

Women and Violence in the Play: Evcil

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ÖZET

Antik mitolojilerde başlayıp tek tanrılı dinlere dayandırılarak gelişen kadının olumsuz imajı ataerkil sistem anlayışıyla da devam etmektedir. Erkeğin tanımladığı kadın imajı cinsiyete dair tanımlamalardan ibarettir ve özel alan içinde konumlandırılmıştır. Yazılı ve kabul edilmiş sanat tarihinde de cinsiyete dair konumlandırma çok belirgindir. Tiyatronun kökeni olarak kabul edilen Antik Yunan tiyatrosunda kadın oyun kişilerinin erkek oyuncular tarafından oynanışı, bir yandan da yazarların erkek olarak ataerkil bir gelenek ile aksiyonu kurlmaları üzerine yapılan çalışmalar antik dönemin kendinden sonra gelen batı tiyatrosundaki erkek egemen çalışmaları etkilediğini göstermektedir. Türk tiyatrosu söz konusu olunca da aynı durumu görmek mümkündür. Aile kavramının önemini vurgulandığı toplumumuzda kadın aile içindeki varlığıyla bir anlam kazanmış, bunun yansıması da sahneye taşınmıştır. Kadından ataerkil sistemin sembolü olarak babasının veya kocasının sözünden çıkmaması, iyi bir eş, iyi bir anne ve iyi bir kadın olması beklenmiştir. Bu çalışmada da çağdaş oyun yazarı Tolga Özenç Özençel'in yazdığı Evcil oyununda kadının konumu, çıkışsızlığı, iç sesleri, erkek olgusu karşısındaki tavrı ele alınmıştır. Seda'nın baba ve koca figürleri arasında kalışı, fiziksel ve psikolojik şiddeti kabul etme şekli sorgulanmıştır. Toplumsal cinsiyetin kadına yüklediği kimlik içerisinde Seda'nın kadın olarak duygu ve düşünceleri ile ataerkil sistemin dayattığı erkek mantığı arasında kalışı kadına uygulanan şiddet ve sonuçları açısından incelenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Evcil, Tolga Özençel, Şiddet, Kadın*

ABSTRACT

From Ancient mythology to nowadays woman is regarded as a badness or illness. In patriarchal system woman is defined with her sexuality and in private areas by men. In the official and accepted art history the role of genders are defined clearly. The researches show that from the An-

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cient Greek drama the role of woman characters are played by actors and the playwrights create their fiction with the patriarchal point of view give shape to the understanding of western drama. The same situation can be seen in Turkish drama. Woman gains importance in family concept, and this situation is represented on the stage. Woman should obey her father or her husband as the symbol of patriarchal system and she should be a good wife, a good house-wife, and a good woman. In this study the contemporary playwright Tolga Özenç Özençel's play Evcil is going to be studied in the aspect of the representation of a woman, Seda, on the stage with her desperate situation, her inner world, her attitude against violence of man. The situation of Seda being between father and husband figures, accepting physical and psychological violence are questioned. Her conflict about her feelings and thoughts as a woman and her situation against patriarchal system is going to be analysed.

Keywords: *Evcil, Tolga Özençel, Violence, Woman*

It is the fact that patriarchal system foregrounds men and makes them rulership in the government, in social and economical life. Because man was taken as the generic form, and woman as a subspecies, a somehow imperfect version or soluble problem. (Gale&Gardner, 2000;1) This understanding gives shape to the gender role and representation in the society, for instance 'the others' such as women, lesbians, gays etc. are represented according to the identified social values of patriarchal system. (Case, 2006; 2) The story of the change from matriarchal system to patriarchal one is interesting. According to Greek mythology the first goddess is Gaia and she has a dangerous womb story that gives birth to lots of crime and castration tales. Everything is or this chaos is finished with the triumph of Zeus. Zeus gains the ability of fertility/reproduction by swallowing Metis and gives birth to Athena. Athena symbolizes the end of dangerous womb. Because she does not have a mother (cuts the relation with matriarchal system and with being a woman) does not have sexuality (be a virgin). She is with Zeus and Apollon and controls Athens. In those days Dionysous gains the ability of fertility and sexuality. And he becomes the symbol of homosexuality. So according to god geneology woman sexuality is assimilated and power of man is foregrounded in the representation of Athena. (Belkıs, 2015; 105)

In the traditional history perception man is dominant and according to this understanding woman should live in private area that means she should be an ideal mother, a good wife who obeys the husband and a good housewife. During Ancient period, 'family' concept increases the importance of woman to create and transfer the property. In Ancient Greek 'ekdosis' which means marriage also means debit or loan that women are given to their husband by their father as a debit or loan and in the divorce they are given away to their father. Athenian women in the fourth century were under the guardianship of their nearest male relative throughout their lives; their marriages and remarriages were governed by strict rules of family inheritance, while their economic dealings were limited to contracts up to the simple value of a bushel of barley. (Fox, 2006; 180)

It is documented that traditional laws all over the world treat women as a medium of exchange or the property of their fathers and husbands. Property laws entitle owners to sell, exchange, and dispose of their property without encumbrance, and to expect the community to recognize their right to redress if the property is stolen or damaged by others. Men also protect their investment by holding the woman strictly liable for any theft or damage of her sexual value. (Pinker, 2012; 479) Women-as-property metaphor persists that women, but not men, wear engagement rings to signal they are taken, and many are still given away at their weddings by their fathers to their husbands, whereupon they change their surname accordingly.

The understanding 'Women sexuality is dangerous' comes from the first woman figure in Ancient Greek Mythology Pandora; and continues to Eve in Middle Ages. The religion, Christianity, also forces the understanding that woman sexuality is the source of every badness in the figure of Eve. Pandora is created as a punishment for humanbeing according to Ancient Greek Mythology. Because Zeus gets angry with Prometheus. Zeus has Hephaestus mould a woman out of earth and water. Each goddess give this woman a special gift; for instance Aphrodite offers her grace and lust, Hermes infuses her mind and heart with tricky and hollow words. (Chyti, 2010;19) For Greek writers woman is a fire for men because Pandora is created because of the stolen sacred fire. In Ancient Greek mythology Pandora has two features; curiosity and hunger. This hunger is for money and

for sexuality that these two items finish off the man. (Vernant, 2011; 39) For this understanding woman is a penalty for men but at the same time a trap because of her attractiveness. (Belkıs, 2015;115)

The history of woman is hidden and the current history is masculine. Perception, intuition etc. are the features of woman that she can stand alone in her life but these features disappear in time that she becomes the one who is obedient, passive and prisoner. Most of the women are prisoner for a short or a long time in their life. And most of them loose their instinct; some of them cannot understand who is the right person, some of them cannot show any reaction to injustice and they just wait the right time to get revenge. Some of them loose the instinct of fighting so they become the victim. (Estes, 1995; 278)

It is thought that terrible things that humans do to other humans such as using violence come from a single, animalistic motive. The psychologist Richard Tremblay has measured rates of violence over the course of the life span and shown that the most violent stage of life is not adolescence or even young adulthood but the aptly named terrible twos. It is the fact that a typical toddler at least sometimes kicks, bites, hits and gets into fights, and the rate of physical aggression then goes steadily down over the course of childhood. Tremblay remarks, ‘The question... we’ve been trying to answer for the past 30 years is how do children learn to aggress. That is the wrong question. The right question is how do they learn not to aggress. The psychologists Douglas Kenrick and David Buss have posed the question “Have you ever fantasized about killing someone you don’t like?” to a demographic that is known to have exceptionally low rates of violence-university students- and were stunned at the outcome. Between 70 and 90 percent of men, and between 50 and 80 percent of the women, admitted to having at least one homicidal fantasy in the preceding year. (Pinker, 2012; 582)

The reason and the way of using violence change throughout the history. But it is sure that violence towards woman is just an instrument to continue the relation between man and woman in patriarchal system. Woman sexuality and their fertility ability are important for the dominance of man. As a result woman body and her sexuality are controlled by society/man

through violence most of the time. So violence towards woman provides the continuity of patriarchal system and get the agreement of society and law system.

Cultures that are classified as more individualistic have relatively less domestic violence against women than the cultures classified as collectivist, where people feel they are part of a community whose interests take precedence over their own. The suggestion that the decline of violence against women in the West has been pushed along by a humanist mindset that elevates the rights of individual people over the traditions of the community, and that increasingly embraces the vantage point of view. (Pinker, 2012; 499)

It is ironic that although democracy, critical thinking/debate and awareness for every violation of rights exist in the nature of drama, it has a negative approach to disastrous sexism/understanding of gender. It is clear that the power of patriarchal system is seen also on the stage. Throughout the history of drama representation of woman on the stage is a problematic issue. Thus it can be said that there are three representations of woman on the stage; the first one is representation of ideal woman; representation of what should not be done by woman; the third one is to hide or ignore, do not allow the representation on the stage.

In Ancient Greek society drama emerges in Dionysos festivals which is supported by patriarchal system. Instead of the dance of maenad satyr's are preferred. The usage of 'phallus' which is the symbol of man sexuality also underlines this patriarchal understanding. Art of performance emerges from this understanding. It is the fact that this patriarchal approach effect the western drama. There are lots of studies about Ancient Greek and Elizabethian drama. It is known that women are not on the stage during Ancient Greek and Elizabethian period. In the text of Aiskhylos and Shakespeare woman image is presented in two ways; the first one is an individual and clever woman; the second one is that the woman has extra-ordinary powers such as being witch, wizard, vamp, goddess, etc. These roles are also represented the point of view of playwright and drama tradition. (Belkis, 2015;99)

In 1800's women begin to show effort to gain voting right legal equality. In those days Ibsen created Nora and Hedda Gabbler who refuse childish attitudes. As a result these plays especially these characters were criticized. Because ideal family and gender forms of bourgeois morality are shaped according to patriarchal system. In 1900's the woman movement was more powerful, but still it did not have any sound in theatre. In those days people believed that the body of woman should be hidden. After 2000's woman body, gender, violence, sexual harassment became the subject of drama. Throughout the history of drama it is the fact that women's role are generally written by male playwrights. The problem is not their gender but their point of view, their prejudice against woman in the process of creating the woman character. Because he creates the woman character like he sees or wants to see that women. The woman in the real life and her condition in that society cannot be seen in the text, just instead identified identity is given again by man.

The situation of woman in official art history is so clear that woman is object and man is subject. The same understanding is seen also in Turkish drama history. It is the fact that in the history of Turkish drama especially after 1960's playwrights focused on woman in their play. But it is not surprise that they only dealt with woman as an object of the relation, object of the marriage, object of the motherhood etc. The expectation, desire, anxieties, hopes, dreams of woman are out of concern. Because in the plays only woman type is seen. For most of our playwrights the woman should be patient, trustable, compassionate wife and mother. She can be clever, cunning if she does not destroy the family concept. (Şener, 2003; 84)

In this study the contemporary playwright Tolga Özenç Özençel's play *Evcil* is studied in the aspect of woman character's situation against patriarchal system. Seda is just one of the woman figure in Turkish society who obeys her father, her husband. In this study the inner conflict of Seda, her attitude against violence is dealt with. The understanding of gender role and acceptance of violence by society is questioned.

Evcil is an one act play and on the stage only one character is seen. In other words Seda is on the stage throughout the play. The playwright gives the voice of father and husband only. In this play the woman is used as a

major character but it should not be forgotten that the voices of men or existence of men in her life gives shape to her attitudes or feelings.

In the play, the major character Seda, is married with Yasin that she does not want to be with. But her father does not have any intention to get the idea of his own daughter. Seda does not have any chance except to obey her father, thus she married with Yasin and tries to love him. But she comes across with the physical and psychological violence of her husband in her marriage. All the time she goes to the house of her father just to feel confidence but her father is always on the side of Yasin. At the end of the play it is seen that Seda kills Yasin in an insane mood.

Seda is in the centre of the play as a woman. But all her attitudes, psychology, desires are restricted by men. In Turkish culture father figure is important in the family; that he means authority. He is the one who decides what to eat, what to wear, whom you will get marry with, etc. Family is conservative in its nature. So the woman is described in family which means that she is not an individual but a person related to family concept with her emotion and duties. In the play Seda has to marry with Yasin because her father wants him as a groom. Seda has to consider her age, her mother who wants to see her marriage and her father who wants to see his grandchild. Her feelings are not important. In fact Seda insist on the fact that she wants love and a man who loves her. But for the father that affair can be felt after the marriage. This understanding is the reflection of Turkish society, also. Most of the time women believes that they can love their husband but it just depends on the degree of her love, patience etc. As a result woman fights with two different ideas; she has to bear her husband that she does not love and accuses herself for not finding a way to love him. She does not have any other chance, and does not even think of changing herself and her life she just wants to believe that she lives in peace and depends on fatalism. (Sezer, 2015; 25) In the play Seda does not go to her father to complain the lack of love affair in her relationship. Because she forces herself to love Yasin by regarding that she does not have any chance. She does her best to be happy in her marriage. She consciously goes to her father's house when she comes across violence. The first one is physical that Yasin puts her hand under iron because she burned his shirt. The second one is a psychological one that she learns her husband's

other life with the other woman. The third one is both physical and psychological violence that Yasin consciously causes her to have abortion by using violence. Violence towards women is accepted by Turkish society, especially if it is in the family and it is the fact that generally husbands show this violence towards their wives. (Cornell, 2016; 36) It is seen especially in understanding of traditional gender role. (Dökmen, 2009; 162)

The dominance of patriarchal point of view is seen in the unity of father and husband in the play. Although for Seda father figure means confidence, the one who will protect her from the violence of husband, it is seen that her father is just like Yasin. He approves the violence of Yasin, thus he accuses his daughter for not being a good house-wife and a woman. He advises her to accept the existence of the other woman in her marriage and being thankful to Yasin for not divorcing. She understands that she does not have any place to go. For the father and also for Yasin honour of Seda is very important. Thus the playwright all the time underlines the perception of society about woman honour; that as a woman she cannot go outside without getting permission from her husband, she has to be virgin before the marriage etc. Otherwise as the authority of house Yasin/Ali has to give punishment to Seda. Honour of woman is controlled again through the violence. (Ertürk, 2015; 37)

The playwright uses radio as the symbol of father. In the beginning of the play Seda answers the questions of speaker while she is having breakfast. It does not seem abnormal because people can talk with the radio or speaker in the radio when they are alone at home. But the interesting thing is that in the middle of the play the speaker becomes her father. Thus in the play the audience only hear the voice of father as if it comes out from the radio. This usage also underlines the voice in the brain of Seda that she cannot stop.

The playwright uses the same technique in giving neighbour and husband. In the beginning of the play she talks to her neighbour behind the wall. But again suddenly the voice of neighbour turns out the voice of husband. The change between the voice of husband and neighbour throughout the play also gives the psychology of Seda. Because the neighbour is the man that Seda wants to be with. He is very polite, sensitive etc. In other

words just the opposite of her husband. The only common point is their name; that the neighbour's name is also Yasin. It is just a clue for the audience to understand that two people are in fact one in the mind of Seda. The playwright consciously wants to confuse the audience and gives the inner world of Seda. Most of the time she cannot decide whom she is talking with.

In the play the voices of father and husband begins to talk to each other that Seda stands just in the middle of two men who have the same understanding or personality. This picture also underlines her desperate situation in the life. Thus she tries to hold on life by giving birth to a baby. For her having a baby means future, hope, protection, etc. But Yasin does not allow this dream to come true. She wants to give birth to a son, but not to a daughter. Because she knows that every girl or woman experiences almost the same life in patriarchal system. Thus she does not want her own daughter to be the victim of this patriarchal system. But if she has a son she will have a chance to give shape to his character. Instead of following the traditions of society, without any fear or hesitation Seda as a woman or a mother can teach her son how to be a good person instead of to be a man at first. It is clear that the playwright wants to underline the fact that Seda accepts the rules of patriarchal system and her thoughts are shaped according to this understanding. Especially in Turkey woman unconsciously obey the rules of man or patriarchal system without questioning. As a result the vicious circle continues from one generation to next. It is interesting that the playwright underlines the fact that the woman raises up their own hangman as a mother. It is seen in the relation of Yasin and his mother in the play.

At the end of the play Seda opens the door of the warehouse and the corpse of Yasin is seen over there. It is clear that violence brings out violence. She knows that she is not going to be happy in the marriage but the violence at home causes her to loose her mental and physiological balance. Having abortion because of her husband is the last and big violence that she experiences that causes her to kill her husband in an insane mood.

The playwright uses red cover as a symbol to show physical and psychological violence. Seda uses that red cover to wrap her hand after Yasin

puts her hand under the iron. Then she uses it as a veil in the marriage ceremony which is a sad experience for her. Then she uses that red colour to show having abortion. And at the end of the play she uses red cover to show the death of husband. The other symbol of the play is eggplant that represents the patriarchal system. It is seen that throughout the play Seda cooks eggplant for her husband. At the end of the play Seda cuts eggplant to make them ready for cooking in fact she is cutting or killing her husband that will be understood when she opens the door of warehouse.

Throughout the play the accepted role of the woman is on the stage, in fact. For instance in the beginning of the play Seda is very sad for waking up late and not making ready the breakfast for her husband. It is understood that she has a problem with her self-confidence and she regards herself only as the wife of Yasin that she is in need of saying that she is married in the beginning of the conversation with the neighbour. She feels that she has to say her husband is a jealous man before going ahead the conversation. It seems as if a warn for the neighbour but in fact it is the reality of Seda that she should not forget. In other words it is the reflection of her self-control. Because the understanding, women sexuality is dangerous, is always in the mind of her husband and in order to protect herself from the violence of her husband she should behave carefully.

The woman on the stage is in fact the symbol of a traditional Turkish woman who is the victim of patriarchal system, who comes across verbal and physical violence throughout her life. Seda does not have any intention to come against the system or to change the understanding in the society. In this sense she is a traditional figure. But the playwright especially highlights a fact about Seda that she knows that she is going to bring up next generation and she is not going to give the codes of patriarchal system to her own son. In this sense she represents an idea that next generations give shape to future and mothers will bring up these generations. So the importance of being a mother is underlined in the play. It is seen that Seda kills her husband when she learns that she cannot be a mother just because of her husband's consciously usage of violence to have abortion. It should be said that by this approach the play does not give woman at first as an individual/person than as a woman and at last as a mother. Instead it blesses being a mother throughout the play. This understanding is also reflection

of traditional point of view of the playwright. But the play is different in the sense that Seda acts as if she is not alone at her home throughout the play. The playwright achieves to create duality on the stage/text, that; till the end of the play the audience/reader is not sure whether she really experiences the violence of her husband or just she creates it in her mind.

The playwright creates the male characters nearly the same. Both of them do what they have seen from their father, such as using violence, drinking a lot, having a forbidden relation, approaching woman as a property, etc. The playwright also gives the pressure that man experiences in patriarchal system, such as earning money is just the responsibility of man. Being jobless is one of the most important obstacle of the man in gaining a position in the society and also in the family. Thus, as it is portrayed in the character Yasin, most of the time Yasin uses violence just to hide his broken pride. As it is said by Seda, Yasin has lots of conflicts in his life. But he does not want to come across with the weakness of himself. Because in patriarchal system he has to be powerful physically and emotionally. At it is understood Yasin's problem is not with woman but within himself. He knows that he is powerless and prefers to show that he is powerful by using violence. In this sense he is also the victim of patriarchal system. Because he has lots of duties and does not have any chance to be weak or to tell his inner world. He has to use a mask all the time. Throughout the play he is like Zeus at the climax of Olympia, by ignoring being the symbol and at the same time the victim of patriarchal system. Seda underlines another fact in the play that for man being a father or a husband is not enough. For him being a man is more important than anything else. It is ironic that being a man is shaped according to the tradition and perception of the society. So they generally follow the traditions without questioning. It is understood from the play that in traditional societies man is in the centre of life and he shows his power through using violence against the others.

It should be said that the play is not a feminist text; because it does not focus on the problems of patriarchal system, being a mother, being a woman, etc. It just portrays a woman who obeys the rules of men. As a result she has to depend on man in order to live. Throughout the play Seda never accuses her family for not having an education or does not have any intention to be a powerful woman. The text just portrays the hopeless situation

of woman in patriarchal system. Thus the reader/audience accepts Seda as a victim and judges the characters subjectively. In other words they are on the side of Seda unconsciously. Because in the text the playwright gives the difference between good and evil clearly and does not give any chance to the reader/audience to evaluate the social problem and discuss it in his/her mind. It can be said that this is the weak side of the play.

From Ancient period woman is described as the opposite of man. The idea of woman is equal to man is dangerous for religion, bourgeois morality, the society depends on the family concept. Thus woman is identified with nature, man is identified with mind and civilization. It is clear that we live in a world that social gender inequality still exist. (Jarvis& Kantor&-Cloke, 2012; 394) It is the fact that the problem does not lie on the destiny, hormone of woman, is the institutions and education.

Art can disappear if life is on its way. Till that time art is used for discussing, expressing emotions and ideas, as it is seen in this play. Although the playwright of this play is a man, he is very successful in giving the desperate situation of woman, Seda, in her marriage, in her life. The playwright is good at creating empathy in the play, he just opens a window for the audience. Empathy is one of the most important emotion that art brings out. Empathy is important because social and individual peace depend on it. Every text is rooted in its period. It does not matter whether it is realistic or historical or experimental play, it just tells its period's understanding. The situation, desire, anxieties, fear of woman are the reality of Turkish society but most of the time it is ignored in daily life. The power of drama cannot be denied. If our playwrights do not hesitate to open their mind, and their hearth to see the woman's position objectively, woman problems will be discussed on the stage, and also in the society. Of course it won't be solved quickly, but even one step is enough to change the understanding of social gender.

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