

Whispers of Time: Memory's Journey in Elif Shafak's 10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World

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همسات الزمن: رحلة الذاكرة في رواية "عشر دقائق وثمانٍ وثلاثون ثانية في هذا العالم الغريب" لإليف شافاق

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#### Abstract

This paper investigates the theme of memory in Elif Shafak's 10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World, which narrates the final moments of Tequila Leila, a woman whose brain is still active during her last moments of life. Memory serves as both a narrative device and a link between the personal and the collective, stitching together strands of Leila's identity and her relationships. The fragmented structure of the novel evokes the human mind's non-linear process of recalling events, underscoring the complexity and selectivity of memory. By analyzing the construction of memory in the novel — its mutable nature and its function of preserving personal history — the study demonstrates how Shafak uses memory to serve as a repository for resilience, legacy and connection. The paper explores the relationship between sensory stimuli and memory, demonstrating how taste, smell, and touch inspire vivid memories that transcend time and space. It also examines the communal aspect of memory, specifically how Leila and her surrogate family's shared experience breeds their solidarity and collective identity in light of their societal rejection. Shafak dualities memory — both an anchor to the past, a possession to be held tightly from a source of strength, framing that duality as the center of the transformative power memory has in »outlining adversity. Drawing on close reading of the novel, this research explores the complicated relationship between memory and the passage of time, the symbolic meaning of sensory signals, and the collective nature of memory in friendships. Shafak's work positions memory as a powerful force in the construction of selfhood while also revealing its fragility in the face of mortality. This research contributes to contemporary literary discussions on memory's transformative power, offering insights into its representation in literature and its broader implications for understanding identity, resilience, and human connection.

Keywords: Tequila Leila, memory, resilience, sensory triggers, marginalization.

#### المستخلص

تتناول هذه الدراسة موضوع الذاكرة في رواية عشر بقائق وثماني وثلاثون ثانية في هذا العالم الغريب للكاتبة إليف شافاق، والتي تسرد اللحظات الأخيرة في حياة تيكيلا ليلي"، وهي امرأة يستمر نشاط دماغها في الدقائق الأخيرة من حياتها. تؤدي الذاكرة دورًا مزدوجًا في الرواية؛ فهي أداة سردية وروابط حيوية تربط بين الذاتي والجمعي، وتنسج خيوط هوية ليلى وعلاقاتها. ويعكس البناء المجزأ للرواية الطابع غير الخطي الذي يتسم به استدعاء الذكريات في العقل البشري، مما يبرز تعقيد الذاكرة وانتقائيتها. ومن خلال تحليل بناء الذاكرة في الرواية—بطبيعتها المتغيرة ووظيفتها في حفظ التاريخ الشخصي—تبين الدراسة كيف تُوظف شافاق الذاكرة كمخزون للمرونة والإرث والارتباط الإنساني. كما تستعرض الدراسة العلاقة بين المحفزات الحسية والذاكرة، موضحة كيف أن الطعم والرائحة واللمس يمكن أن المشتركة بين ليلى وأسرتها البديلة في بناء روح التضامن والهوية الجمعية في ظل الرفض المجتمعي الذي يواجهونه. وتُظهِر شافاق الذاكرة في صورتين متناقضتين: فهي من جهة مرساة للماضي وملاذ للقوة، ومن جهة أخرى كيان هش قابل للتلاشي. وتشكل هذه الثنائية الذاكرة في صورتين متناقضتين: فهي من جهة مرساة للماضي وملاذ للقوة، ومن جهة أخرى كيان هش قابل للتلاشي. وتشكل هذه الثنائية وتوالي الزمن، والمعاني الرمزية للمحفزات الحسية، والطبيعة الجماعية للذاكرة في إطار الصداقة. وتُبرز أعمال شافاق الذاكرة كقوة فاعلة في تشكيل الذات، مع كشف هشاشتها في مواجهة الموت. تسهم هذه الدراسة في النقاشات الأدبية المعاصرة حول القوة التحولية للذاكرة، وتقدم رؤى حول تمثيلها في الأدب ودلالاتها الأوسع في فهم الهوية والمرونة والارتباط الإنساني.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تيكيلا ليلي، الذاكرة، المرونة، المحفزات الحسية، التهميش.

#### 1. Introduction

Elif Shafak is a commonly known Turkish writer. She uses both Turkish and English as her medium of expression. She has written seventeen books, eleven of which are fiction. She writes in various disciplines, from fiction and human and global rights to cultural issues in Europe, Turkey, and the Middle East, and her works have been translated into almost fifty languages. In her novels, especially *The Bastard of Istanbul (2006)*, *Three Daughters of Eve (2017)*, *The Gaze (2012)*, etc..., her voice could be heard speaking out on sensitive issues confronting society's marginalized groups.

10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World (2019b), Elif Shafak's masterful exploration of memory, identity, and the passage of time. The novel's frame — existing at the fleeting hour of brain activity that follows death — creates an opportunity to explore how memory serves as the scaffolding for individual and collective storylines. Through its interweaving of Leila's last moments with her brightest memories, this creates a heart-rending meditation on the fragility and resilience of memory: how it defines individual experience while simultaneously transcending it. The focus on memory central to the narrative resonates with readers — serving as a lens to understand connections between selfhood, relationships, and time.

Existing works (Basseler, 2015; Di Martino, 2024; National Centre for Writing, 2025; Saunders, 2024) focus on Shafak's innovative narrative styles and her ability to interlace memory with motifs of resilience and human connection. Memory in literature has been explored for centuries and is often used as a literary device to navigate identity and time (Poletti, 2020). Shafak's novel is remarkable for the way it registers the

personal and communal, the remembered as both uniquely and universally human, capturing the complexities of human relations and the marks we leave on the world.

This study aims to examine the role of memory in 10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World, especially its interrelation with identity, time, and human entangling. The study traces Shafak's use of memory as a narrative lens to study the workings of themes such as selfhood, legacy, and the connections we make through shared experiences.

The analysis uses a range of methods to do so:

- Textual Analysis: Close reading of key passages to explore how memories get activated, constructed, and told.
- Ancillary Research: Exploring the unique temporal framework of the novel and how it shapes notions of memory.
- Thematic Evolution: Exploring sensory triggers, resilience, and collective memory motifs.

Ultimately, through these means, the research sheds light on the centrality of this theme of memory and its dual identity—both a personal journey and a shared journey reflecting human connection in the novel.

## **Research Questions**

- a) How does memory play a role in constructing and maintaining identity within social marginalization?
- b) In what ways does the novel's fragmented narrative structure illuminate the complexity and selectivity of memory?
- c) How does Shafak's treatment of memory demonstrate resilience and create linkages between those who may not

be connected to build a community of entirely disparate people?

#### **Memory and Identity**

The interplay between memory and identity is a significant theme in literature. Memory is a way of holding on to selfhood, especially when one is cast out or marginalized from society. Shafak uses the framework of Leila's memories to explore their life-altering power as a way for her to gain agency in herself and change how she sees herself. This aligns with (Ricoeur, 2004) argument that memory is a tool of self-reclamation and resistance.

Leila's memories also embody the intersection of personal and collective identity. Relational memory focuses on intersubjectivity's function in an individual's identity formation. Shafak's focus on the chosen family highlights this dynamic, illustrating how shared experience helps create a feeling of inclusion. Langer (2009) further describes how memory is an act of resistance against erasure, specifically in communities that have been marginalized. Leila's reflections on her Kurdish heritage and social exclusion throughout the book are a natural political act, and Shafak's work embodies this (Mustafa & Ahmed, 2020).

## **Building Collective Memory and Resilience**

In addition to understanding how political legacies are created and utilized for national memory, collective memory — as discussed in the work of scholars such as (Bachleitner, 2022; Ngom, 2021) — is also argued to create a sense of community that continues to exist into the future. Halbwachs (1992), for instance, viewed memory as social, in that people remember

within social structures: memory must be understood as social. This is echoed by (Fahraji, 2019), who discusses how collective memory contributes to identity that aids in resilience in the face of marginalization.

Leila's chosen family's shared memories demonstrate in Shafak's novel how we draw resilience and agency from collective memory. It positions the bonds formed through these memories as transcending societal rejection, keeping with Butler & Trouble (1990) social identity theory.

## Gaps and Opportunities

There is considerable research on memory as a literary device, but what undercurrents link memory, marginalization, and resilience in contemporary works? Shafak's novel makes an unusual choice in putting these themes on a multicultural and transnational scale. This research addresses this gap by examining how memory serves narrative as a lens through which to explore identity, time, and human connection in 10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World.

#### 2. Research Statement

Focusing on Elif Shafak's 10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World, this research examines the prominence of memory in the novel. It looks at how Shafak uses memory to negotiate issues of identity, time, and human connection. The paper also traces how the interdependence of personal and collective memory constitutes strength and agency for monuments of hate and oppression.

#### 3. Analysis

#### **Memory and Identity**

The bedrock of identity in 10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World is memory, providing a lens on Leila's life and the events that have shaped her. Shafak's story emerges in a series of rich memories evoked by the senses: the taste of salt and the smell of cardamom. Each memory comes with a taste or a smell: of lemon, cardamom, chocolate, wedding cake, single-malt whiskey, or sulfuric acid, which she's inextricably tied—and linked to a metamorphosis in her life (Lancaster, 2020). These sensory triggers work as portals that transport Leila — and the reader — back in time to pivotal moments in her life.

Leila's recollections capture the nuances of her identity, tailored by her Kurdish ethnicity, her estrangement from her conservative family, and her life at the fringes of Istanbul's society. With her Kurdish roots and estrangement from a conservative family, Leila reflects on erasure and identity. In her works, Shafak often touches on how family rejection affects the individual identity. For Leila, memories are a substitute for the family and societal acceptance she never got. The quote reminds us that memories are immaterial; they represent resistance, a way of maintaining agency and dignity. This allows the reader to see how the physical breakdown of Leila's body does not erase her memories, making it a stunning metaphor for the persistence of memory and the endurance of the human spirit (Eakin, 2011). Leila's life on the edges of Istanbul society highlights what an important character the city itself is in Shafak's novels. Istanbul is a multifaceted city where memory anchors over fleeting signs, which embodies a split between presence and absence (Keyder, 1999), parallel to the fragmented

identity of Leila. Leila's assertion resonates with a philosophical idea: memory undergirds selfhood. Perhaps less paradoxically, memory acts as a reservoir for personal identity, as several scholars, including Ricoeur (2004), argue, particularly in physical or social disintegration. Leila's memories are a form of resistance against obliteration, personal and systemic.

Shafak's depiction of memory emphasizes its fragility and selectivity, too. Leila's memories are not presented linearly but as fractured snapshots of how memories come to the human fragmented structure allows Shafak to grasp the mind. This complexity of identity, revealing how disparate moments — both the joyful and the traumatic — weave together to form a unified self. A different narrative which also deals with fragmented identity is 10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World in which Shafak intertwines disparate cultural threads with various personal histories in a mosaic of Istanbul that changes (Lancaster, 2020). The fragmented narrative structure parallels the bareness of memory and identity-making. This fragmented narrative is also employed by Manzoor in Leila Aboulela's *The Kindness of* Enemies, to discuss diaspora, hybridity, and cultural belonging (Aladylah, 2018). Both authors use a fragmented style of storytelling to communicate the complexity of identity, in particular for people who exist in multiple cultural worlds. This enables an important exploration of how experiences shape sense of self through perspectives.

Moreover, Shafak threads her memories through larger cultural and social contexts that reveal the interplay of private and public life. The political context of Leila's childhood in Van, for example, foregrounds the cultural vibrancy of her Kurdish identity and the constraints it faces as the systems of control that make her people second class come to light. This double-sided

concern reaffirms memory as a point of reference for a personal and a shared past. The narrative also probes how memory makes and remakes identity. Leila's responses show how through recollection she reclaims her agency as she reimagines how she sees herself in a world that attempts to define her in reductive terms. She found herself in her memories, and the selves the world had condemned her to forget. This process of self-reclamation highlights the transformative power of memory against the backdrop of marginalization.

In addition, Shafak employs memory to explore the relational facets of identity. Leila's reflections on her chosen family — her tight-knit group of friends — illustrate how interpersonal bonds build and maintain identity. As the narrator indicates,

"She had never told her friends this, not in so many words, but they were her safety net. Every time she stumbled or keeled over, they were there for her, supporting her or softening the impact of the fall. On nights when she was mistreated by a client, she would still find the strength to hold herself up, knowing that her friends, with their very presence, would come with ointment for her scrapes and bruises; and on days when she wallowed in self-pity, her chest cracking open, they would gently pull her up and breathe life into her lungs" (Shafak, 2019b, p. 180)

These friendships, formed on the fringes of society, offer Leila a sense of belonging and validation juxtaposed with the alienation she faced in her biological family. The novel, where the various characters' memories are interwoven to reflect one another's experiences, struggles, and histories, constitutes a network of mutual recognition that maintains their sense of self. The story demonstrates how understanding and affirming oneself

comes with shared experiences among marginalized characters, especially with the outsiders in society. The world may turn a blind eye to these identities or may pretend not to see them, but recognition, in the authentic sense of the word, is what gives them visibility, and the possibility to be valued (Langer, 2009). Shafak frequently critiques social customs that isolate people according to their gender, sexuality, and ethnicity. This deluge of refusal to see or acknowledge particular identities is a repeated motif of the novel as its characters move through and against societal expectations. Nalan's remark can be decoded in light of the global health theory called social identity theory, which essentially says that the self is constructed and formed with social interactions and the recognition of people around them. The notion that we are "each other's mirrors" implies that affirming one's identity depends on being seen by others. This relational perspective of memory significantly contends the conception of sole, isolated individualism, which puts the community at the forefront of personal identity.

10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World explores memory and identity and how individuals navigate and maintain their sense of self. Leila's memories of her brothel neighborhood's past allow the narrator to draw an alternative one besides the city's official chronological reason-based historical narratives. The narrator states,

"... human memory resembles a late-night reveller who has had a few too many drinks: hard as it tries, it just cannot follow a straight line. It staggers through a maze of inversions, often moving in dizzying zigzags, immune to reason and liable to collapse altogether" (Shafak, 2019b, p. 45)

Istanbul city, as well as its disappearance at this moment, is complemented by its sensory description as both an ephemeral and permanent city. "Smells of tobacco, sweat, perfume, fried food and an occasional reefer – albeit illegal – mingled with the briny sea air" (Shafak, 2019b, p. 45), the narrator asserts. Three minutes after Leila's heart stops, she thinks of "... cardamom coffee – strong, intense, dark. A taste forever associated in her mind with the street of brothels in Istanbul" (Shafak, 2019b, p. 45). In some sense, these transient sensory experiences offer Leila an intimate connection and relationship to Istanbul city. However, the ability of Muslim women to move through and inhabit civic spaces was limited. Her recollections about these public spaces and their smells disrupt notions of women as passive bodies and construct a public self that claims city spaces (Thomas, 2023).

#### **Memory and Time**

The novel's temporal architecture — a 10-minute and 38-second window of residual brain activity — conceives of memory as a way of transcending time. In this tight time frame, Leila relives decades of (written) past, which works to encapsulate memory itself: The collapsed time allows the past to become one unified experience. Shafak's mode of narration mirrors modernist experiments with time, echoing works by Woolf and Proust. In this novel, Shafak explores the inner consciousness of her protagonist, Leila, in the moments after her death, letting memories bubble up in a non-linear form to echo Proust's Deutschers and Wools. A review points out that the novel is "clearly indebted" to Proust's madeleine "since sensory details trigger Leila's memories, notably tastes and smells," in the same way that Proust's techniques of involuntary memory do (Truth, 2019). Furthermore, Shafak's narrative style is consistent with

Woolf's use of stream of consciousness, crafting a fractured but cohesive picture of the main character's memories and thoughts. This approach emulates Woolf's method of emulating the disjointedness of thought to generate emotional and intellectual reactions (Litgram, n.d.).

Sensory triggers are key to this temporal fluidity. Through the lens of migration and transnational movement, sensory experience is vital in making and unmaking memory and identity. Sensory inducement, particularly food and domestic activities, have been shown to conjure powerful memories and emotions, linking individuals to their growing up and cultural heritage (CHOO 1, 2004; Dennis & Warin, 2007). This invokes the senses as meaning-generating apparatuses that work along and between consciousness, as tools between the physical world and memory (Seremetakis, 2019). Specifically, olfactory experiences can rework form embodied identity work that transforms perceptions of self and social interaction (Low, 2013). These sensory memories are often not simply individualized but are ingrained in broader cultural and historical frameworks that enable one to traverse complicated transnational realms while simultaneously retaining a connection to the 'homeland' (CHOO 1, 2004; Dennis & Warin, 2007). Sensory perception, memory, and identity closely interrelate, so discussing human experiences and social mediations is highly relevant to keep sensorial-bodily experiences in mind (Low, 2013; Seremetakis, 2019). The smell of antiseptic reminds her of the brothel of Istanbul, for instance, just as the taste of watermelons takes her to her summers as a child. These cues remind us that memory and sensory experience are intertwined, demonstrating how much memories are tethered to the physical world and how they outrun it simultaneously.

Time, too, is figured as a "shared dimension, spanning Leila and her most intimate friends," as has been examined in several writing and logical locales, as a provider of personal and collective identity, connecting past, present, and future (Ahmad, 2024; Bachleitner, 2022). It is stressed that memory is socially constructed and occurs in the context of society (Bachleitner, 2022; Ngom, 2021). Defining and redefining one another through this process is a way of gathering information about each other (Fahraji, 2019). It shows the link between personal and collective memory and how the groups serve as cause for the remembering process (Ngom, 2021). It also observed the political nature of memory characterized by forgetting as "social normality" and remembering as the "exception" (Ngom, 2021). This type of study respectively illustrates the impact of collective memory on shaping social identities, specifically in terms of marginalized groups and on maintaining cultural continuity (Ahmad, 2024; Fahraji, 2019). The bonds they forge live in their collective memories, woven into a tapestry of shared experience. As Shafak notes,

"Perhaps a person's thoughts survived longer than his heart, his dreams longer than his pancreas, his wishes longer than his gall-bladder ... If that were true, shouldn't human beings be considered semi-alive as long as the memories that shaped them were still rippling, still part of this world?" (Shafak, 2019b, p. 185)

In this way, memory is communal, bringing individuals together and preserving their stories beyond their demise.

#### **Memory and Resilience**

Shafak's portrayal of memory as a wellspring of resilience is at the novel's thematic heart. Leila's capacity to reexperience moments of love, friendship, and defiance, though her life has been so defined by marginalization, embodies the power of memory to bolster hope and agency. Her reflections are not pure sorrow but capture the moments of beauty and connection of which her life was made. The recollections maintain and honor the friendships among Leila and her chosen family — Nostalgia Nalan, Zaynab122, Sabotage Sinan and more. It includes their shared experience of survival which goes beyond time and immortality.

Shafak's overbearing sense of memory as a response to agency is vital in the realm of identities that feel marginalized. The focus on Leila's memories encourages identification and empathy, but by bringing to light voices that have suffered silence through various societal structures, Shafak affirms their humanity and uniqueness. Memory is woven into the theme of resilience so intricately that it acts in presentation as a survival mechanism and means of resistance, as well: Shafak tells us how important it is to remember and to disrupt the erasure of history. Leila's meditations show how storage and recovery of memory is a common technique marginalized subjects use to take back narrative agency when society erases their existence. Her memories, in particular of her chosen family, imply that memory is not only a solitary act, but a social process that binds the community. For example, Leila, Nostalgia Nalan, Zaynab122, and Sabotage Sinan fighting against the ostracization in society depicted this (Mehdi et al., 2022).

For Leila, memory serves as an emotional reservoir she draws to help her get through the gritty and grime of her life in the underbelly of Istanbul. Her sensory memories, the taste of salty sea breeze or the scent of cardamom coffee, root her resilience in real-life moments. These stimuli evoke specific experiences of happiness or comfort — ennoble the human

capacity to derive strength from transitory but significant connections to the past (Green et al., 2023).

In addition to individual strength, Shafak argues, memory is a way of collective resistance. A shared family history empowers them to nurture belonging and solidarity that society denies them. This dynamic echoes Halbwachs's concept of collective memory in which memories are social, both in how they are constructed and in their embedded narrative context, which is always within and among groups (1992). Through the common ground of shared experience, Shafak's characters weave their lives together in ways that also bring us a collective story that transcends the isolation imposed on them by their marginal state.

The novel's splintery structure speaks to the fracturing of memory. Shafak deliberately eschews a linear narrative to reflect the tendency of the memories to return, a flash here, a conflation there, in disjointed, non-chronological fashions. This narrative choice emphasizes that building resilience is not a straightforward journey but a complex, multistep process. For Leila and her chosen family, maybe resilience is reassembling those fragmented shards into a narrative that makes sense and meets agency halfway — that gets up to be heard — while still being a testament to survival and resistance.

Shafak also takes issue with a social order that seeks to repress these memories. But Ailam's poetic recalls of her family's denunciation and her upbringing in Istanbul's red-light district suggest broader streams of marginalization. These memories are not just painful; they also empower by validating her lived experience and agency. As Nostalgia Nalan wisely believed that

"There were two kinds of families in this world: relatives formed the blood family; and friends, the water family. If your blood family happened to be nice and caring, you could count your lucky stars and make the most of it; and if not, there was still hope; things could take a turn for the better once you were old enough to leave your home sour home."

This is a collective path of resilience, of marginalized groups affirming each other as the rights bearers of their own selfhoods and thus collectively increasing resilience in the face of external denial. By basing her story on memory, Shafak elevates it to the scale of a transformative force. Memory here is not machinal or re-active but performative and dynamic; it is an always constitutive process of both identity and self-making. Through her grappling with what memory can achieve for resilience, Shafak delivers a sweeping meditation about human capacity to withstand, adjust and flourish under structures of systemic oppression.

Memory is sutured into this theme of resilience, which Shafak depicts as both a tactic of survival and a way to resist. Memory serves as a reservoir of personal identity and, contributing to our sense of resistance, is particularly relevant for those whose voices are marginalized or oppressed (Ricoeur, 2004; Langer, 2009). Leila's memories in 10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World serve to elucidate this notion in the sense that, within her sensory-imbued memories, she can glide through the bygone scope of a life that society has marked with contempt.

The disjointed, fragmentary narrative style that Shafak employs mirrors memory itself, both in its disjointedness and numinous nature, and it encapsulates the complexity of resilience. The non-linear storytelling aligns with Gibbons's (2019) claim that fragmented narrative reflects the fractured realities of marginalized people. For Leila and her chosen family, resilience means stitching together the disorienting fragments, cut-up, until they blend into narrative, survival into defiance.

Memory is also a resistance against social erasure. According to Langer (2009), memory acts as a kind of defiance, preserving identities at risk of being marginalized. Leila's memories of her childhood in Van and her life in Istanbul's redlight district undermine the society that seeks to erase her story. These memories reaffirm her existence and agency, allowing her to reclaim her story. Shafak's depiction of memory meshes with Fahraji's (2019) conclusion concerning the critical role of collective memory within marginalized communities as a tool for the continuity of culture against systemic oppression.

Sensory memory plays an important role in building resilience. Dennis & Warin (2007) and Low (2013) study the fact that taste and smell can also trigger strong emotions and cultural memories. For Leila, those triggers go beyond the former and the latter; they transform her past and present into a coherent, empowering story. For instance, the watermelon flavor brings her back to her childhood summers, and the fragrance of the sea evokes some of her moments of freedom and intimacy. These sensory-based recollections embody the perseverance of the human soul to maintain its identity in a state of disarray.

By focusing the narrative around memory, Shafak illuminates memory's transformative quality. Memory sustains not just the individual but the community; both marginalized and subordinated groups allow memory to become a repository of resilience. Continuity and resilience despite mortality align with

Bachleitner's (2022) argument that collective memory is a vital ingredient in that continuum.

#### 4. Conclusion

Elif Shafak's 10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World is a profoundly moving meditation on how memory shapes identity, transcends time, and ultimately creates resilience. Through sensory-triggered memories, Shafak reveals mutability of memory, how it can bring time and space down around your ears and fuse two from different "now" into one "when," turning them into a single actively "telling" passage. The broken structure of the novel shows the way that human memory stores memories — they are not comprehensive and can be internally biased by conflicting interests. The memory of the novel works across registers, holding firm to identity in a climate of marginalizing erasure; transgressing boundaries of time; forging collective bonds, rooted in work, across chosen collectives. Shafak's finding memory both fragile and lasting echoes the duality of memory as a deeply personal yet irreparable collective phenomenon. Ultimately, 10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World is a vision of memory as an act of transformation that can maintain dignity and humanity as death approaches. In subtextual opposition to such threads, the melding of personal and collective memory in Shafak works to forge a bittersweet but also hopeful vision of legacy and connection, feeding into wider literary conversations regarding the capacity of memory to both ground and nourish the human experience.

Whispers of Time. Memory's Journey in Elif Shafak's 10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World

## **Findings**

Memory as Identity: Our memory is who we are, and the novel shows us that through detached shots of time passing — moments in Leila's life before anyone else's eyes that trigger the senses.

Sensory Triggers: Taste, smell and touch coalesce into powerful conduits between the past and the present, rooting the narrative in deep emotional soil.

Memory as a Tool of Survival: Memory is a source of power for Leila and her chosen family, allowing them to reclaim agency and create lasting relationships . Shafak herself recalls history not just private but collective.

Collective Identity: The communal existence of memory causes solidarity among marginalized characters and depicts lived experiences as empowering.

Fragmented Structure: The non-linear narrative structure reflects the fragmented nature of memory, serving the central theme of personal identity and interconnectedness.

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