparing the dinner on the same day that Rose goes through such an extraordinary case. Considering this, she

narrates that “I tried to push my mind back to thinking about school, but the anxiety kicked in for me about halfway through the preparation; as I watched my mother roll raw chicken in breadcrumbs, I thought: What if I taste it in the chicken too? The rice?” (TPSLC, 2010: 13). With the hesitation and anxiety resulting from the taste of the cake eaten, Rose serves her dinner as slowly as possible with her mind full of questions which seems difficult her to answer them properly. The reason is that she cannot clearly express what she experiences after consuming foods since she cannot find appropriate words to define her feelings after eating. It is observed that during the dinner time, she suffers from the same difficulty in transferring her feelings into words when her mother speaks about Rose’s comments regarding the taste of the cake. When Lane tells her husband and son that “Rose thought I missed a part”, Rose replies as “I didn’t say that” (TPSLC, 2010: 15). In fact, Rose does not really mean like that but no words can work for this complex experience. When Lane adds that “we all have different tastes, honey” after seeing her husband and son appreciate the cake, Rose can only say “it’s not what I meant” (TPSLC, 2010: 15). Rose is in despair since she does not know what to do and what to say in front of this elusive experience. Rose realizes that she can feel her mother’s emotions by tasting the lemon cake prepared by her mother. This hollowness is the emotional state of her mother who does not reflect her sadness or the feeling of hollowness that she is in. She does not reveal her inner feelings but hides them from the people around her.

Lane is a silent woman, and “she’d been working as an office administrator, but she didn’t like copy machines, or work shoes, or computers” (TPSLC, 2010: 5). Because she is not happy with her job, she desires to “take some time off and learn to do more with her hands” (TPSLC, 2010: 5). Considering Lane’s preference regarding her profession, Rose states that “after my mother quit her job, she spent those first six months or so beautifying the house” (TPSLC, 2010: 7). Together with her focus on beautifying their house, cooking different meals might be also seen as an opportunity for enriching her practical attempts. Preparing a lemon cake is one of Lane’s new experiences in which she can use her hands more actively, and considering this experience, Rose states “a cake challenge like this wasn’t a usual afternoon activity; my mother didn’t bake all that often, but what she enjoyed most was anything tactile, and this cake was just one in a long line of recent varied hands-on experiments” (TPSLC, 2010: 4). Rose underlines that her mother does not spend so much time for cooking.

However, she quits her job and tries new experiences in order to fulfil her desire to create something with her able hands. It is important here to mention that women spend time in the kitchen in order to carry out artistic and productive deeds most of the time since “cooking is a way to care for the self and realize happiness” (Matwick, 2017: 532). The process of involvement into food-related tasks has been the opportunity for women in order to discover their potential through experiencing the complexities and contradictions that occur with changing dynamics in fictional works. That is to say, food is a dynamic agent in the lives of female characters who are in search of finding their own identities that are blurred due to patriarchal reasons oppressing them constantly. Namely, they can convert a daily task of cooking into a ceremony of preparing dishes which enables them to move away from the troubles of life in general. In this respect, “while the domestic sphere proves to be a space for power struggle between the sexes and subordination of women, on the opposite end of this axis is the promise of symbolic empowerment of women through cooking that is one of the central motifs in modern popular culture” (Andrievskikh, 2014: 147). Lane can also be regarded as one of the women who do not perform culinary tasks as an obligatory duty since her attitude towards these tasks is beyond the definitions of the traditional perspective related to the role of cooking in women’s life.

During another dinner time, Rose cannot help herself from tasting the feelings that cover all the foods on her plate. She tries to express herself but she cannot achieve reflecting how she really feels about the foods. Words do not work while she endeavours desperately to reflect her feelings. None of her parents can understand her even though they think they do. Considering her feelings during this dinner, she narrates that

Food is full of *feelings*, I said, pushing away my plate.

Feelings? Dad said. For a second, he peered at me, close.

I couldn’t eat my sandwich, I said, voice wobbling. I can’t eat the cake.

Oh, like that, Dad said, leaning back. Sure. I was a picky eater too. Spent a whole year once just eating French fries.

Did they taste like people? I said.

People? he said, wrinkling his nose. No. Potato.

You look well, Mom said. She tried a careful bite of her chicken. Better with pepper, she said, nodding. Much better, yes (*TPSLC*, 2010: 43).

Following the dinner, Rose helps her mother washing the dishes and cleaning the kitchen as a daily evening routine hold by the mother and daughter. While performing these tasks, Lane seems cheerful and talks to Rose by asking a serial of questions regarding her school. However, Rose can sense that her mother does not reflect her real feelings but hides them behind her cheerful conversation with Rose. This is narrated by Rose as “mom seemed in good spirits, squeezing my shoulder, asking me a series of fast questions about school, but the aftertaste of the spiraled craving chicken was still in my mouth and I was having trouble trusting her cheer, a split of information I could hardly hold in my head” (*TPSLC*, 2010: 46).

One of the possible reasons of Lane’s behaving as if she was happy with her life might be the communication gap among the family members. The communication problem within the families is a frequently encountered obstacle hindering warm family relationships. Despite the fact that family members live in the same house, they might not share their feelings and thoughts openly with each other. This might lead to a great range of problems in families that are affected psychologically and emotionally. In fact, dining together with the whole family members is an opportunity to prevent the occurrence of communication problems within families. It is seen in the novel that the Edelsteins have dinner together most of the time but they rarely communicate with each other. This case is also clearly represented in the story, and it is narrated by Rose as:

I read a study, Dad said, flaring his napkin into his lap. Families that eat dinner together are happier families, he said.

I think those families also talk to each other, I said.

Mom, behind us, spooning up a vegetable, laughed (*TPSLC*, 2010: 93).

As a parent, Rose’s father underlines an important requirement for becoming a happy family and that requirement is stated as eating dinners together on the same table. However, the Edelsteins cannot move one step forward in order to build a healthy communication with each other. Eating together offers them the opportunity since this process can also be transformed into a ritual to strengthen the family ties. Nevertheless, it seems that they cannot be successful at closing the communication gap within their family. Rose says “it was true: our dinners, always at the table, framed by floral-print

kitchen curtains and the rising steam off casserole dishes, were almost always silent in those days ...” (TPSLC, 2010: 93). It can be inferred that the kitchen of the Edelstein family has the required physical features to be a place where they can enjoy their foods while increasing the quality of communication among each other. However, they cannot get psychologically and emotionally involved in such an interaction that can be developed around a dining table.

When the communication problem is reconsidered by focusing specifically on the female characters of the novel, it is seen that Lane is a silent woman who does not frequently reveal her real feelings and thoughts verbally. She continues her life without reflecting her inner feelings openly to her family. Nevertheless, the foods prepared by her replace her words and this alteration can be deciphered through the extraordinary ability of Rose. Lane is not aware of the fact that Rose can come to know her hidden feelings through tasting the foods prepared by her. She hides her feelings but her daughter has the knowledge of even the most private emotions that she experiences. Rose unveils them by eating the meals prepared by Lane starting from the moment when she tastes the *particular lemon cake* on her ninth birthday. The crucial element of this extraordinary ability is food, and this ability is very overwhelming for the little Rose. Here, food is reflected as an instrument for revealing any kind of feeling that people experience but conceal from others due to various reasons. It can also function as an instrument for disclosing the feelings that people are not aware of in their daily lives. The function of food has moved beyond the nutritional aspects and has gained a new dimension through the creative literary touch of the author.

The lemon cake changes Rose’s life in such a way that nothing is similar for her anymore. Since food is at the centre of her life, Rose’s life standards alter drastically. Thus, her eating habit is affected negatively from her unusual talent. In the process of time, Rose gives up consuming homemade food and starts consuming packaged and fabricated food products as much as possible. The reason behind this inclination towards fabricated food is that such foods do not convey feelings. Although Lane cooks meticulously, Rose refrains from eating the foods prepared by her. She avoids from eating the meals cooked by her mother because each bite conveys different emotions felt by her mother. As a result, the unspoken inner world of Lane can be accessed by Rose through the foods substituting the words. As time passes, Rose discovers that she can also have the knowledge of the feelings of other people when she consumes the

foods prepared by them. Her extraordinary ability is not limited only by the feelings of her mother but it is valid for anybody whose meals are tasted by Rose. A clear example to this case is the incidents during which Rose tastes the foods prepared by somebody who she does not know personally in order to test her extraordinary talent. The idea of performing a test belongs to George who is a close friend of Rose's brother, Joseph. Although Joseph does not pay attention to the extraordinary events that Rose experiences, George is the first person believing in her unusual talent. They agree to do this test in order to see the scope of Rose's talent, and the people working in a bakery and their feelings are focused by Rose and George in the novel. The bakery that they go for their test is a place "specialized in homemade cookies" (TPSLC, 2010: 59). George offers this test with unknown people and the foods prepared by them in a different atmosphere. Considering this, it is narrated by Rose that "it's better to be away from your home, he said, coming up to me. We may be able to tell different things, if you don't know the people" (TPSLC, 2010: 61). Through the test away from Rose's house, they can define the scope of Rose's extraordinary experiences. George supports Rose with his ideas and his attitude towards Rose is really important for her since there is nobody understanding and supporting her in her own family. Although Joseph, Rose's brother, also goes to the bakery with them, he does not even enter into the bakery to help her sister. He thinks that Rose and George deal with trivial works while he is waiting them outside the bakery while he is "doing actual work" (TPSLC, 2010: 60) through engaging in other tasks which are important for him. Both Rose and George taste the same things first, chocolate chip and oatmeal. When Rose expresses her feelings about the chocolate chip, George tastes his own chocolate chip to be able to understand Rose's feelings. Rose provides information regarding the ingredients as "the chocolate chips were from a factory, so they had that same slight metallic, absent taste to them, and the butter had been pulled from cows in pens, so the richness was not as full" (TPSLC, 2010: 61). She also adds that "the baker, who'd mixed the batter and formed the dough, was angry. A tight anger, in the cookie itself" (TPSLC, 2010: 62). For her, the ingredients of the chocolate chips are mixed and then put into the form of dough by an angry baker. George tries to understand this case by asking questions to Rose and tastes the cookies by paying utmost attention to each bite. As a requirement of the test, Rose's comments are confirmed by speaking to the baker in order to reach answers to the questions in their minds. After they ensure that the cookies are prepared by the baker, George tries to have information regarding the mood of the baker while he is preparing the cookies.

Since it is not an ordinary task to question what a person's feelings are in the process of cooking something, George has to explain that they prepare a school project on this issue. Then the baker starts talking about the questions asked by George. When he asks, "what was your mood when you made this?", the baker replies that "no mood, ... I just made the cookies. In the bowl, stir, bake, done" (TPSLC, 2010: 63). Although he says that he is not in a particular mood while preparing the cookies, he also states that he hates this job and adds that "I don't even *like* cookies" (TPSLC, 2010: 63). This is the point of interaction between the angry taste that Rose has in the cookies and the feelings of the baker who is not aware of the fact that his mood is detected by a person eating the cookies prepared by him. He is not angry due to a specific reason, but his anger might stem from the fact that he does not have any positive attitude towards his job and even towards the cookies. The second test is performed with the oatmeal, and Rose's feelings about the oatmeal are narrated as "... the oats, well dried, but not so well watered, then the raisins, half tasteless, made from parched grapes, picked by thirsty workers, then the baker, rushed. The whole cookie was so rushed, like I had to eat it fast or it would, somehow, eat me. Oatmeal in a hurry ..." (TPSLC, 2010: 63). When they ask for the baker making the oatmeal, they learn that it is made by another person, Janet, who works there in the mornings and always arrive late to the bakery. As a result of this information collected, they confirm the reason of the feeling of hurry and rush mixed into the taste of the oatmeal and detected by Rose. After all these tests and obtained results, George is convinced and he becomes the first person witnessing Rose's ability. George's comments about this first impression are stated by Rose as "so, George said, turning to me as we started to walk. Seems like it's mostly the feelings people don't know about, huh?" (TPSLC, 2010: 67). However, Rose is not sure about this, and she expresses her discomfort about this issue stating that "seemed like that to me too but I didn't like the idea at all" (TPSLC, 2010: 67). Still confused about what to do regarding the extraordinary experiences going through every moment of her feeding, Rose talks to George about her problem a couple of months after their tests in the bakery. It is narrated as:

But so what do I *do*? I asked George, a couple months after the cookie store visit,

...

But what do I do about it? I asked again, after a minute.

About what?

About my food problem?

...

It's not a problem, he said ... It's fantastic.

I hate it, I said, tugging at the sides of my mouth.

Or maybe you'll grow into it, he said

...

Maybe, I said.

I think, George said, you should become a superhero (*TPSLC*, 2010: 70-71).

Even though Rose is really disturbed by her food problem, George offers her a positive perspective which can change her attitude towards this issue. He claims that it is a fantastic case and Rose can utilise it as a power that nobody else might possess.

At the beginning of the novel, Rose is really disturbed by the overwhelming burden of the fact that she can sense the hidden feelings of other people. This causes her to become very depressed and she tries anything that helps her avoid possible outcomes of consuming homemade foods. When she goes to school, she eats fabricated food at lunch time because such foods are not similar to homemade foods and do not have the potential for conveying emotions as powerful as the homemade foods. Thus, fabricated foods are safer for Rose in her attempts to refrain from personal details as much as possible while sustaining her nutritional needs. The dominance of feelings sensed through the consumed foods disturbs her eating habits and she inclines more to the fabricated foods. In this regard, it can also be said that this disturbing fact leads to an eating disorder problem for Rose because it affects her both physiologically and psychologically. This problem and the possible outcomes of eating disorder of a young girl constitute another dimension related to the food-related representations implemented in the novel. As stated by Andrievskikh (2014), "recently, many feminist critics have focused on the link between eating disorders and what Kristeva terms *asymbolia*, or inability to express one's feelings and desires in words" (146). Accordingly, the reasons and results of the eating disorder experienced by Rose also deserve critical attention in line with the fact that "contemporary feminist writers often

explore the theme of eating disorders as a result of inability to speak up one's mind and express one's needs" (Andrievskikh, 2014: 146). The reason why Rose refrains from eating certain types of foods might be related to her psychological state which can be also a research topic to be investigated critically.

Rose experiences a remarkable change in her life after consuming homemade foods and this case also affects her performance at school. At times, she cannot focus on her lessons due to the overwhelming influence of the feelings transmitted through foods. In order to avoid from this burden, she sometimes drinks only water from the drinking fountain at school. One day at school, after spending her lunchtime by drinking a great amount of water, she cannot help putting her head on her desk during a course. Her teacher tries to understand whether Rose is ill and this event causes Rose to visit the school nurse. Rose visits the school nurse for the first time and this is a new experience for her resulted from the indefinable influence of foods on her life. When the nurse asks Rose what the problem is, she has to say that the foods that she eats have a bad taste. Since the problem is hard to define, she cannot say much about the exact problem experienced by her. Thus, she cannot reveal her real problem and thinks that "this was not entirely true—I'd eaten a pretty good apple in my lunch. The recess milk carton was fine. But almost everything else—the cake, the chicken dinner, the homemade brownie, the craving in the peanut-butter sandwich—had left me with varying degrees of the same scary feeling" (TPSLC, 2010: 28). The nurse cannot understand what Rose means by saying that the taste of foods is bad. She links this complaint with the possibility that Rose has some negative feelings regarding her weight and physical appearance which might lead to these problems related to foods. Rose's comments regarding the bad taste of foods automatically cause the nurse to think about a probable weight problem that Rose might have as a young girl and she asks, "what kind of bad?" and adds "do you think you're overweight?" (TPSLC, 2010: 28). The case becomes more and more confusing for the nurse when Rose states that foods have a kind of hollowness. Nurse is inevitably puzzled and links this explanation to the body image of Rose by stating "you think you're hollow?" (TPSLC, 2010: 28). After listening Rose, she starts to take notes and writes "*food has a hole in it*" (TPSLC, 2010: 28) followed by a question mark which can be reported as the sign of the confusion in the nurse's mind. However, she cannot come to a meaningful conclusion regarding this unusual case, and therefore, she has an inclination to link this event to an eating disorder problem of this young girl. She

insists on the questions for revealing eating habits and disorders of Rose even though Rose states that she likes foods and she does not feel herself fat. The problem experienced by her does not have a connection with her eating habits or a kind of weight problem on the surface. When the nurse offers a cup of water, Rose drinks it and the conversation continues in a way that ends without a solution to Rose's problem regarding foods. This conversation is narrated by Rose as:

Water is important, I said, gripping the cup. We have to drink or we die.

Just like food, she said.

I like food, I said, louder.

Three meals a day?

Yes.

And do you ever make yourself throw up?

No.

Or are you taking any pills to make yourself go to the bathroom? she asked, eyebrows raised.

I shook my head (*TPSLC*, 2010: 29).

All these questions distress Rose who tries to control her tears caused due to the extraordinary case that she goes through again. This case cannot be solved in a way that Rose desires since the nurse recommends her to give time to this undefined problem which might be an allergy to food or a product of an active imagination. All the notes taken by the nurse do not work while diagnosing Rose's problem.

Another striking incidence regarding Rose's ability takes place approximately six months after the particular lemon cake experience. The familial relations during those days are described by Rose as "things had been tense around the house. Dad, brusque. Mom, wound up" (*TPSLC*, 2010: 71). Lane suffering from sleeping problems starts cooking due to boredom as early as five a.m. in the morning of a sleepless night. She tries new recipes and one of the newest recipes is a pie which is unconsciously mixed fully with the emotions of the cook. After eating only a piece of it, Rose is influenced so powerfully that she cannot hide her feelings. She narrates this experience as:

I ate the piece of pie she sliced on the small white plate ... The taste so bad I could hardly keep it in my mouth.

What do you think? asked Mom, squinting as she tasted, leaning back in her chair, just as she had before.

We began with cake; we end with pie.

I leaned over, too. I could not, for this last time, hide any of it. I leaned right out of my chair and slumped down on the tile floor of the kitchen. I got on the floor because I had to go low. The chair was too tall.

...

Rose? she said. Baby? Are you okay?

No, I said, low.

Are you choking? she asked.

No, I said. But I closed my eyes. A gripping in my throat. The graininess of the pie dough, of the peach syrup: packed, every bite, with that same old horrible craving.

Was it her? Was it me? (*TPSLC*, 2010: 73).

The influence of the feelings is so powerful that Rose cannot lean back and answer her mother's questions. Lane is very anxious and she tries to understand the reason of Rose's condition. Rose continues her narration as:

I started tearing at my mouth. Get it out! I roared.

What is it baby? Mom asked, struggling out of her chair.

My mouth, I said, suddenly crying. The tears steaming hot, down my face. Everything flooding. I tried to pull at it—my mouth—with my fingers. Take it out! I said, *Please*. Mommy. Take it off my face.

...

Mom knelt by my side, her cheeks flushed with worry. Rose, she said. Baby. I don't understand. What do you mean?

I threw the paper towel away. Pull off another. Wiped down my tongue. Pulled off another. I had been avoiding my mother's baked goods, but I had eaten her cooked dinners now for months and months, which she made for us every evening with labor and love. Trying not to show everything on my face ... And, day in and day out, I had been faking enjoying eating at home, through the weekly gaps and silences between my parents, through my mother's bright and sleepless eyes, and for whatever the reason, for that one time, I could not possibly pretend I liked her pie.

...

What is it Rose? It's the pie?

You feel so *bad*, I said, to the floor tile.

What do you mean? she said, touching my shoulder. Are you talking to the floor? You mean me again, Rose?

You're so sad in there, I said, and alone, and hungry, and sad—

In where? She said.

In the pie, I said.

In the pie? she said, flinching. What do you mean baby?

Not baby, I said. No more baby.

Rose? she said, eyebrows caving in. The sheets of tear came down over me again. Blurring. I clawed at my mouth. What are you doing? she said, grabbing my hands. Honey?

I pulled away from her. I tasted it, I said, pitching.

But, Rose, she said, tasted what—

I TASTED YOU, I said. GET OUT MY MOUTH (*TPSLC*, 2010: 74-76).

This incidence can be regarded as a very important indicator of how Rose is influenced from the foods cooked by her mother and what the reasons are behind these cases. In contrast to Rose's efforts to define her food-related problem having a close link with the feelings of the cook, Lane cannot grasp it and takes Rose immediately to a hospital. Similar to the moment when the school nurse cannot diagnose Rose's problem, the doctors in the emergency room cannot also diagnose Rose's trouble. After Rose says that she feels better, they leave the hospital. Confused about the comments related to her feelings made by Rose after consuming the pie, Lane tries to persuade Rose about the fact that she is not unhappy and asks Rose to not worry so much about her while they are leaving the hospital. However, Rose cannot be convinced because she can clearly see her mother's unhappiness and loneliness in her eyes, and she narrates that "I knew if I ate anything of hers again, it would likely tell me the same message: Help me, I am not happy, *help me*—like a message in a bottle sent in each meal to the eater, and I got it. I got the message. And now my job was to pretend I did not get the message" (*TPSLC*, 2010: 80). Since her mother cannot realise Rose's awareness about her hidden feelings,

Rose has to pretend as if everything was fine and there was nothing to worry about. Following this event, Rose does not strive to make herself understood by other people because it is useless. Her decision is narrated as:

I no longer wanted to advertise my experience to anyone. You try, you seem totally nuts, you go underground. There's a kind of show a kid can do, for a parent—a show of pain, to try to announce something, and in my crying, in the desperate, blabbering, awful mouth-clawing, I had hoped to get something across. Had it come across, any of it? Nope (*TPSLC*, 2010: 95).

Following this event, Rose tries to identify the details about the foods in her plate during the dinners. It seems like a good game for her and recovers her from the burden of sensing the feelings of the cook as much as possible. She states that “it was a good game for me, because even though it did command some of my attention, it also distracted me from the much louder and more difficult influence of the mood of the foodmaker, which ran the gamut” (*TPSLC*, 2010: 95).

As it is mentioned before, Rose can sense even the most private and secret feelings of her mother and also other people. When the issue is related to her mother, Rose becomes really sensitive emotionally which also causes her to suffer physiologically since she cannot eat the foods prepared by her mother without being anxious. After eating the meals cooked by her mother, Rose can get lots of details about her mother's hidden feelings. In this regard, it can be stated that “with a cosmic irony, the mother who is unreachable until the ninth birthday of Rose becomes a reachable mother for the daughter with the particular lemon cake” (Ayan and Yalvaç, 2021: 153). She can detect information about her mother's emotional status starting from her ninth birthday. For example, she can sense that her mother meets with someone else and feels herself guilty together with the romance of this secret affair. Lane might consider that she is as discreet as possible, but she is not aware of the fact that her feelings are revealed through the foods cooked by her. The first impression regarding Lane's love affair arises when Rose is twelve years old. She narrates that “I was twelve when I sat down to a family dinner of roast beef and potatoes ... and got such a wallop of guilt and romance in my first mouthful that I knew, instantly, that she'd met someone else. Thick waves of it, in the meat and the home made sour cream and the green slashes of carefully chopped chives” (*TPSLC*, 2010: 92). All of these detected in the aftertaste of the foods cooked by Lane cause Rose to become a person who grows up suddenly and

is “no more baby” (*TPSLC*, 2010: 75) as she exclaims. The innocence of being a little girl leaves its place to a state of awareness shaping Rose’s development as an adult, and during this period, “the relationship between the mother and the daughter turns to a tasty one converting from sweetness to sourness” (Ayan and Yalvaç, 2021: 153). After sensing the feeling of romance surrounding the foods, it does not take much time for Rose to detect the man with whom her mother has a romantic love affair. While Lane is talking about the people working in the same place with her, the tone of her voice changes suddenly especially when she is speaking about him. Here, Lane’s words and tone of voice helps Rose to find out the name of this man.

At the beginning of the process that Rose starts sensing the emotions of people after consuming the foods that they prepare, the ability of knowing the hidden feelings of others is a very depressing problem for Rose. The focus is on the interaction between foods and feelings but it is also revealed in the novel that Rose can also have the knowledge of details of the foods. Namely, the origin, quality, and other specific features of changing types of foods can be detected by her. An example to this fact is the incidents occurring at a café where she provides information regarding the details of foods that she tastes there. She tastes various types of foods such as egg, butter, and nutmeg and then informs the people who are curious about the details about the consumed foods. Rose declares that “the eggs are from Michigan ... The butter is French butter ... Not pasteurized ... The parsley is from San Diego” (*TPSLC*, 2010: 271-272). It is obvious that she can also speak about the origin and quality of foods. She can detect whether the tasted foods are organic or not. In this regard, she is asked for tasting a piece of ham in the café for revealing its quality, and she declared that the ham is organic which can be detected “in the aftertaste” (*TPSLC*, 2010: 272). The type or quantity of foods is not a matter for Rose in this process since she can reach conclusions regarding any kind of food from the first bite. Here, a daily food item might lead to an unusual representation in the plotline of the story. Fact and fiction is mixed in the kitchen of creating a literary work which is rich in representations related to foods and cooking-related issues.

Regarding the interaction between foods and feelings of people in fictional works, it can be observed that the quality and taste of foods can be influenced from the emotional and psychological states of the cooks. That is to say, there is a close relationship between the taste and other features of the meals and the feelings of the

cooks. In the novel, Rose goes through the process of detecting the feelings experienced by the cooks via the foods exposed to the power of various feelings including happiness, sadness, anger, and so on. Thus, it gains an unusual function apart from nutrition, and Aimee Bender represents this interaction through the incidents experienced by Rose. In one of them, she thinks that “I ate an enormous range of food, and mood” (*TPSLC*, 2010: 243). When she consumes something, she also has the feelings of the cook automatically. This cook is not solely her mother, and the issue of sensing the feelings is not specific only to her mother and her emotions. When she eats something cooked by her mother, she is exposed to her mother’s feelings. However, she also has to bear the burden of feelings belonging to other people when she prefers eating out. Moreover, she can have the knowledge of various details of the consumed foods even though the foods are fabricated products. In the novel, all of these are represented as the occasions that have a primary influence on Rose’s life and identity development process.

It is not an easy task for Rose to manage the troubles caused due to her extraordinary talent. However, she harmonises the interaction between this talent and her daily life. At first, she refrains from eating homemade food, but as time passes, she starts to cook various dishes at home. As far as Rose can remember, the moment when she enters into the kitchen to prepare, cook, and serve a meal as a whole occurs on a day when she is in need of talking to somebody. Although she wants to talk, she cannot call anybody due to various reasons. It is seen that rather than talking to anyone possible, she starts performing some food-related tasks in the kitchen. This performance is narrated as “I found my way to the kitchen ... It was the first time I could remember making a whole meal, start to finish. As best I could, I kept focused on the task at hand ...” (*TPSLC*, 2010: 221). She cooks “spaghetti with marinara sauce” served together with “a bowl of grated Parmesan cheese” (*TPSLC*, 2010: 221). When her mother asks Rose to join them while eating the meal prepared by her, Rose also serves herself but she cannot help her hands shaking. She narrates this moment as “the first full meal I’d made on my own ... The sauce was good, and simple, and thick. Sadness, rage, tanks, holes, hope, guilt, tantrums. Nostalgia, like rotting flowers. A factory, cold” (*TPSLC*, 2010: 222). All of these feelings emerge when Rose consumes the meal cooked by her. It is a very strange experience for her because she can sense her own emotions revealed through this meal. It can be inferred that Rose may not be aware of some of these feelings detected by means of this meal. For her parents, it is a delicious meal prepared

meticulously by Rose, but for Rose, it is something more than a meal. Despite the fact that it is the first meal that Rose prepares on her own, it can also be regarded as a mirror reflecting her inner feelings. After a while, she makes the same meal again which is also eaten by her parents with pleasure. However, Rose tries to detect the source of the first impression which is so disturbing for her. The disturbing impression is the feeling that is related to a factory which is cold and unknown. For Rose, it is not a big deal to detect the factory of the ingredients included into the meals consumed by her. Nevertheless, she cannot name this unknown factory no matter how hard she tries to find out through checking the boxes of the pasta available in their kitchen and asking some questions to the customer service representative of the supermarket where they get some of the ingredients. When she eats the same meal again, she gets the same impression related to the unknown factory. She narrates this impression stating that “that same unknown factory, again. Loud and clear, in the food. A machine-tinge I could not identify. Alongside a little-girl voice wanting to go back, to go back to a time with less information. Go back, said the little girl” (*TPSLC*, 2010: 241). This feeling related to the factory does not resemble to any of her previous experiences collected so far, and she states that “none of it matched any factory I’d known in my reservoir of factory tastes, which seemed only to indicate that it must’ve come from the cook” (*TPSLC*, 2010: 242). It can be inferred that the coldness of the factory felt in the foods is a reflection of the coldness that Rose feels very deep inside of her own self. As she can sense the feelings of other people who are not even aware of the detected feelings, the same thing is also valid for Rose and her own feelings. She cannot attach a meaning to the state of feelings found in the foods prepared by her. She depicts this feeling as “it was like seeing that photo and not recognizing my own face” (*TPSLC*, 2010: 242).

Her attempt for cooking also develops the mother-daughter relationship, and Rose and Lane partake in the process of selecting various kinds of recipes from cookbooks. Rose states that “twice a week, I cooked for her ... For months, we ate only appetizers, and then I moved to soups, and salads, and entrées. I skipped the recipes that sounded too difficult, and my mother picked her favorites and made requests” (*TPSLC*, 2010: 278-279). Their journey in the kitchen is similar to an arrangement in a menu starting with appetizers and ends with entrées. It continues in an order and in accordance with the preferences and requests of these two women in the kitchen, and “in a sense, each cooking event builds on the other, with each experience bringing a

sense of accomplishment with the completion of an edible dish” (Matwick, 2017: 540). By means of this shared experience of cooking an edible dish in the kitchen, Rose and Lane have a good time together while cooking. Thus, they automatically accompany each other and a much more intimate atmosphere is created with the mutual participation of the mother and daughter. The cooking experience becomes a bridge to the communication gap between Lane and Rose who states that “neither of us mentioned that we had reached the dessert section of the cookbook, after which was only the index” (*TPSLC*, 2010: 279). The novel begins with the preparation process of a lemon-cake handled by Lane for Rose’s birthday. It is seen that, through the end of the novel, a similar process is carried out by Rose who prepares a birthday cake for Lane. Considering this process, Rose narrates that “when her birthday rolled around, I baked her a coconut cake with cream-cheese frosting, and we sat across from each other at the table with big textured slices. Eight, whispered my cake. You still just want to go back to eight, when you didn’t know much about anything” (*TPSLC*, 2010: 279). After they eat the coconut cake for Lane’s birthday, they have a conversation about the particular type of cake that is the turning point of Rose’s life. Unaware of its role in her daughter’s life, Lane offers Rose to make a lemon cake for her. This conversation on the lemon chocolate cake is narrated by Rose as:

She said maybe she’d make me a lemon chocolate cake next time, but I put a hand on her shoulder gently and said I didn’t really like lemon chocolate cake so much anymore.

But you used to! she said.

I used to, I said. A long time ago (*TPSLC*, 2010: 280).

The communication problem within the family attracts Rose’s attention via her unusual talent related to foods. She can decipher her mother’s unspoken emotions through the culinary products prepared by her mother. Foods are represented as a substitution for words in the novel. Namely, foods become an active instrument for reflecting the unvoiced thoughts and feelings repressed may be due to the deficiency in building a healthy communication environment in the family. On the other hand, this communication problem can be partially overcome with the help of foods and culinary experiences again. This occurs partially because the cooking experience encapsulates only Rose and Lane, and they are the ones who can possibly recover from the stress stemming from the communication problem between each other. Communication

problem can be seen as a barrier in sustaining intimate familial relationships. This trouble causes stress to the protagonist and her family in the novel. In order to lessen the negative influence of this case, they may unconsciously need to develop various kinds of strategies. The variety of these strategies may depend on personal inclinations in coping with encountered problems. The deficiency in communication in a family may deeply affect some of the family members who inevitably needs a solution to overcome the psychological burden resulted due to this problem. It can be claimed that the strategy preferred by Rose and her mother is closely related to foods and cooking. This strategy enables them to get over the distress. Kitchen and culinary tasks are reflected as powerful agents presented for the female characters in the novel. This is one of the main points aimed to be revealed in the current study.

It is also observed that Rose's cooking talent in their kitchen at home moves one step further when Rose decides to work in a café. As seen through the end of the novel, Rose does not allow the encountered problems to prevent her from taking important decisions that might have a considerable influence on her own future. As time passes, Rose becomes aware of the things that she can and cannot do in her life as an individual. For example, she prefers not to go a college for receiving further education. Instead, she decides to meet various cooks while she is working at an office. She eats out frequently and tries to taste something new in any chance. Each experience is evaluated carefully by her and thus she can decide which meals and restaurants are her favourites. One of her favourite restaurants has become a place where she can feel a kind of relief especially when the atmosphere of her own house causes sadness. Considering this restaurant, she states that "I went over at least once a week, sometimes more, and my time in general was marked by silent sad dinners with my parents and then lunchtime or dinnertime visits to the café as a kind of gateway into the world" (*TPSLC*, 2010: 244). This place is really special for Rose, and regarding her unforgettable experiences related to the meals she has there, she recalls that

There, I ordered chicken Dijon, or beef Bourguignon, or a simple green salad, or a pâté sandwich, and when it came to the table, I melted into whatever arrived. I lavished in a forkful of spinach gratin on the side, at how delighted the chef had clearly been over the balance of spinach and cheese, like she was conducting a meeting of spinach and cheese, like a matchmaker who knew they would shortly fall in love. Sure, there were small distractions and preoccupations in it all, but I could find the food in there, the food was the center, and the person making the food was so

connected with the food that I could really, for once, enjoy it. I ate as slowly as I could. The air around me filled with purpose (*TPSLC*, 2010: 244).

This place where she can enjoy the foods prepared meticulously by the cook of the café gains much more importance for Rose who starts working there in order to deal with any work related to foods. First, she starts working as a part-time dishwasher which is a job that she takes great pleasure, and she underlines that “I loved the job; I kept myself focused on clearing the plates, on rinsing the bowls, absorbed in the smells of the kitchen, of piles of chopped onions and rolling pins flattening pastry dough, next to the bubbling pots and sizzling pans, and it was good for me just to be there, to spend as much time there as I could” (*TPSLC*, 2010: 251). Then she starts doing food tasting in this café during the lunch breaks which attracts other people’s attention and results in other employment proposals for Rose. All of these opportunities lead Rose to engage in various food-related tasks such as cooking, serving, and tasting foods which can have an eventual influence on her food-related sensations surrounded with a great range of feelings revealed by means of foods.

Regarding the decision of working at a café, Rose narrates “at home, at dinner, I explained to my parents that I would be working part-time at the café, learning about cooking in some form or another ... It’s not moving out yet, I told them. But it’s a step” (*TPSLC*, 2010: 283). This step might have a satisfying influence on Rose’s attempts for cooking professionally. For her, this café might offer her the opportunity of working at a professionally equipped kitchen. Moreover, this opportunity reconciles Rose symbolically with her extraordinary talent related to foods and feelings. Although this talent makes her life difficult at the beginning of Rose’s story, she can find a remedy to these troubles. The reason of her troubles is connected to foods, however, it is seen that the remedy for these difficulties is found through engaging in cooking-related activities more actively and enthusiastically. The enthusiasm for cooking in a professional environment influences her well-being positively. The culinary tasks do not put insurmountable barriers in front of Rose. On the contrary, these tasks contribute favourably to Rose’s personal and professional development. The personal and professional gains obtained from experiences related to foods and cooking create a new dimension for Rose’s life.

In sum, it can be stated that Aimee Bender represents the food-related journey of the female protagonist Rose through offering a renewed perspective related to foods and food-related issues and deconstructs the traditional considerations related to kitchens and culinary tasks. In the novel, kitchens are observed as places of relief and transformation for the female characters in contrast to the traditional norms accepting kitchens as limited places where females have to perform cooking-related tasks as obligatory duties of daily life. When the function of kitchens is analysed, it can be deduced that these places are not laboratory-like entities for the female characters. In the novel, Lane engages in food-related issues in order to perform practical activities and to involve in the process of preparing meals which offers her to discover her potential in carrying out culinary steps and reaching satisfactory results in her kitchen. In this regard, it can be stated that kitchen offers her a range of practical opportunities enriched with culinary details which ensure self-realisation and fulfilment. The first steps of Lane's inclination of engaging in food-related tasks can be accepted as the starting point of Rose's food-related talent in sensing the feelings of other people and also detecting the details related to foods. The interaction between the feelings of the characters and the foods consumed is portrayed through the experiences of Rose and also other characters taking part in cooking the foods consumed by Rose. As the female protagonist, Rose is the main character who is surrounded with various food-related events including tasting and also cooking via which the feelings of other people are revealed. In accordance with this, it is possible to conclude that the identity formation process of Rose is influenced considerably from the experiences of tasting foods, sensing feelings, and detecting other details about foods.

3.4. *One Hundred Shades of White*

One Hundred Shades of White (OHSW), published in 2003, was written by Preethi Nair. The novel is five chapters in total and it is narrated by Nalini and Maya in alternate chapters. They tell their stories from their own perspectives and this technique allows us to see the events from a wider scope. The novel is primarily about the experiences of Maya and her mother Nalini. Nalini and her children, Maya and Satchin, have a comfortable life in India. They have many opportunities to have a carefree life. However, their life changes with the demand that the father of the house makes. He is a businessman and has to move in England. After a while, he desires to live with his

family in this country. As an obedient wife, Nalini does not rebel against this desire and completes the necessary preparations before travelling to the foreign city where she has to continue her life. She leaves her land which causes great sadness for her. But, the worst happens in England, her husband abandons them unexpectedly. Nalini cannot say her children that their father abandons them since he has a secret relationship with another woman. She does not want her children to be upset due to their father's unacceptable behaviour. She decides to tell them that their father died. For her, there might be various ways for telling the truth, one hundred shades of explaining truth, to others. The children are shocked and sorrow over the death of their father. Everything changes dramatically for them. In the foreign land, Nalini, Maya, and Satchin have to go on their lives without any financial support of the father figure. Gardiner (1981) claims that "the conventional old plots of heterosexual seduction and betrayal play a minimal role in contemporary women's fiction. Women in recent novels do not fear loss of their lovers, nor do they seriously resent male infidelity. The husband who goes off with another woman leaves his wife poorer but freer" (360). It is observed in the novel that, after Raul's infidelity, Nalini and her children have to move in a small and old house, and they experience lots of difficulties which can be solved eventually with the cooking ability of Nalini. Nalini can overcome these troubles as a free woman who has a remarkable talent in cooking and engaging in food-related issues. Within changing socio-economic structures of societies around the world, cooking as a professional occupation ensures a social status to females who can obtain an advantage over the patriarchal norms restricting females not only socially but also financially. Through this socio-economic status provided by cooking, females can protect themselves from the negative influence of various limitations set by male-dominated social orders. Moreover, they can get the chance for having better living standards achieved by means of benefiting from the opportunities that are offered by food-related tasks. There is a significant correlation between cooking skills and financial income which is represented as a solution for the difficulties experienced by female characters in the fictional works. The inclination for producing edible meals and serving these meals proficiently to other people are the steps in the process of converting a daily task into a professional practice performed competently by female characters. When they can seize this opportunity, this practice opens the way also for achieving professional recognition in social life. The more they are determined in pursuing this food-based occupational approach, the more they can involve in various financial and social processes. This involvement has a

significant impact, either directly or indirectly, on identity development process of the female characters. In this regard, foods and food-related routines are not limited within the frames of daily nutritional needs, but they transcend these frames and become a fruitful source in the process of female characters' empowerment through developing a sense of self-worth and dignity.

3.4.1. Nalini's and Maya's Guidance and Empowerment through Foods

Cooking is a recurrent metaphor from the beginning till the end of the novel. It has a vital role in the lives of the Indian family immigrated to a foreign place. At the beginning of the novel, we learn that Nalini's mother is a talented cook and Nalini also has this ability in cooking delicious Indian foods. Nalini and her mother believe in the significant influence of foods on individuals since the ingredients and also how foods are cooked are the factors that appear to make one's life either better or worse. Moreover, the performance of daily food preparation from her own cuisine makes Nalini imagine and accept her belonging to a particular group with regards to nation, religion, class, and ethnicity. This imaginary form of belonging causes relief for Nalini who is under the stress of being far away from her hometown. To continue the foodways and culinary habits as it is in her hometown has become a foothold for Nalini while living in a foreign country. Another point regarding foods and other food-related details is that preferring Indian cuisine or European cuisine causes conflict between Nalini and her children. However, this case changes through the end of the novel. The conflict leaves its place to the combination of two different cuisines. It is seen in the novel that ethnic foods can be mingled with the foods of the foreign country in the lives of immigrated communities. This mixture even enriches the food culture. While adapting to anything new in the foreign land, immigrants may also get used to new food cultures. Although first and second generation people may insist on consuming food from their own cuisine following their immigration to another country, the individuals who are born or grow up in a new country as the third generation of the immigrants may prefer the foods of new cuisines. These differences in culinary inclinations and food preferences of females of three generations are examined attentively considering the stories of three women depicted in the novel. Another aspect that is analysed in this novel is the economic income earned through culinary tasks. We also focus on the cooking ability of Nalini enabling her to have the opportunity for earning money after a

period of economic difficulty. Moreover, the healing power of foods, especially the spices, that is frequently emphasised in the novel is examined within the scope of this research.

The story of Maya and Nalini starts from the moment that Maya is born as the second child of the Nalini and Raul couple whose first child is a son named Satchin. Maya and Satchin call their mother as Amma and their father as Achan. Maya continues the story through providing information about her family members in the first chapter. She speaks about the physical appearances of her mother and father. According to her, Nalini “was really very beautiful” (*OHSW*, 2003: 3), and Raul “was handsome” (*OHSW*, 2003: 3). Maya also gives information about the financial status of her mother and father by accounting the number of the cattle that is the sign of their wealth. She states that her father “came from a wealthy family” (*OHSW*, 2003: 3) whose cows were more than all other villagers, and her mother “had more of a middle-class background” (*OHSW*, 2003: 4). The nuclear family of Maya and her grandmother live in Kerala when their story begins. As the stories of Maya and Nalini develop, they include various details regarding foods and culinary issues. In accordance with the aim of the research, these details about foods and food-related routines represented in the narration of the stories are tried to be detected in the process of analysing the events that surround the lives of female characters portrayed in the novel. Here, female characters Ammu, Nalini, and Maya are three-generation females, and the role of foods and food-related activities in the lives of these women is the significant point to be considered attentively.

Nalini’s mother Ammu, called as Amamma by her grandchildren, is the ancestral figure representing the traditional Indian heritage. She is the most important guide for Nalini and also Maya while they are learning the proper ways to practice culinary tasks specific to their own culture. Ammu always supports Nalini and Maya with her background knowledge in cooking and other food-related issues. Thus, she can hand down her culinary knowledge from generation to generation. It is seen in the novel that the grandmother figure, Ammu, does not have an active participation into the narration process of the story. However, her daughter and granddaughter are surrounded with her knowledge and advices. As an old wise woman of Indian heritage, she pays utmost attention to keep the traditions and values of the Indian culture alive. From the beginning till the end of the story, Maya and Nalini feel the presence and support of this

ancestral female figure either physically or spiritually. She contributes to the self-improvement process of Nalini and Maya by means of her advices, guidance, assistance, and comments. As can be inferred from the narrations of Nalini and Maya, the culinary tradition of Indian cuisine is the most important focus of Ammu's world-view which is connected powerfully to the Indian culture. For her, foods belonging specifically to the Indian cuisine are considerably important because they can be treated as a reflection of Indian identity that should be transmitted to future generations. This transmission is depicted through the experiences of the females having a matrilineal lineage that has an important influence on the progression of the events in the novel.

Ammu and her grandchildren have a very close relationship and she strives to teach the values of Indian heritage to her grandchildren. As an ancestral figure, she behaves tenderly to them; however, as Maya states, the only incident that makes the grandmother angry is the moment when Maya and Satchin "kicked over the mountain of colourful spices that she had left out to dry" (*OHSW*, 2003: 13). This causes a great mess because spices spread everywhere and the colour of white walls changes into "bright yellows, oranges, reds and browns" (*OHSW*, 2003: 13). However, this mess is not the real reason of Ammu's anger toward her grandchildren. She is really very upset because of the fact that this is a disrespectful behaviour towards spices. Since spices have an important place in Indian culture, Ammu cannot help herself become angry due to her grandchildren's inconvenient attitudes towards spices. After a while, she states her sadness for shouting at them and briefly explains the reason for why they should be respectful to spices as stating "you have to treat them with respect because they can do magical things" (*OHSW*, 2003: 13). Neither Maya nor Satchin can understand the importance and power of spices at that time, but they apologise and start cleaning up the mess together with the hand working in their house. Even though they cannot figure out these features of spices emphasised by Ammu, they may develop a sense of awareness by means of the fact that Ammu holds spices in high esteem. In this regard, their attempt to remove the mess and the traces of spices can be considered as an indicator of not only the feelings of regret and sadness but also the sense of awareness related to the value of spices.

Ammu is a talented cook and knows much about the features of foods and the phases of food production process including the plantation and harvest of crops. This process does not include only these two steps but there are also other phases both before

and after the plantation and harvest of crops. Each phase requires specific knowledge and also active participation in order to obtain the best results. Maya reminds the readers that “Ammamma knew lots about harvest time and food because, as I said already, she was a cook. She and Amma would spend hours in the kitchen ...” (*OHSW*, 2003: 8). These women endeavour to obtain the best results in the kitchen, and therefore, they spend most of their time in the kitchen by participating actively in food-related tasks. For Ammu, the harvest time of the crops is one of the moments during which people’s dreams are either come true or not come true in accordance with their sincerity while they are planting their dreams with the seeds of crops into the soil. Thus, the seeds of plants are symbolically the seeds of feelings referring to the intimate relationship between foods and moods of individuals in this story. This close relationship starts from planting seeds into soil and continues through their cultivation, selection, preparation, and consumption as foods. Each phase is performed by individuals who might develop a sense of feeling or healing through their interaction with foods and food-related tasks. It is observed that Ammu is an old Indian woman and has a special gift for cooking elaborate meals and knowing special mystical features of foods and spices that can have a healing effect on individuals consuming them appropriately. Her wisdom in knowing the details about the foods and spices and in using them properly while cooking meals can be seen as a consequence of the strong link between Ammu and her own cultural background knowledge related to foods. The process of establishing such a link might require a strong devotion as a result of which an individual can go beyond the frames drawn for depicting food-related daily routines. Namely, it is much more than an effort for meeting the nutritional needs of other people by engaging in culinary routines defined as the responsibilities of women in traditional standards of many cultures around the world.

It can be claimed that food-related tasks are very important in a great number of incidents affecting the lives of fictional characters in literary works. In this respect, the female characters in this novel have unforgettable memories and experiences which have a close relationship with foods and food-related deeds. As an example, at the very beginning of the story, Maya states that a cup of tea together with some savouries prepared by a woman for her first meeting with a man are crucial details of an arranged marriage according to their traditional norms about marriage. Maya narrates these details related to the arranged marriages as “that’s how they did things in Kerala. The

man and his family would go and see the lady, who would have to go to the kitchen and make him some tea and serve it in the best cup, along with some savouries, and then he would look at her as she handed the cup to him” (*OHSW*, 2003: 4). These are the initial steps for the establishment of familial relations in Kerala where Maya and her family lives. Among other factors affecting the arrangement process, the cooking ability of the woman is one of the crucially emphasised points which is revealed as “other things were also important like how much money the family has and if the lady can cook well, and finally, their astrological charts must match” (*OHSW*, 2003: 5). As seen, the ability in cooking well is one of the important requirements that are desired to be possessed by the lady who is chosen as the bride. In this regard, another important point is the traditional patriarchal consideration which classifies women according to their abilities in cooking foods and performing food-related deeds. The more the women can cook delicious food, the more the patriarchal social structure has classified them as qualified females. This sociological trouble can also be considered closely while examining gender-related themes in fictional works. It should be noted that cooking as a daily activity cannot be a criterion for qualifying or classifying women in social or domestic life. Women cannot be marginalized by pre-determined traditional norms if they do not cook as per to the culinary standards of the patriarchal appetite. This ability is underlined by Maya stating that some of the families looking for a proper wife for their sons may also demand “an extortionately high dowry” (*OHSW*, 2003: 5) when a woman does not have the desired features. Among these features, the cooking skill of a woman is among the outstanding requirements, and according to Maya, Nalini possesses all the good features that a woman should have according to their traditions. Maya describes her mother as “she was all of those things and could cook exceptionally well, due to the fact that she and my Amamma were the village cooks” (*OHSW*, 2003: 5). Despite the fact that cooking ability of a woman is a prerequisite for getting married in line with the cultural standards reflected in the novel, Nalini and her mother go beyond this requirement with their outstanding talents in cooking. Both Ammu and Nalini carry out their duties meticulously and cook with pleasure and gratitude when they are hired for preparing meals for other people. They gain a reputation for being excellent cooks in the village they live. They believe in the positive influence of foods when they are delicately prepared, cooked, and served. It can be inferred that the mother and daughter are aware of how careful they are while cooking, and Nalini describes its eventual results as “as we hired out for village festivals, births and marriages, things in the

village began to change: a new temple, renewed rainfall, and laughter. It was almost as if my mother turned the inability to mend her own life outwards and seeing the pleasure this produced fixed her in some way. She took pride in her work and it showed” (*OHSW*, 2003: 56). They conclude that the positive feelings of the cooks while engaging in culinary tasks bring along positive reflections in the lives of the consumers. The talent of mother and daughter is known by other people in the village, and they work as village cooks in order to prepare and serve food for many people. Thus, cooking for other people is not a daily task to be performed solely for meeting the nutritional needs of their family members, but it becomes an opportunity for earning money, contributing to family income, and more importantly developing a sense of personal autonomy. Ammu and Nalini work as the cooks of the rich Kathis family for years. They enthusiastically carry out their duty as the cooks until the moment that Nalini and Raul, one of the sons of this rich family, fall in love with each other. Nalini works for this family by assisting her mother when she cooks and deals with any other food-related tasks as a part of her occupation as a cook. This assistance comes to an end when Nalini accepts Raul’s marriage proposal and leaves her house secretly for the sake of her love.

The marriage of Nalini and Raul does not follow an arranged marriage tradition mentioned before since Nalini leaves home and gets married to Raul without getting her mother’s approval. She thinks that her mother would not allow her to marry Raul. The reason is that Raul is the son of the rich Kathis family in whose house Ammu and Nalini work as the cooks. Nalini falls in love with Raul who also declares his love for Nalini. However, Raul is going to marry another woman and this marriage is arranged by his mother. In those days when Nalini and Raul open their feelings to each other, the mother-daughter relation between Ammu and Nalini is tenser than before even though this relationship is known only by the lovers. Nalini’s confused feelings about her love surround the overall mood in her house, and she expresses that “our house became suffused with uncertainty and my mother and I began to argue as we never had. Food rotted after just a day. She sensed that Raul had something to do with it and warned me to stay away” (*OHSW*, 2003: 68). Although Nalini does not mention her love or her confused feelings to her mother, Ammu instinctively feels that Raul might have a role in affecting the emotions of Nalini and warns her daughter about staying away from him in order to protect her sense of self-worth and dignity. Nalini states that the food prepared

is rotten immediately one day after the argument between the mother and the daughter. This is the first time that they have a quarrel affecting even the quality of the foods prepared by these two talented cooks, Ammu and Nalini. The image of the rotten food is open to discussion by considering the possible reasons that might cause this case of the deterioration in the quality of the mentioned food. First of all, it can be regarded as the reflection of the fears of Ammu regarding the possibility that her daughter would experience sadness, disappointment, and any other difficulties if she pursues her love which would not bring happiness to her. A striking conflict reflected in the novel is a consequence of Nalini's expectations to have a romantic love and to be happy and Ammu's anxiety regarding the sadness that might be experienced by Nalini. Moreover, the rotten food can also symbolically refer to the emotional conflict occurring between the mother and the daughter that affects their feelings considerably. Despite her mother's anxiety and warnings, Nalini secretly leaves home to get married to Raul two weeks before his pre-arranged wedding ceremony. It is seen that Nalini does not say anything about her love or her intention to be the wife of Raul to her mother. Obviously, Nalini's life changes immediately after the moment when Raul convinces her to be his wife. That is to say, the cook of the house becomes a part of the rich Kathis family by getting married to one of their sons.

Nalini's life changes drastically when she accepts Raul's marriage proposal. She is no longer the cook of the Kathis family but this fact does not have an influence on Nalini's attitude towards cooking and spending time in her own kitchen. It is seen in the novel that even though Raul has the economic power to employ a cook and a kitchen hand, the cooking ability of Nalini has considerable significance not only for her marriage but also her personal development. After her marriage to Raul, Nalini continues to be a part of culinary tasks, and it can be said that the most important guide for her in performing food-related tasks is still her mother. The mother and daughter interaction has an undeniable influence on Nalini's cooking ability. As a married woman, Nalini goes shopping for selecting and buying groceries and cook various meals for her family as spare time activities through which she "spent lazy afternoons" (OHSW, 2003: 7). Despite the fact that there is a cook employed for carrying out the daily culinary tasks for the newly-wed couple, the lady of the house, Nalini, does not give up cooking and pursuing food-related tasks. Until she falls pregnant, Nalini engages in culinary tasks. However, after that, she cannot continue performing these

tasks even though they can be regarded as the most crucial components in Nalini's life both before and after her marriage. She narrates her inability to cook as "the sickness and nausea took away the pleasure I usually felt when cooking and I detested seeing the kitchen, so I stayed away and the cook did whatever she wanted" (*OHSW*, 2003: 72). Raul does not help Nalini during and after her pregnancy, and Nalini feels herself in a desperate condition because she cannot cope with the responsibilities of having a baby who screams all night. Nalini cannot call her mother and ask her help since she feels embarrassment in front of her mother due to the fact that she distresses her by getting married to Raul secretly. However, after a while, she informs her mother about the desperate condition that she is in and begs for help. The atmosphere of Nalini's house changes when her mother arrives in and brings along lots of food with her. In contrast to Nalini's anxiety, her mother does not make a comment about her scandalous marriage and she concentrates on the tasks to be performed in order to make Nalini's life better. The most urgent interference should start from the heart of the house, kitchen. After Ammu helps Nalini make healthier decisions regarding her house and the people working there, Nalini decides to do something about the case related to the cook that starts cooking for them during Nalini's pregnancy. Nalini states the necessity of this decision as "the first thing that needed to be done was to fire the cook. The cook had a bad feeling emanating from her; everything she did was peppered with anger and frustration" (*OHSW*, 2003: 74). In contrast to the meals prepared by the cook, all of the meals prepared by Nalini's mother and the sounds and smells coming from the kitchen cause Nalini and her baby to calm down. Moreover, the smells spreading from their kitchen influence other people that they do not know before and these people start visiting them more frequently by always bringing other people together with them. Considering this, Nalini narrates that

people that didn't know us began visiting, drawn by the activity and the enticing smells coming from the household. My mother stopped work to make time for all of them, offering them tea and savouries made carefully from fried green bananas. They returned, bringing their children and elderly relatives. My baby slept peacefully and I felt in control again (*OHSW*, 2003: 75).

The concentrated attention of the mother who becomes the cook changes the overall atmosphere from a devastating one to a peaceful and quiet one. It is observed in this novel that cooking and other food-related events are not obligations to be fulfilled by the females whose interrelated stories lead to a renewal of consideration regarding the

role and place of foods in women's lives. They take part in culinary practices by tasting or cooking food or by any other possible way. When Nalini and her mother are considered, it can be claimed that no matter how they have an interaction with food, these two women take pleasure in being a part of such a powerful connection built between foods and their experiences. However, Maya and her food-related experiences are required to be analysed specifically since she has a much more complicated interaction with foods. Nevertheless, this does not mean that she cannot develop a culinary sense resembling to her mother and grandmother. Through the end of the novel, equilibrium is established between two distinctive cuisines for Maya. This equilibrium can also be regarded as a reflection of the fact that Maya develops a sense of dignity by acknowledging that the integration of two different cultures in general and cuisines in particular can be a rich source for personal development, and this integration offers further opportunities for her identity development process. Thus, her experiences require a unique perspective different from the ones that are implemented while analysing the experiences of Nalini and Ammu.

Nalini speaks about her preference between cooking various kinds of foods and going to school to deal with other tasks different from the ones that she experiences in the kitchen of either her house or anywhere else. She points that "I did go to school when I could but it wasn't something that interested me. What I loved was the preparation of a wedding or a village festival; the anticipation, the chopping food, the blending, the frying, the colours, the aromas, the tasting then adding, and then the final results offered alongside decorations" (*OHSW*, 2003: 58). In Nalini's life, all the phases of preparing, cooking, and serving food predominate over any other task or duty that can also be fulfilled by her from her childhood. As a child, she has two options: to cook with her mother as her mother's assistant while serving food for other people or to go to school as a student for continuing her education. It is seen that Nalini prefers to be the assistant cook with her free will. This preference might help her gain her self-worth and dignity through engaging in practical and productive culinary tasks. These tasks might offer her various opportunities for developing her talent in cooking further and having deeper knowledge about the features of spices or the details of recipes belonging to the Indian cuisine. It is seen that, for Nalini, cooking or any other food-related task is neither an obligatory duty to be fulfilled in order to complete the daily routine of

offering foods to other people nor a requirement solely for meeting daily nutritional needs.

For the little Maya, her mother and grandmother “worked like two magicians and with smoke they could turn piles of vegetables and colourful spices into feasts” (*OHSW*, 2003: 8). Maya tells her story by means of flashbacks from her babyhood during which she can become aware of the fact that her mother and grandmother can prepare and cook excellent meals by putting together various ingredients including vegetables and spices that have a special place in Indian culture. In fact, the process of transformation of ingredients into delicious meals is a demanding one, and the women carrying out the requirements for having a tasty consequence at the end can spend most of their time in a kitchen by dealing with the culinary steps meticulously. Performing these tasks with pleasure and desiring to be included in various food-related routines are the issues that can also be detected in the lives of Ammu and Nalini who enthusiastically engage in the events during which they can cook and serve food for other people. The feasts that are offered in the celebrations organised by rich people can be regarded as further opportunities for these two women who can skilfully cook and serve foods for many people.

Nalini is an Indian woman for whom each step of cooking has exceptional importance starting from the preparation to the mixture of ingredients in order to have an edible meal. She is a cook and assists her mother who is the most valuable guide for Nalini in the process of learning the key points about foods, culinary steps, and recipes belonging to the traditional Indian cuisine. She claims that “the only thing my mother could do exceptionally well was cook” (*OHSW*, 2003: 54). It is seen in the novel that Nalini and her mother perform culinary steps conscientiously while cooking Indian food, and Nalini frequently remembers her mother in the process of engaging in food-related tasks. For Nalini and Ammu, specific foods have specific features affecting people when they consume these foods. It is important to do the cooking with love and gratitude and combine the ingredients carefully since it might have an influence over the people consuming the prepared meals. This influence might have either positive or a negative impact on the consumers as per to the talent of the cook who brings together the ingredients together. Moreover, the mood of the cook is also regarded as a crucial component affecting quality of the meal obtained as a consequence of the culinary steps followed either meticulously or carelessly. It is revealed in the novel that

The art of putting together food is a magical thing and if it is done right it has the power to soften the most hardened heart. My mother always said that when you work with what you love, you work with magic. However, if the ingredients are incorrectly administered, or if you work with bad intention, it can also bring the most disastrous results. Subtly, we laboured, convinced that it was the love and gratitude we put into the preparation of the Kathi's food that made them prosper. Just the right amount of cumin to stimulate appetite for life, a cinnamon quill to bring spice or action into stagnant phases of life, lemon juice to diffuse an argument, chilli to relieve pain and turmeric to heal the heart. Freshly picked coriander leaves tempered bad humour and gave a sense of clarity, fiery peppered rasam warmed the soul, and grated coconut added to many dishes soothed and comforted. Pounded lentils left to soak for days made the batter for soft pancakes filled with shallow fried masala potatoes for a sense of pride and stability. Golden beans added to vegetable thoran were for longevity and prosperity (*OHSW*, 2003: 55).

Most probably, Nalini learns these features specific to specific foods to be used while cooking delicious Indian food that appeals not only to the appetite but also to the senses of the consumers. A cook is expected to have the information about both the characteristics and the right portions of ingredients when a certain type of meal is prepared. The reason of this expectation might be the possibility that undesired results may occur if the ingredients are not administered correctly, which is also underlined by Nalini as a probable reason of the unfavourable effects of the prepared meals on the people consuming them. Therefore, the more the recipes are followed carefully and correctly, the better the nutritional and also sensational quality of the foods will be. For Nalini and her mother, the nutritional quality, value, taste, odour, and appearance of foods can be some of the factors that are regarded as the crucial criteria while preparing meals. However, it can be inferred that they also attach importance to the points determining the sensational quality of the foods that might affect consumers' moods either positively or negatively.

Healing potential of the foods, especially the spices, might be considered as another point reflected frequently in the works belonging to female authors. "Every food has medical significance" (Fischler, 1988: 280), and healing the body through consuming certain types of foods and spices is not a new concept reflected in fictional works. The Indian cuisine is reflected generally with the abundance of spices used frequently in the recipes belonging to the Indian food culture. The power of them is a matter of fact in most of the fictional creations that include events and images which can be regarded as the ones specific to the Indian heritage. The aromatic richness of the

Indian cuisine finds its path in the fictional works, especially with the power of the spices which are used for healing physical, psychological, and also emotional troubles of the characters. It can be stated that each spice has its own specific features which can be considered as its own identity among a great number of other spices existing in the Indian culinary heritage. This resembles to the fact that each individual has his/her own personal features that play a very vital role in the identity development processes. However, individuals might go through identity crises due to various reasons and they might be in search of finding their own identities. In fictional works, spices can help these individuals to find their autonomous identities through the influence arising from the power of the spices that are the indispensable components of the Indian cuisine. Female authors can take the advantage of this feature while narrating the events at the centre of which there are female characters in search of their self-worth and dignity. As it is said before, spices are used for flavouring the dishes with the richness of aromatic tastes that they provide but they also have an important role for healing individuals while providing a kind of relief for various physical, mental, and emotional troubles that might be experienced by them.

Moreover, spices are a part of Indian culture and they can be used as an instrument for conveying messages related to the identities of the fictional characters in literary works. There is a positive interaction between the identities of the spices and the identities of the individuals who benefit from the power of spices. Thus, foods and especially spices are the instruments for reflecting the issues related to the social, cultural, ethnic, and national identities of the fictional characters. That is to say, foods can become characters that play crucial roles in the development of events and, similarly, spices can also be personified and equipped with the power of influencing the narrative flow of the stories. Accordingly, in this novel, this theme deserves to be examined and reported carefully while narrating the food-related events influencing the female characters not only physiologically but also psychologically, mentally, and emotionally. In this novel, healing the feelings of consumers is shown as a possible outcome of cooking foods that include ingredients influencing not only general physiological conditions but also emotional and psychological well-being of consumers. In the novel, it is mentioned that there is a belief regarding the curative powers of twins who are considered as the doctors of the village. However, Nalini's mother does not believe in this belief related to the twins. Nalini states that "in the village, twins were

supposed to have curative powers and if someone had an ailment, one of the twins was brought in to touch the patient. If this failed, the other twin was brought in and the patient was supposedly healed” (*OHSW*, 2003: 59). However, this belief is not accepted by Ammu who looks for a meaningful link between the diseases people have and the treatments that the twins apply to cure these diseases. Considering the healing power of twins, Nalini underlines that “my mother didn’t believe a word of it, thinking that most complaints in the village were cured by her fiery pepper rasams” (*OHSW*, 2003: 59). Ammu is an old woman who trusts her recipes prepared to heal the people who might suffer from a wide range of diseases. She knows the details regarding the healing power of any kind of spices that can be implemented as a curative agent and “she said that ailments were very simple to cure; cold diseases treated by warm spices and warm diseases treated by cold spices” (*OHSW*, 2003: 59). For her, when the features of spices are well-known and the diseases are specified carefully, it would not be too difficult to find the best remedy for healing the physiological, psychological, and emotional disorders of people.

In this novel, the story takes place mainly in two different places, India and England, and the border crossings between these two nations experienced by some of the female characters have a powerful impact on the development of a strong bond among the three generation females with different personal experiences. This bond might take its power from the inherent ability in performing culinary tasks and the awareness about food-related issues reflected in the narrative frame of the story. Starting from Ammu, who is the ancestral guide for Nalini and then Maya, the female characters go through food-related experiences as the women of three-generations. This can be seen as a journey starting from the grandmother and continues with the granddaughter in the process of attaining a sense of dignity and self-worth through partaking in food-related issues. The inherited talent in cooking contributes to the identity development processes of these female characters and enables them to attain the feeling of wholeness despite the differences in their experiences as the females of three generations. In this process, there are various incidents causing these women to have memorable culinary experiences throughout their lives. These incidents can either be a simplest daily routine of purchasing foods in order to cook meals for a nuclear family or an elaborative preparation phase for giving a feast to a large number of people including friends, relatives, neighbours, and so on. The richness of the unforgettable culinary

images in the minds of the female characters is shown itself through the narrative framework of the story in which even the smallest details can be remembered and narrated when the narrators Maya and Nalini telling their stories in alternate chapters in the novel. The generation difference leads to a complicated relationship between the female characters and food-related experiences. This relationship becomes more and more complicated due to the fact that second and third generation females, Nalini and Maya, have to cope with the changes that they encounter following their immigration to England. While one of them can long for the foods consumed in the motherland, the other can reject consuming any kind of food belonging to their background and desire to taste the foods of the foreign land after their immigration. As it can be inferred from the stories of the mother and daughter narrated in alternate chapters, the journey between two different places inevitably causes a culinary journey from the foods of the motherland to the ones available in the foreign land.

When her daughter and grandchildren are to move to a foreign land, Ammu reminds Maya, her granddaughter, the importance of remembering their past and any detail related to their origins in the future. She says “Mol, promise me you’ll try to remember this, all of this, the place you are from when you are older, not just the place but the pace. You won’t forget the language, the smells, colours, the people, will you, Mol? Don’t ever forget where you’re from” (*OHSW*, 2003: 16). As an ancestral maternal figure, Ammu pays utmost attention to the continuity of their own heritage through the future generations even though they have to live in a place far from their own land. If they really desire to be a part of this heritage, they can find a way for remembering, practicing, and transferring their cultural knowledge and traditions. As a little child in India, Maya can learn her traditional values through the elders living around her. After her arrival in England on her fourth birthday, there is nobody, apart from her own parents, to be observed for attaining the Indian values. That means that she can forget some or most of her heritage due to being far away from her ancestral origins. In order to prevent this possibility as much as possible, Nalini has an important role as the mother and also the cultural representative who can guide her children in the process of having the knowledge related their own culture and traditions. It is seen that Nalini assumes full responsibility for keeping the link between her children and the Indian culture alive through persisting in the practices of her own heritage. She is almost alone in this effort since her husband, Raul, is open to new experiences offered

by the culture of the foreign land in which they start a new life. Namely, their new life brings new experiences, new tastes, new habits, and new knowledge. Among these novelties, new culinary experiences can also be ranged among the issues about which Nalini and Raul do not share the same view. It is obvious that “a woman’s experience includes a different perceptual and emotional life; women do not see things in the same ways as men, and have different ideas and feelings about what is important or not important” (Selden et al., 2005: 121). In contrast to Nalini’s insistence in consuming only the foods belonging to the Indian cuisine, Raul does not have such an inclination to prevent his children from consuming the foods of the new cuisine.

Maya’s memories about her father are always the happy ones. According to Maya, Raul misses his children very much when he is far away from home due to business purposes. Maya states that “Achan was never upset with us” (*OHSW*, 2003: 10), and he allows Maya and Satchin to do whatever they want. For Maya, the reason of this attitude is that “this was because Achan was away a lot and so he really missed us. When he came back, he brought us many gifts from faraway places” (*OHSW*, 2003: 10). Raul spends lots of time with Maya and Satchin and behaves tenderly while they are playing games together when he returns from abroad to his home in India. Likewise, Raul tries to please them and allows them to experience new things freely when they move to England. An example to the children’s experiencing new things is the event that they taste red meat in a restaurant serving fast-food including hamburgers, chips, cola, and any other things. Maya states that “Achan ordered hamburgers for us. Up until then we had never eaten red meat but Achan said it was important to try new things” (*OHSW*, 2003: 20). When they arrive to the restaurant, Maya and Satchin enjoy the moment of tasting new foods which are totally different from the ones that they consume so far in India. However, Nalini does not share similar feelings with her children, and Maya realizes that “Amma looked distressed when we went into a restaurant” (*OHSW*, 2003: 20). In contrast to Nalini’s insistence in consuming the food belonging to their own cuisine, her children are mesmerised by the foods belonging to the culinary culture of the immigrated country. Their first encounter with the foods of the immigrated land is narrated by Maya as “then the burgers came and they had flags made from cocktail sticks on top of them and came with something called chips and ketchup. It was an amazing taste and Satchin and I looked at each other chomping into our food and drinking cola” (*OHSW*, 2003: 21). Not only the tastes but also the

appearances of the foods are all new culinary experiences for little Maya and Satchin. From now on, their new life in the foreign land includes an inclination towards consuming the food belonging to the cuisine of this country. As the story develops, it is seen that this inclination turns into a kind of insistence in consuming only the food of the immigrated country although this insistence does not please Nalini.

After their arrival in England, Nalini goes out only when she has to accompany Maya and Satchin while they are going to school and coming back to home. She does not even go shopping for buying groceries. Even though she does not participate actively into the selection and purchasing of ingredients including the vegetables, fruits, spices, Nalini does not give up cooking Indian food in the kitchen of their new house. Considering this, Maya states that “groceries and things like spices and other ingredients, which weren’t readily available, were delivered to our house every Thursday by a man named Tom. Achan had arranged this as Amma liked to cook. It was the only thing she really loved to do” (*OHSW*, 2003: 23). Her family knows Nalini’s affection in cooking and also her devotion to the recipes belonging to the Indian cuisine. This affection in cooking and participating in food-related tasks is confirmed by Nalini as well. In the novel, various issues related to the gender, identity, and ethnicity of the female characters and also nostalgia and homesickness are reflected through the experiences, feelings, and thoughts of Nalini who is very upset because of the fact that she is far away from her own land and misses both her mother and any other detail belonging to her hometown. The only possible opportunity for her to keep her sanity and fill the emotional void is to engage in culinary tasks, and she narrates “happiness; happiness was a state of mind, happiness was a state of mind; if I said it enough times perhaps it would seep into my consciousness. I had to do something, anything, so I got Raul to have groceries and spices delivered to the house. At least I could cook to keep my sanity” (*OHSW*, 2003: 82). The feelings of loneliness and sadness in the foreign land might be minimized by means of creating an atmosphere in the kitchen which is furnished with the foods and culinary details belonging to the motherland. Nalini misses her mother and her own land so much so that she tries to fill this huge gap through cooking food belonging to the Indian cuisine. More importantly, in each of these recipes, there are memories related to her mother and the culinary tasks that they perform together in their hometown. It is observed that Nalini tries to pursue

the traditional values belonging to the Indian culture, and this effort is narrated by her with the following words:

I cooked huge meals and placed them on the dining-room table. From morning to night, I would concoct dishes, remembering recipes and stories from my mother, cook and forget the place I was in. I would polish the cutlery and decorate the table. Nobody ate what I made. Raul had either eaten at the office or with clients or friends, and the children preferred their new-found meals of burgers and fishfingers. I would secretly garnish these with spices so that they would never forget where they were from (*OHSW*, 2003: 82).

The psychological and emotional state that Nalini is in while performing these food-related tasks is open to discussion. Although nobody cares about consuming the foods cooked by her with love and special attention, Nalini does not give up her efforts to do her best in preparing, cooking, and serving food. It is seen that cooking and dealing with food-related events is the most important instrument for her to sustain her well-being and mental and emotional health. However, her family members are not aware of this fact and do not pay attention to the value of consuming the foods of their own culture as much as possible while they are living in a foreign land. It is observed that in contrast to Nalini's insistence in maintaining the special features of the Indian cuisine, Raul does not have such a strong tendency in preferring foods belonging to the cuisine of the motherland. On the other hand, the children prefer eating the foods of the new land and reject consuming the foods belonging to their own cuisine. In this regard, considering the foods prepared by Nalini and the ones preferred by Maya and Satchin, Maya points that "her food would often go to waste as Satchin and I discovered that we liked burgers and fishfingers with ketchup a whole lot better. We would gang up against her and make her place these items on the grill instead or tell her how to make English things" (*OHSW*, 2003: 24).

Food as a source of relief and comfort has a crucial role in Nalini's life. When Nalini incidentally learns the secret affair of her husband, she thinks of her children immediately and the first thing that she does is to cook food for Maya and Satchin. In this regard, she narrates "my children, what would I tell the children? In two hours they would be home. I made my way to the kitchen and began to cook frantically" (*OHSW*, 2003: 85). It is obvious that being in the kitchen and cooking food are the unique agents that can help Nalini in a state of desperate confusion and emotional turmoil. She rushes into kitchen and cannot help herself from cooking frantically. She almost loses herself

while cooking which can be regarded as a way for attaining emotional relief immediately after a devastating event. Even though her hand starts bleeding while she is chopping, she cannot stop herself from cooking. She narrates this moment as “the blood from my hand covered the marrow as I picked it up and began to chop. Blood and tears dripped into the pan and made the oil splatter. Blood seeped into the wooden spoon as I held the spoon tighter and tighter. I began to stir” (*OHSW*, 2003: 85). This event is a devastating shock for Nalini who cannot say her children that their father leaves them since he has a secret family. While stirring the food, she takes important decisions about what to do in order to protect her children from any dangers or problems, even the ones caused by their own father. In this regard, she decides not to say the real reason of their father’s disappearance to her children. She tries to keep calm and says Maya and Satchin that their father dies in an accident. Raul dies for Nalini when she learns his infidelity followed by Raul’s leaving his family behind for the sake of another woman with whom he has a long-term relationship which can be inferred from the fact that they have a child together. As a mother, Nalini strives to protect her children from anything that might upset them, even from their own father, Raul. For this reason, she makes a decision regarding what to tell about Raul when her children ask. She should be very attentive while choosing the right words in order not to hurt Maya and Satchin. She would tell them that their father dies in an accident as a hero while saving a little child. When the children are informed about their father’s death, they are shocked to learn that their father would not come back any more. No matter how careful Nalini is in using proper words, both Maya and Satchin are wounded deeply upon their father’s death.

On the other hand, Maya looks for her father’s personal possessions including his clothes and any other items used by Raul. Although she cannot find anything possessed by their father, Maya keeps searching for the clothes worn by him. Then she realizes that her father’s clothes are packed. For Maya, it is too strange to believe since her mother packs her father’s possessions into big boxes without any exception. She thinks that her mother behaves as if her father does not exist, and when Nalini says “Mol, he’s not coming back. Come, eat something” (*OHSW*, 2003: 30) to Maya, she is surprised and cannot figure out the reason of Nalini’s attitude. She thinks “Eat? Is that all she ever thought about? How could we eat? She had cooked an elaborate dinner and placed some chicken drumsticks coated with breadcrumbs on a side plate (more as an

afterthought that we might not like the rest). We ate none of it and went to bed” (*OHSW*, 2003: 30).

At first, Maya and Satchin reject consuming Indian food because they may find hamburger, fishfinger, chips, and cola much more delicious than the food of traditional Indian cuisine. However, there can be any other reasons for not eating the Indian food after Raul leaves them all alone in this new land without any explanation. This event is a milestone in the lives of Nalini and her children, and Nalini has to take care of her children on her own. Nalini has to earn money in order to have an income for meeting the needs of her children and she starts working in a factory for long hours almost every day. When she arrives home after a long day of working, she finds her children almost asleep, and thus, they do not have much time to spend together in the evenings as before. When the children sleep, Nalini finds herself in the kitchen not only for cooking but also for forgetting. She states she “cooked whatever they needed for the next day, cooked just to forget. Forget that somewhere I was losing them, that Satchin was becoming very responsible” (*OHSW*, 2003: 91). She feels that even though they are very young physically, Maya and Satchin have to grow up so fast emotionally and psychologically in order to be able to cope with the difficulties they experience so far. While her children grow up with limited living standards, Nalini feels so guilty because she has nothing to offer her children to make their lives better. The only thing that she can do is to cook various types of foods. Nalini cannot catch the moment in this process during which an emotional distance appears between her and her children, especially Maya. Considering respectively Satchin and Maya, Nalini states that “at eight, he had responsibilities beyond his years, and Maya; Maya was very distant, almost in a world of her own” (*OHSW*, 2003: 91). It is seen that Maya and Nalini cannot built a healthy communication with each other after their immigration to England and especially after Raul’s disappearance. This communication problem shows itself through their discussions about insistence in or rejection of the foods belonging to the Indian cuisine. In this regard, Maya confesses that one of the reasons for rejecting Indian food is to make her mother react in a way which can be a chance for reaching her mother emotionally since she works desperately for earning money in order to provide a better life for her children after Raul leaves them suddenly. Nalini is very tired because she works for long hours in a factory. As a result, she cannot spend time together with her children at home as she could do in the past. Appearing due to economic reasons, this

distance makes Maya unconsciously fear from the possibility that her mother might also disappear suddenly as her father. This feeling of anxiety causes problems between Maya and Nalini especially when the issue is eating Indian food. In this regard, Maya states that “when she cooked Indian food, I insisted on something else. I wish I had never done these things but I was desperate for her shout at me, to react, to tell me that she didn’t love me, that she couldn’t cope with it all and that she was going too, but she never did” (*OHSW*, 2003: 51). Nalini is a patient and self-sacrificing woman and she does not hurt her children no matter how hard they try especially when the issue is related to Indian food and culinary tradition. She becomes more and more careful about behaving tenderly to her children notably after the betrayal of her husband who suddenly leaves Nalini, Maya, and Satchin alone in the foreign land even without saying goodbye to them.

Cooking and dealing with food-related tasks turn to be chance for compensating the things that Nalini cannot offer to her children especially after her husband’s disappearance. However, it is seen in the novel that her outstanding ability of cooking and dealing with food-related tasks provides her opportunities not only for earning money but also for overcoming the troubles that cause them suffer in the foreign land where they have to continue their lives. Nalini gets the chance for engaging in a task that she can also do professionally in the future. She starts preparing and selling bottles of pickles including delicious combinations of ingredients that attract the attention of greater number of people every passing they. As a result of the increasing demand for the pickles prepared by her, Nalini moves to a bigger house with a separate kitchen where she can continue her new occupation. Their friends Tom and Maggie, who support Nalini and her children while they are trying to continue their lives after Raul’s disappearance, have a great contribution to their food-related entrepreneurship and the name of their brand is revealed as “The Abundance of Spice” (*OHSW*, 2003: 108). During this period of starting and continuing this new entrepreneurship, Nalini may sometimes worry about the details but she underlines that “the worrying went on, but when I cooked, everything paled into insignificance” (*OHSW*, 2003: 100). It is also seen that Nalini opens a shop for selling the pickles and also employs other people in this shop. Considering the influence of the pickles and the shop over the customers, Nalini states that

the shop was like a magnet that drew many broken hearts. These fragile hearts came in with layers of armour so they appeared very strong. We had an array of customers ... All entered with an air of certainty. Unbeknown to them, the sound of the chimes and the various smells disarmed them and made them feel safe, they felt secure in the store and they didn't even know it (*OHSW*, 2003: 128).

The pickles prepared by Nalini who performs each step of the preparation process carefully turn to be the instruments that can heal the unbroken hearts and cause them feel relieved and secure.

In the process of preparing and selling pickles, Nalini receives another opportunity to earn money through cooking. One of their household clients, Ravi Thakker, who will be Nalini's husband, needs a cook who will prepare meals for a dinner organisation for a group of Ravi's guests. Engaging in the task of cooking foods for Ravi's guests with pleasure and gratitude, Nalini achieves in completing her duty through cooking "unbelievable" (*OHSW*, 2003: 110) foods. The first impression leads to an agreement with Ravi and Nalini that she will continue to engage in culinary tasks for Ravi when he needs a cook. After a while, Ravi makes a marriage proposal to Nalini who can make her decision on whether or not to accept this proposal while cooking. For Nalini, "in cooking, there are always answers" (*OHSW*, 2003: 119). In each step of cooking, she considers the details about the lives of people around her including Maya, Satchin, Tom, and Maggie. When she feels that everything will be fine also for them, she accepts Ravi's marriage proposal. They get married and have a little daughter, Ammu, who will have a tendency to take part in food-related tasks and help her mother in culinary issues in the future. Following the little baby's birth, Nalini cannot go back to the pickle shop due to a feeling of void deep inside Nalini who thinks that nobody can understand her emotional condition causing her to feel inadequate to solve the problems and her insecurities related to the life in general. Since she cannot go back to the shop for almost a year, it loses its previous atmosphere of welcoming great number of customers with changing needs. Even though she tries to bring the shop into its previous state, something obligatory happens and she has to sell the shop. Her previous husband appears unexpectedly. Nalini sells the shop and gives the money coming from this sale to Raul in order to keep him away from Maya and Satchin thinking that their father died in an accident. The closure of the shop due to various unfavourable reasons does not cause Nalini to give up her passion for dealing with food-related tasks. After the troubles restricting her are resolved, she opens a new pickle shop where she can

engage in food preparation with love, gratitude, pleasure, and attention. She believes in the power of the spices that can be a remedy for the consumers' troubles when the cooks use them with love and gratitude. This new shop surrounded with spices also offers the opportunity for improving the mother-daughter relationship between Nalini and Maya. Through the end of the story, Maya's attitude towards her family and her own cultural heritage changes after her visit to India. During this trip, she learns the truths about her father's infidelity, and then she recognises the fact that her mother Nalini tries to do her best to protect them all along her life. Moreover, Maya finds out that her grandmother, Ammu, leaves them a letter before her death, and this letter, in which Ammu enjoins Nalini to teach Maya everything about spices, plays an important role in the initiation of Maya's food-related journey guided by Nalini. The details about spices are accepted as the most important thing that Ammu once taught Nalini, and now, it is Nalini's turn to transfer her knowledge about spices to the next generation. Thus, Nalini and her daughters, Maya and Ammu, initiate a culinary journey through which they can produce original tastes by considering the information related to cooking Indian food taught by grandmother Ammu and by combining the details belonging to the Indian and English cuisine.

In conclusion, it can be stated that Preethi Nair portrays the food-related journey of the female characters and their identity formation processes by deconstructing the pre-established considerations regarding culinary tasks performed by females in the kitchens. This food-related journey includes lots of details about the female characters' personal, social, and financial development phases, and it is not restricted within the borders of daily nutritional needs. From the beginning till the end of the novel, food-related details are frequently portrayed, and the power and value of spices are the most recurrent themes in the story of the female characters. Under the guidance of the ancestral figure, the features of spices having a great importance in the Indian cultural heritage and cuisine are learnt by the posterior generations. It can be inferred that Preethi Nair gives prominence to the spices while narrating the story in accordance with the value and significance attributed to the spices in Indian culture. The taste, scent, type, colour, and benefits of spices contribute to the flow of the events narrated in the novel. It can be inferred that the scent of spices arising while preparing dishes belonging to the Indian cuisine plays an important role while Maya and Nalini are taking decisions regarding their lives. It is revealed in the novel that the female characters become aware

of the influence of ingredients, especially spices, used while cooking. The scent of spices can be considered as a foothold for Nalini in the foreign land where she has to continue her life and also a guide for Maya who is in search of her autonomous identity in between two different cultural backgrounds. It is seen that Preethi Nair portrays Nalini and Maya's stories in a way through which the Indian cuisine is described as an agent contributing significantly to the identity formation processes of the female characters from changing perspectives. Preethi Nair's technique for depicting culinary issues through deconstructing the traditional considerations related to foods, food-related tasks, and also kitchens offers a renewed perspective to be examined attentively by considering the interaction between food and identity development processes of the female characters represented in the novel. It is observed that both Nalini and Maya combine the details of the Indian cuisine with the features of the foreign cuisine, and spices are reflected as an indispensable component of this combination. As a consequence, combination of two different cuisines and enthusiasm of engaging in food-related tasks lead to the personal, social, and financial development which has a direct impact also on self-fulfilment, dignity, and well-being of the female characters in the novel.

CONCLUSION

As a result of the analyses conducted within the frame of this study, information about gynocriticism as a part of feminist literary criticism, female poetics, female identity, and food-related issues has been gathered through an extensive research in the related literature. The theoretical background of the study has been formed by means of collecting relevant data obtained from the academic studies performed on the mentioned research areas. Moreover, the selected novels have been examined carefully in order to detect examples that are related to the theoretical background of the study based mainly on the claims of a well-known feminist critic Elaine Showalter. Showalter's definition of gynocriticism and the scope of this term as a part of feminist literary criticism have been the starting point of this study focusing on female characters represented in the fictional works of female authors that are investigated for revealing whether they are created autonomously by deconstructing the literary standards practiced in male-authored fictional texts. In order to reveal the authenticity of the selected novels that are analysed from a gynocritical perspective, critical views of Showalter, primarily, and then the ones belonging to other female critics contributing to the development of gynocriticism as an influential and comprehensive part of the feminist literary criticism are tried to be included into the scope of this study. Thus, while performing this investigation, the focus is principally on the academic writings that belong to women and are about women. The reason of selecting a female-centred point of view is the fact that the aim of this study is to reveal the renewal and reformation in the ways how women are represented by female authors in the selected novels. The details related to the female characters' physical, emotional, spiritual, psychological, social, cultural, and financial experiences and also their expectations about these factors deserve to be evaluated critically while examining the fictional works with a gynocritical perspective. It can also be concluded that gynocriticism emphasises the importance of understanding and appreciating the woman image as a whole together with the connection existing among the soul, mind, body, and spirit of women that can be interpreted from the creative fictional works belonging to female authors. The multi-dimensional point of view while performing a woman-centred critical analysis is of great importance in decoding the encoded images offering relevant data about women from changing social, cultural, and national backgrounds. It can be claimed that experiences of female

characters can be revealed as the pieces of a puzzle, and in order to reach the whole picture depicting females in fictional works, any detail about feelings, desires, thoughts, and beliefs of these characters should be meticulously examined. The reason is that together with the daily life experiences depicted explicitly, female characters' inner worlds can be seen as a source of information to be evaluated while performing a critical analysis about these characters.

It should be noted that feminism creates an awareness regarding the discrimination of women in front of the male-dominated social order and aims to ensure gender equality in all parts of social life through standing for the rights of women. Upon its appearance and constant development as an influential social movement, a great range of fields have been affected by feminism. Among these fields, literature has become an important means for reflecting the details of feminism by means of analysing the female characters and their experiences created in various literary genres. In order to interpret fictional representations of female characters through a critical perspective, feminist literary criticism functions as an influential trend in analysing literary works critically. That is to say, feminism encompasses the issues revealed in literature and also in literary criticism in which women are depicted and criticised from changing perspectives. Feminism works not only for defending the rights of women but also for challenging all the stereotypical considerations marginalising women in social life. Accordingly, feminist criticism aims to demolish the patriarchal hierarchies and underlines the value of gender equality in all parts of life. Fictional works in which women are the second sex in front of the dominant patriarchal social systems are severely criticised by feminist literary criticism that insists on the necessity to reassess literary works with a renewed perspective. Feminist literary criticism boosts the opportunities through which women can be actively involved in creating and also criticising fictional works where they can increase the awareness about female experiences. Deconstructing the standards of the male literary canon, female authors create female characters that can express their feelings, thoughts, desires, and beliefs freely by means of various personal strategies and preferences. It can be claimed that they have more freedom for self-expression when compared with the female characters of the classical fictional compositions. With this renewal, traditional definitions of women turn upside-down because new definitions of women cannot fit into the frames of the past any longer. In fictional works of female authors, women can break with the

dominancy of traditional social roles imposed by patriarchy, and they can behave as independent individuals who can become conscious about their self-worth and dignity.

The critical feminist perspective is not limited within certain borders while criticising the issues related to females. Accordingly, the aims of feminist critics can show diversity as per changing reasons including the social, political, and financial conditions that can play an important role in women's life. In order to reveal these factors, feminist critics can benefit from the literary representations of female characters found in both male-authored and female-authored fictional works. It can be inferred that each group can offer a great range of fictional portrayals related to women and their experiences, and these portrayals are open to critical discussion by considering any detail that might be collected as important gender-related patterns in social life. It can be concluded that women might be represented as the marginalised, voiceless, powerless, and invisible characters that might not have a crucial and/or critical role in the flow of the events narrated in the male-authored fictional works where the patriarchal social standards are the dominant norms. On the other hand, it can be also claimed that these representations have been converted into a totally opposite form and women have been represented as powerful and visible characters that can express themselves freely and have an active role in social life in female-authored fictional works. The renewal in the portrayal of female characters is accomplished through deconstructing the literary standards determined by male authors of the classical literature. The deconstruction process of the stereotypical representations of women has been carried a step further with the contributions of the female authors all around the world.

Since the focal point of the present study is related to the place of women in the development of the literary tradition of female authors from all around the world, the theoretical background of the research is based on the critical perspective related to two concepts depicted by gynocritics. These concepts are *women as reader* and *women as writer* which are explained by Showalter pursuant to women's interaction with literary works. It is seen that these two aspects get out of any simplistic definitions and become a powerful basis for gynocriticism that brings out significant critical inquiries and academic studies related to the place and role of women in the production and consumption of literary works. It is obvious that females can be the readers of the fictional works produced either by male or female writers. However, they can also become the writers of their own creations. In this regard, females are taken into

consideration as the writers rather than the readers of the fictional works in gynocritical analyses conducted for revealing the presence of a female literary tradition that is formed by the contributions of female authors. Within this scope, Showalter is the female critic defines gynocriticism in order to have a meaningful term to be used while speaking about the concept of *women as writer* in all its parts. In her criticism about this issue, Showalter explains this need in creating a new and original term which is appropriate for this concept, and she states that there is not a suitable word defined to fill this gap in the critical studies which are about female authors as the producers of the fictional works. With the creation of the term *gynocriticism*, the focus of critical studies moves towards the reformation of the knowledge related to the literary history. It could be expected that female authors would bring a renewed perspective that could dive into even the smallest details of literary representations of female characters. When the related literature is analysed, it can be detected that female authors have become successful at deconstructing the literary standards of the past and bringing innovation to the process of creating fictional works. As a result, female readers can have the opportunity for reading literary products belonging to female authors with a renewed perspective. Moreover, female critics can also evaluate the works of female authors and they can compare and contrast the features of fictional works belonging to male and female authors. Basing on these possibilities, it can be claimed that females have important roles in literary world and they can contribute to the development and progression of the literary history by means of creating, criticising, and also consuming fictional works.

Through the gynocritical approach to the literary works, female critics can prioritise the female experience reflected from the perspective of females, and by this way, female authors, characters, and readers can be united within a female-centred framework where they can share many experiences that are common for women all around the world. This should not be considered as an essentialist approach that excludes the male-authored texts or the criticism of male critics totally. The point is that gynocriticism aims to create an awareness regarding the fact that the literary products belonging to females have not been considered as a part of common literary history where male-authored and female-authored texts can be represented as autonomous creative works. It is detected that gynocriticism allows the formation of a female literary history through the discovery of the unknown female authors of the past and with the

participation of modern female authors of the present. By this way, it can be revealed that female authors can also share a common ground while creating their works and they can form a female subculture including female authors, readers, and characters. With the help of the female subculture in literature, females can move beyond the standards of male authority restricting them within certain borders, and thus, they can have the chance for experiencing a kind of renewal bringing the female perspective into the fore.

As understood from the critical comments of Showalter, Moers, Rich, Cixous, Gilbert, and Gubar who are among the important female critics contributing to the development of a critical framework related to female authors all around the world, literary history is not limited to the fictional works of males. Although the literary works produced and presented to readers belonged predominantly to male authors in the past, this case has changed in a way that female authors have become visible in world literature. Their works have reached to readers of any culture and they have been considered critically in academic fields. The rediscovery of the unknown female authors is one of the crucial points that are underlined by gynocriticism in the process of definition and development of the female literary history. The efforts for rediscovering the components and characteristics of the female literary tradition allow tracing the evaluations and transformations that can exist within the scope of female poetics. It is possible to make comments regarding the pattern and development process of this tradition through examining the features of the available literary works and by means of detecting the similarities and differences represented in these works. By the way, the critics can also find out and define both the universally valid concepts and the ones specific to particular national and cultural backgrounds in which the fictional works are produced. The richness of the data related to fictional creations can stem from the fact that literary works can be effective instruments for representing not only specific national or cultural features but also universal concepts which are valid, known, and practiced all around the world. One can infer from this diversity and abundance in the production of literary works that it cannot be possible to draw strict borders while analysing or commenting about a fictional work. In line with this inference, the standards and limitations practiced by the dominant male literary circles can be deconstructed as per to the scope and content of the fictional works belonging to female authors. That is to say, female authors are free to produce their autonomous fictional works, and this freedom can become an opportunity to enrich literary representations

through the contributions of the female authors. In this process, they can either combine the literary practices preferred by male and female authors or they can focus specifically to the ones implemented by female authors while deconstructing the traditional standards and norms related to literary creations.

The evaluation of issues related to the development of the female literary tradition is not an easy task to be fulfilled without much effort. The diversity in the thematic and structural formations available in literary works produced by female authors should be taken into consideration while conducting researches in order to detect and define both the common and also the uncommon features of the fictional works of female authors all around the world. In this evaluation process, there are also some other issues that are necessary to be considered, and these issues are related to social, cultural, national, political, religious, and financial factors. It can be inferred that these issues have very crucial roles in the production of fictional works and the development of critical perspectives related to the content and form of the produced literary works. These factors can be represented by both male and female authors, and they can reflect them either directly or indirectly in the fictional works. Here, another point considered is about the fact that female authors also include various issues related to and affected from the social, cultural, national, political, religious, and financial factors in the flow of their fictional creations. While doing this, they can either be as realist as possible or they can blur the real with imaginary. As per to their preferences, the fictional works can become a product to be evaluated attentively, and readers and/or critics might need to read between the lines in order to be able to find out the messages conveyed. Namely, it depends on the techniques preferred by authors. Since the focus of the current research is on female authors, it is much more appropriate to consider specifically the techniques preferred by female authors.

Considering the related literature mentioned within the scope of the present study, it can be claimed that the first female authors have a great contribution to the establishment and development of the female literary tradition. The reason of this is the fact that they become the pioneers of this tradition through their decisions to write even though they might encounter several troubles and experience various hesitations regarding the techniques and/or content of the texts while creating their own fictional works. Together with being the pioneers of the literary world of women, female authors can also have the opportunity for mirroring the experiences of women through a female

perspective and by means of creating female characters in their own texts. Since the representations of female characters in the literary works belonging to male authors do not content them, female authors obviously prefer representing female characters with a renewed perspective. This attitude leads to a different approach towards fictional characters while performing critical analyses. The counter movement of female authors offers alternative considerations regarding female characters with the help of objective representations. There can be similarities and differences between the literary works produced by male authors and the ones belonging to female authors. These similar and different aspects can stem from various factors including the gender and culture of the authors. However, the important point is to evaluate the fictional works by keeping these factors in mind and recognizing them as the potentials influencing the content and structure of the produced fictional works. Each person has a unique perspective and gender can be seen as an important reason of the difference between the perspectives of males and females. Because of the possible differences, it can be claimed that there is not any absolute literary framework that should be accepted and implemented while creating fictional works. On the contrary, this case can lead to the diversity in literary compositions through changing thematic foci and structural organisations preferred both by male and female authors. Something unimportant for male authors can be an important and significant thing to be considered for female authors, or vice versa. Similarly, while female authors can pay utmost attention to a particular theme, male authors can disregard it and show great interest in any other theme. Within the scope of the present study, the important point is that female authors do not have to pursue the literary techniques or themes preferred predominantly by male authors, and they can cross the borders drawn as per to the dominant male canon in literature. In this study, the female authors and their techniques deconstructing the literary standards defined by male authors and critics have been analysed. In the analysis process, the theoretical background of the study is tried to be supported with appropriate examples obtained from the selected novels.

In fiction, female characters can be seen as the vehicles for revealing changing social roles and character types depending on the narrative framework of the literary works that are formed by female authors. In the process of representing these issues, female authors can select different techniques and form up autonomous narrative frameworks with the help of these techniques. That is to say, the social roles, character

types, and also the experiences of the characters in the created works can be true to life in realistic fictional contexts. In these contexts, the events can be reflected as a mirror with each detail specific to these events. However, it can be underlined that female authors are not limited within the scope of certain fictional techniques while creating their works. They have the right for establishing the narrative structure of their works autonomously, and thus, they find an opportunity for creating fictional contexts that can deconstruct the standards of the literary history constructed with male-authored works.

In the novels belonging to female authors and analysed within the scope of the present study, it is detected that female characters find a place in social life and make themselves visible through their own efforts. In the novels, these efforts take their strength from foods and food-related issues that become important components for the formation of powerful female images. It should be noted that these efforts are not the consequence of any obligation to be obeyed by the female characters. These characters perform food-related tasks with their free will as a part of their identity development processes. It is also seen that when they cannot express their feelings, thoughts, desires, and beliefs verbally, foods can substitute the unspoken words to be decoded from the foods prepared by the female characters. It can be regarded as a proof of the fact that female characters do not have any intention to be marginalised and silenced by the standards or the norms of the patriarchal social structure. They awaken and strive for continuing their lives freely without being under the dominance and/or control of the patriarchy. Furthermore, foods offer various kinds of opportunities for the female characters in the novels. They can sustain their lives through the income that they earn through performing food-related tasks including cooking and also tasting foods in professional environments. Additionally, these tasks can provide relief from various troubles of daily life that might affect the female characters socially, psychologically, emotionally, and also physically. When the female characters involve in changing types of culinary tasks, they can overcome these troubles and become more powerful than before by means of the positive impact of these tasks on the personal development processes of these characters. It is also observed that in contrast to the negative narrative plot lines in which female characters remain unfortunately as the voiceless, invisible, and marginalised ones who cannot have the opportunity for self-realisation and development, the female characters of the selected novels are obviously different from the previously encountered female images as a consequence of the renewal in the

narrative strategies preferred by the female authors of these novels. These authors contribute to the redefinition of the female image and also bring a kind of reformation to the traits of women portrayed in fictional works.

The selected novels have their own original narrative frameworks through which they make unique contributions to the establishment process of the female literary tradition where these original fictional works share a great range of common features. It is detected that the influence of foods on the identity development processes of the female characters is one of the most important and common points in the selected novels. Another point observed while analysing the novels is the relationship between male characters and foods and food-related issues. It is seen that male characters do not engage in culinary tasks as the female characters do. In their daily routines, the male characters of the selected novels do not partake in cooking or any other food-related processes which resemble to the ones experienced by the female characters. It can be inferred that while the female characters' relationships with foods leads to extraordinary and complex events surrounding their stories, the male characters' relationships with foods do not go beyond daily nutritional needs. The male characters are represented as the ones who do shopping to buy foods or consume these foods, and thus, it can be stated that the issues of buying or consuming food do not embody the qualities which are portrayed through the female characters' experiences occurring when they engage in food-related routines. In this regard, the relationship between foods and the female characters deserve a critical analysis considering the research topic of this thesis. Accordingly, it can be claimed that foods and culinary issues are one of the most common features encountered within the scope of narratives representing the experiences of female characters. Women from differing cultures, nations, social and ethnic backgrounds, age groups, and educational levels can have food-related experiences that might be somehow common to all of them despite the existing differences in their lives. One of the most important reasons of this is the fact that food is a universal item with its multidimensional characteristics that can be separately or simultaneously included into the thematic frames of fictional works all around the world.

It is also concluded that foods are much more than their physiological or biological features, and the complex nature of foods encompasses also the concerns about immigrant females longing for their motherlands. However, this interaction

between foods and immigrant people has another dimension when the second or third generation family members are considered. Since the focus of this study is on female characters, the analysis goes through mentioning the experiences of females of different generations for whom foods and culinary issues are much more complex and dynamic matters. It can be claimed that the first and second generation immigrant women might adhere strictly to their culinary background and strive to consume foods belonging to their own culture even though they have to continue their lives in a different place far from their own lands. As a result of the diversity existing in cultural, national, and regional features of the motherland and the foreign land, female characters might encounter with various patterns in culinary facts, and this possibility might cause difficulties for these women desiring to consume foods and cook meals belonging to the background of their own cuisine.

It is seen that female characters treat foods with respect, and they honour their foods consciously or unconsciously which allow them to bring food-related routines to a spiritual level where they may acquire wisdom and experience a sense of relief and dignity. Thus, foods and culinary tasks may also be regarded as a chance for personal and/or social reconciliation for the female characters. Accordingly, when a scene including foods and food-related events is encountered in a fictional work, a reader or a critic may have a complex literary representation in which the connections between the characters and foods should be analysed critically. When the interaction between foods and feelings is considered, one can also state that dealing with culinary tasks and performing food-related activities have a positive therapeutic influence on female characters. Indeed, foods have the potential for empowering women not only physiologically but also psychologically by offering women the opportunities for discovering their self-worth and dignity. By making, eating, and sharing food and also performing food-related tasks in their kitchens and/or any other place, women feel a glow of satisfaction via the positive impulse of these deeds.

The ingredients used while cooking are shown to have either negative or positive effect on the fictional characters represented in the selected novels. Since the focus of this study is to examine the relationship between foods and female characters, the study develops by examining the food-related events and the influence of such events on Tita, Rose, Lane, Nalini, Maya, and Ammu. It can be stated that the ingredients preferred and included in the process of cooking may have a considerable influence on the well-being

of the bodies and also, indirectly and powerfully, on the emotional status of the consumers. The fictional female characters may benefit from the medicinal effects of foods having a rich amount of nutritional properties when they feel consumed by various reasons including the personal, familial, and the social ones. The oppression and hopelessness that are caused due to the unfavourable and damaging social situations influencing the psychology and emotions of these characters may be represented indirectly via the physiological disorders that can be used as clues for deciphering the characters' emotional and psychological conditions. Therefore, the process of interpreting female characters' emotional and psychological states can become more transparent when the foods consumed, the ingredients used, and the meals cooked are considered attentively in fictional works.

Eating and preparing food are among the most frequently performed daily routines for human beings. The basic reason for eating is to sustain life. Gratifying appetites by tasting food and preparing and sharing food for social interaction are also important issues. However, preparing foods using a variety of ingredients required in line with the preferred recipes, tasting the meals, sharing the prepared meal with other people, and also setting tables for eating these meals can be more than the apparent ordinary reasons for performing these activities. Behind and beyond these simple daily issues, there may be significant shifts from physiological to psychological states of individuals. A person's food preferences, eating habits, and cooking experiences can be used as effective instruments for conveying messages in literary works. That is to say, cooking is not a simple daily routine but it is a much more significant process for fictional characters. Starting from the selection step of the ingredients and developing with the combination of the selected ingredients, the process of preparing, cooking, and eating foods can have the potential for offering changing messages when the creative intervention of the authors is a matter of discussion. This issue can be analysed in the fictional works of both male and female authors through taking different perspectives into consideration. Since the focus of this research is of female authors and female characters, the discussion is predominantly on women as authors and fictional characters. Within this frame, it can be inferred from the related literature that by means of this opportunity offered by foods and food-related events, a female author can narrate her stories by conveying deeper messages to be deciphered especially when these stories are about female characters who are marginalised and/or voiceless women.

As a consequence of the analysis performed in this research, it is detected that female writers handle the richness of food-related issues proficiently while depicting stories of their female characters which lead us to label this case as *gynocritics of food*. When the attention is paid to the issues related to *gynocritics of food*, it can be concluded that foods and food-related tasks function as literary agents for revealing and depicting female characters' moods, desires, thoughts, and experiences that might not be expressed wordy but foody. The physiological effect of foods may start from the moment of taking the first bite, but the psychological and emotional influence of foods may begin at a much earlier phase of preparing or eating foods. Namely, the first impression after eating a certain type of food is particularly related to its taste. However, there is also another possible impression gained while cooking or consuming foods and this impression is related to memories. Food-related memories are permanent for people in general. The ingredients, odour, taste, and appearance of the food; the place where it is cooked and/or consumed; and the events take place in a food-related process can have an unforgettable impact on individuals' memories. An individual may not forget either positive or negative memories since they can be activated suddenly when food-related reminders show up. That is to say, specific foods evoke specific feelings, and this case has been reflected in literary works including foods and food-related issues. In this regard, female characters' emotions, thoughts, and memories evoked through foods have been also represented by female authors. Moreover, the time spend together while preparing food, setting the dining table, and sharing and eating food may preserve and promote interpersonal relations. In fictional works, female characters mostly have a familial bond as daughters and mothers, and they have been also portrayed as women engaging in culinary tasks, cooking foods, eating foods together with other people, and spending time in the kitchens. This familial bond between mothers and daughters either strengthen or weaken through foods and food-related deeds. Some mothers and daughters not only find out their self-worth and dignity together but also spend good time in the process of involving in culinary task. However, there are also some others who cannot be successful at benefiting from the opportunities that foods provide in order to develop a better mother-daughter relationship. A wide range of reasons can be lined up regarding this problematic bond when fictional works are considered. Mothers and daughters cannot be united through food-related issues or while they are performing culinary tasks due to the generation gap, food-preferences, cultural differences-

especially for the immigrants, and so on. These reasons can diversify when the changing lifestyles represented in fictional works is considered attentively.

It can be concluded that foods and food-related issues are observed as the intersection point of the female characters in *Like Water for Chocolate*, *The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake*, and *One Hundred Shades of White*. When analysed within the context of gynocriticism, it can be claimed that, whether consciously or unconsciously, the female authors of the novels add extra depth to the meaning of foods while composing the stories of the female characters in their own social contexts. In each novel, foods are more than nutrition and play an important role in the identity development processes of the female characters. In line with the claims of gynocritics, this process should be reinterpreted by females through keeping the realities related to females in mind with a renewed artistic vision. This artistic vision is expected to articulate the issues by filtering them through the female consciousness. In this regard, how foods and other culinary matters are depicted in the fictional works belonging to female authors is the central point of the present study evaluating the collected data through considering gynocriticism and food-related events as a whole in the realm of the female experience. In this realm, foods are transformed into instruments empowering women via the modes of producing fictional works preferred by female authors. It is obvious that foods and food-related practices in the lives of female characters are rewritten through attuning them to the daily and professional experiences of women portrayed in literary works of female authors. Impressive scenes of food preparation and/or consumption may successfully involve readers into the story through their emotional responses. The portrayal of a basic daily activity in an artistic creation can arouse the most sincere feelings of readers. They may find something similar to their own experiences while reading a literary work. Foods in these three novels are not simply related to nutrition but they are key factors for the female characters' identity formation processes as well as for the development of relationships among the characters going through various troubles in the flow of events. It is also observed that foods and food-related issues are depicted as significant means by which female characters can form an active site for themselves, express their feelings, and sustain their personal development. Moreover, these stories reflect changing types of struggles experienced by female characters psychologically, physiologically, socially, and economically. However, recoveries from such struggles are also presented in the

narrative flow of the stories. In these stories, the recovery of the female characters has a close relation with the foods prepared or consumed and also with the cooking-related tasks performed by these female characters.

Consequently, food is an open-ended process and it can be analysed from various perspectives. This thesis focuses on food and identity development of female characters under the light of gynocriticism. Briefly, in all the selected novels, the protagonists go through a voiceless journey full of identity crises and they overcome these crises with the help of foods and food-related issues in a kitchen that becomes their literary space where they write their stories of gynocritic foods presenting female worlds in their literary works.

REFERENCES

Main Sources

- Bender, A. (2010). *The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake*, Anchor Books, New York.
- Esquivel, L. (1995). *Like Water for Chocolate* (1989), (Trans. Carol Christensen and Thomas Christensen), Anchor Books, United States of America. Print.
- Nair, P. (2003). *One Hundred Shades of White*, Harper Collins Publishers, London.

Secondary Sources

- Albala, K. (2013). "Introduction", *Routledge International Handbook of Food Studies*, (Ed: K. Albala), Routledge, London and New York.
- Almerico G. M. (2014). "Food and Identity: Food Studies, Cultural, and Personal Identity", *Journal of International Business and Cultural Studies*, 8, 1-8, <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.645.8411&rep=rep1&type=pdf> (03.01.2019).
- Andrievskikh N. (2014). "Food Symbolism, Sexuality, and Gender Identity in Fairy Tales and Modern Women's Bestsellers", *Studies in Popular Culture*, 37/1, 137-153, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/24332704> (06.08.2019).
- Avakian, A. V. and Haber, B. (2005). "Feminist Food Studies: A Brief History", *From Betty Crocker to Feminist Food Studies: Critical Perspectives on Women and Food*, (Ed: A. V. Avakian and B. Haber), University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst and Boston.
- Ayan, M. (2011). *Diversities in Ethnic Female Narratology*, İkinci Adam Yayınları, İstanbul.
- Ayan, M. and Yalvaç, F. (2021). "Food and Mood in *The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake*", *Pamukkale University Journal of Social Sciences Institute*, 44, 145-158, <https://doi.org/10.30794/pausbed.758470>.
- Bachelard, G. (1994). *The Poetics of Space*, (Trans. Maria Jolas), Beacon Press, Boston.
- Barthes, R. (2013). "Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption", *Food and Culture: A Reader*, (Ed: C. Counihan and P. Van Esterik), Routledge, New York and London.
- Bilbija K. (1996). "Spanish American Women Writers: Simmering Identity Over a Low Fire", *Studies in 20th Century Literature*, 20/1, 147-165, <http://dx.doi.org/10.4148/2334-4415.1384> (18.05.2017).
- Blodgett H. (2004). "Mimesis and Metaphor: Food Imagery in International Twentieth-Century Women's Writing", *Papers on Language and Literature*, 40/3, 260-295.
- Boyce C., Fitzpatrick J. (2017). *A History of Food in Literature: From the Fourteenth Century to the Present*, Routledge, London and New York.
- Brady J. (2011). "Cooking as Inquiry: A Method to Stir Up Prevailing Ways of Knowing Food, Body, and Identity", *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 10/4, 321-334, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/160940691101000402> (03.01.2019).

- <https://journals.library.ualberta.ca/crcil/index.php/crcil/article/view/10670> (19.10.2020).
- Carr, H. (2007). "A History of Women's Writing", *A History of Feminist Literary Criticism*, (Ed: G. Plain and S. Sellers), Cambridge University Press, New York.
- Cixous H. (1976). "The Laugh of the Medusa", (Trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen), *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 1/4, 875-893, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3173239> (25.03.2019).
- Counihan, C. (2012). "Gendering Food". *The Oxford Handbook of Food History*, (Ed: J. M. Pilcher), Oxford University Press, United States of America, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281824299_Counihan_Carole_2012_Gendering_Food_In_The_Oxford_Handbook_of_Food_History_ed_Jeffrey_M_Pilcher_Oxford_Oxford_University_Press_99-116 (19.07.2019).
- Counihan, C. and Van Esterik, P. (2013). "Why Food? Why Culture? Why Now? Introduction to the Third Edition", *Food and Culture: A Reader*, (Ed: C. Counihan and P. Van Esterik), Routledge, New York and London.
- De Valdés M. E. (1995). "Verbal and Visual Representation of Women: Como agua para chocolate/Like Water for Chocolate", *World Literature Today*, 69/1, 78-82, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40150861> (18.05.2017).
- Dobrian S. L. (1996). "Romancing the Cook: Parodic Consumption of Popular Romance Myths in "Como agua para chocolate"", *Latin American Literary Review*, 24/48, 56-66, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20119730> (18.05.2017).
- Donovan J. (1984). "Toward a Women's Poetics", *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 3(1/2), 99-110, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/463827.pdf> (12.09.2019).
- Douglas M. (1972). "Deciphering a Meal", *Daedalus*, 101/1, 61-81, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/20024058> (23.09.2019).
- D'Sylva A. and Beagan B. L. (2011). "'Food is Culture, but It's also Power': The Role of Food in Ethnic and Gender Identity Construction among Goan Canadian Women", *Journal of Gender Studies*, 20/3, 279-289, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/09589236.2011.593326?needAccess=true> (03.01.2019).
- Eagleton, M. (2007). "Literary Representations of Women", *A History of Feminist Literary Criticism*, (Ed: G. Plain and S. Sellers), Cambridge University Press, New York.
- Eagleton M. (ed.), (2013). *Feminist Literary Criticism*. Routledge. New York and London.
- Fearon, J. D. (1999). *What is Identity (As We Now Use the Word)*, (Draft), Stanford University, Stanford, <http://www.web.stanford.edu/group/fearon-research/cgi-bin/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/What-is-Identity-as-we-now-use-the-word-.pdf> (11.11.2019).
- Fernández-Levin R. (1996). "Ritual And "Sacred Space" In Laura Esquivel's "Like Water For Chocolate"", *Confluencia*, 12/1, 106-120, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27922410> (18.05.2017).

- Finn J. E. (2004). "The Kitchen Voice as Confessional", *Food, Culture & Society: An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 7/1, 85-100, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.2752/155280104786578012> (19.07.2019).
- Fischler C. (1988). "Food, Self and Identity", *Social Science Information*, 27/2, 275-292, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/053901888027002005> (05.08.2019).
- Fitzpatrick, J. (2013). "Food and Literature: An Overview", *Routledge International Handbook of Food Studies*, (Ed: K. Albala), Routledge, London and New York.
- Friedman S. S. (1996). "'Beyond' Gynocriticism and Gynesis: The Geographics of Identity and the Future of Feminist Criticism", *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 15/1, 13-40, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/463970> (21.06.2019).
- Gardiner J. K. (1981). "On Female Identity and Writing by Women". *Critical Inquiry*, 8/2, 347-361, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/1343167> (12.11.2021).
- Gilbert S. M., Gubar S. (2000). *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (1979), Yale University Press, New Heaven and London. Print.
- Glenn K. M. (1994). "Postmodern Parody and Culinary-Narrative Art in Laura Esquivel's 'Como agua para chocolate'", *Chasqui*, 23/2, 39-47, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/29741129> (18.05.2017).
- Goldstein, D. (2018). "Afterword", *Food and Literature*, (Ed: G. G. Shahani), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Gubar, S. (2007). "Postscript: Flaming Feminism?", *A History of Feminist Literary Criticism*, (Ed: G. Plain and S. Sellers), Cambridge University Press, New York.
- Humm M. (2004). "Into the Millennium: Feminist Literary Criticism", *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses*, 48, 45-59, <http://acad.colmex.mx/sites/default/files/pdf/Maggie%20Humm%20Into%20the.pdf> (12.09.2019).
- Ibsen K. (1995). "On Recipes, Reading and Revolution: Postboom Parody in Como agua para chocolate", *Hispanic Review*, 63/2, 133-146, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/474551> (18.05.2017).
- Jaffe J. (1993). "Hispanic American Women Writers' Novel Recipes and Laura Esquivel's Como Agua Para Chocolate (Like Water for Chocolate)", *Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 22, 217-230.
- Jones M. O. (2007). "Food Choice, Symbolism, and Identity: Bread-and-Butter Issues for Folkloristics and Nutrition Studies (American Folklore Society Presidential Address, October 2005)", *The Journal of American Folklore*, 120/479, 129-177, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/4137687> (03.01.2019).
- Karmarkar P. R. (2014). "Apocalypse And Explication - A Study on Female Phase In Elaine Showalter's 'Towards Feminist Poetics' - An Indian Point of View", *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention*, 3/2, 35-41, [http://www.ijhssi.org/papers/v3\(2\)/Version-1/G0321035041.pdf](http://www.ijhssi.org/papers/v3(2)/Version-1/G0321035041.pdf) (04.10.2019).

- Long L. M. (2004). "Learning to Listen to the Food Voice: Recipes as Expressions of Identity and Carriers of Memory", *Food, Culture & Society: An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 7/1, 118-122, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.2752/155280104786578067> (19.07.2019).
- Matwick K. (2017). "Language and Gender in Female Celebrity Chef Cookbooks: Cooking to Show Care for the Family and for the Self", *Critical Discourse Studies*, 14/5, 532-547, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17405904.2017.1309326> (04.10.2019).
- McLean, A. (2013). "The Intersection of Gender and Food Studies", *Routledge International Handbook of Food Studies*, (Ed: K. Albala), Routledge, London and New York.
- Moers, E. (1976). *Literary Women*, Doubleday & Company Inc., New York.
- Plain, G. and Sellers, S. (2007). "Introduction", *A History of Feminist Literary Criticism*, (Ed: G. Plain and S. Sellers), Cambridge University Press, New York.
- Plain, G. and Sellers, S. (2007). "Introduction to Part III", *A History of Feminist Literary Criticism*, (Ed: G. Plain and S. Sellers), Cambridge University Press, New York.
- Plate L. (2016). "Gynocriticism", *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Gender and Sexuality Studies*, 1-2, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316363964_Gynocriticism (30.07.2019).
- Rich A. (1972). "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision", *College English*, 34/1, 18- 30, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/375215> (05.11.2019).
- Saltz J. (1995). "Laura Esquivel's "Como agua para chocolate": The Questioning of Literary and Social Limits". *Chasqui*, 24/1, 30-37, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/29741173> (18.05.2017).
- Salvaggio R. (1988). "Theory and Space, Space and Woman", *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 7/2, 261-282, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/463682> (21.06. 2021).
- Selden R., Widdowson P., and Brooker P. (2005). *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*. Pearson Education Limited, Great Britain.
- Shahani G. G. (ed.), (2018). *Food and Literature*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Showalter E. (1975). "Literary Criticism", *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 1/2, 435-460, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3173056> (21.06.2019).
- Showalter, E. (1977). *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing*, Princeton University Press, Princeton.
- Showalter, E. (1979). "Towards a Feminist Poetics". *Women Writing and Writing about Women*, (Ed: M. Jacobus), Routledge, London and New York.
- Showalter E. (1981). "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness", *Critical Inquiry*, 8/2, 179-205, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1343159> (21.06.2019).

- Showalter E. (1984). "Women's Time, Women's Space: Writing the History of Feminist Criticism", *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 3(1/2), 29-43, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/463823> (05.08.2019).
- Showalter E. (1986). "Shooting the Rapids: Feminist Criticism in the Mainstream", *Oxford Literary Review*, 8(1/2), 218-224, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43964607> (05.08.2019).
- Showalter E. (1993). "American Gynocriticism", *American Literary History*, 5/1, 111-128, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/489763> (21.06.2019).
- Showalter E. (1998). "Twenty Years on: A Literature of Their Own Revisited", *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, 31/3, 399-413, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1346107> (21.06.2019).
- Spanos T. (1995). "The Paradoxical Metaphors of the Kitchen in Laura Esquivel's "Like Water for Chocolate"", *Letras Femeninas*, 21(1/2), 29-36, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23021716> (18.05.2017).
- Vallianatos H. and Raine K. (2008). "Consuming Food and Constructing Identities among Arabic and South Asian Immigrant Women", *Food, Culture & Society: An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 11/3, 355-373, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.2752/175174408X347900> (03.01.2019).
- Walton H. (2003). "Re-vision and Revelation: Forms of Spiritual Power in Women's Writing", *Feminist Theology*, 12/1, 89-102, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/096673500301200108> (21.06.2019).
- Weedon, C. (2007). "Postcolonial Feminist Criticism", *A History of Feminist Literary Criticism*, (Ed: G. Plain and S. Sellers), Cambridge University Press, New York.
- Wehmeier S. (ed.), (1993). *Oxford Wordpower Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Williams-Forson, P. and Walker, J. (2013). "Food and Race: An Overview", *Routledge International Handbook of Food Studies*, (Ed: K. Albala), Routledge, London and New York.
- Woolf, V. (2020). *A Room of One's Own* (1929), MK Publications, İstanbul. Print.
- Xu, W. (2008). *Eating Identities: Reading Food in Asian American Literature*, University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu.
- Yadav M. S. and Yadav M. K. (2018). "Aspects of Feminist Writing: A Presentation of Common Issues", *JELTL (Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics)*, 3/1, 57-68, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324247443> (18.09.2019).