

# Book Review: *Honour* by Elif Shafak

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## HONOUR by ELIF SHAFAK

A perfect blend of modernity and tradition and the perplexity of the immigrant youth struck at the crossroads of this merger, is, the story of Turkish writer Elif Shafak's fascinating world of *Honour*. The backdrop of the novel keeps shifting from the idyllic Kurdish village of Mala Çar Bayan, "House of Four Winds" to the city of Istanbul and

finally to the London of 1967 to the London of 1992. The story of three generations—Berzo and Naze; Pembe and Adem Toprak; and Iskender, Esma and Yunus Toprak—the centric theme of the novel revolves around the tradition bound male psychology devoted to the preservation of the honour of their families which sadly for these men rests only on the actions of their women. Whereas men can go scot free and have the privilege of indulging in extramarital affairs, for which ironically again the wife is to be blamed who cannot keep her husband home, the woman even though dumped by the erring husband has no right to love another man or lead her life according to her wishes. The novel begins with the revelation by the young woman, Esma, that her own elder brother Iskender is the murderer of their mother. He has been convicted and it's the day of his release from the prison when Esma relates the entire story to the readers.

Iskender comes to know about his mother's extramarital affair. He approaches the estranged father, Adem— a drunkard and gambler living with a strip bar dancer, Roxanna. He urges the father to protect the family honour by taking the mother to task. When the father refuses, Iskender decides to be the head of the family and protect the honour of the Topraks. He stabs his mother on the road leading to their house on Lavender Grove in full public view. But here comes the twist in the tale. Did he or did he not kill his mother? If he didn't kill his mother then for whose murder was he convicted? If he did kill his mother then who is the woman who dies a natural death in the village of Mala Çar Bayan? Well, to unveil the truth the novel deserves a reading. Written in a charming and enchanting style, the novel charts the life span of three generations and their peculiar complexities. The novel also highlights, though on a minor scale, the London of the era of high racism and the age of growth of socialism among its youth. Overall a gripping story with twists and turns of the Euphrates.