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# A Comparative Study on the Novels Jane Eyre, Tante Rosa and Sevgili Arsız Ölüm in the Context of Bildungsroman

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#### **Abstract**

Novelists such as Charlotte Brontë, Sevgi Soysal, and Latife Tekin have carved out a literary niche for themselves through their writings. These writers focused mainly on women characters mirroring gender restrictions in their milieu. When Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), Soysal's *Tante Rosa* (1968) and Tekin's *Sevgili Arsız Ölüm* (1983) are compared within the framework of the bildungsroman, they have a lot in common in that they all tell the stories of female protagonists from childhood through adulthood. The authors also incorporate romantic elements, which are known for elevating subjectivity, childhood, imagination and nature. The most notable aspect of these female bildungsromans is that the awakening of the female characters to the social roles imposed on them by society is provided by the romantic tools. Thus, they acquire self-awareness and a sense of self.

This study aims to compare the romantic elements in female bildungsromans *Jane Eyre*, *Tante Rosa*, and *Sevgili Arsız Ölüm* to show that the female characters in these novels gain self-development during their journeys from childhood to maturity. As the novels are written in different periods and societies, the effect of different cultural codes

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on the formation of women's social roles and how women are represented in the novels are also discussed.

Keywords: Bildungsroman, romanticism, Jane Eyre, Sevgili Arsız Ölüm, Tante Rosa.

# Bildungsroman Bağlamında *Jane Eyre, Tante Rosa* ve *Sevgili Arsız Ölüm* Adlı Eserlerin Karşılaştırılması

Öz

Charlotte Brontë, Latife Tekin ve Sevgi Soysal romanlarıyla tanınan yazarlardır ve bu yazarlar eserlerinde genelde sosyal yaşamlarında cinsiyet rolleri bakımından birtakım sorunlarla karşılaşan kadın karakterlere yer verirler. Bu anlamda Brontë'nin *Jane Eyre*, Soysal'ın *Tante Rosa*, Tekin'in *Sevgili Arsız Ölüm* adlı romanları bildungsroman yani büyüme romanları çerçevesinde karşılaştırıldığında kadın karakterlerin çocukluktan olgunlaşmaya varan öykülerini yansıtması bakımından benzerlik taşır. Ayrıca Brontë, Soysal ve Tekin öznelliğe, çocukluğa, hayale ve doğaya önem atfeden romantik unsurlardan faydalanırlar. Bu kadın büyüme romanlarının en dikkat çekici yanı da kadın karakterlerin toplum tarafından kendilerine yüklenen sosyal rolleriyle ilgili farkındalığının romantik unsurlar aracılığıyla sağlanmasıdır.

Bu çalışmanın amacı *Jane Eyre*, *Tante Rosa* ve *Sevgili Arsız Ölüm* adlı büyüme romanlarındaki romantik unsurları karşılaştırmak ve kadın karakterlerin çocukluktan olgunluğa çıktıkları yolculukta kendi gelişimlerini nasıl elde ettiklerini göstermektir. Bunun yanı sıra romanlar farklı dönem ve toplumlara ait olması bakımından kültürel kodların kadınların sosyal rollerini biçimlendirmedeki etkisi ve kadınların bu romanlarda nasıl temsil edildikleri de tartışılmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Bildungsroman, romantisizm, Jane Eyre, Sevgili Arsız Ölüm, Tante Rosa.

### **Introduction: Bildungsroman and Romanticism**

As a literary term bildungsroman was introduced by scholars like Karl Morgenstern and Wilhelm Dilthey. In *Das Leben Schleirmacher*, Dilthey explains bildungsroman as "human education and maturation in various stages, figures, and periods of life." In *Das Erlebnis und Die Dichtung*, he elaborates and focuses on the thematic concerns of bildungsroman in which "the history of a young man who enters into life a blissful state of ignorance, seeks related souls, experiences friendship and love, struggles with the hard realities of the world and thus armed with a variety of experiences, matures, find himself and his mission in the world."

Emphasizing the role of education in bildungsroman, other critics, such as Georg Lukács and Mikhail Bakhtin, endorse further definitions. Bakhtin defines bildungsroman as the most typical phenomenon of German Enlightenment which paved way for Goethe's novel *Wilhelm Meister*. According to Bakhtin, Goethe achieves to place the emergence of man in a visible movement of history merging the past and the present as the enlightenment provided to depict a unified historical sense of time standing against the otherworldly elements. Therefore, the world is perceived as more real than before. In this reality, the world becomes a school, an experience for the man who changes along with the world. <sup>3</sup>

Like Bakhtin, Lukács regards the bildungsroman "as a means of education." In this respect, the hero- whose formation is depicted until it is completed- reaches education within the process of growth. In this process, while the character faces a series of challenging events, a conflict between individual aspirations and the resistant presence of practical limitations appears. The conflict generally stems from society's reliance on order and reason which excludes the individuality of the self.

The discrepancy between individuals and society is highlighted in the bildungsroman. In this sense, Franco Moretti's way of dealing with the bildungsroman comes to the fore. In *The Way of the World*, he argues that the discrepancy between individual and society increases in a new bildungsroman, especially af-

James N. Hardin, "An Introduction", Reflection and Action: Essays on Bildungsroman, 1991,
 p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Hardin, a.g.m., p. 24.

M. M. Bakhtin, "The Bildungsroman and Its Significance in the History of Realism", 1986, p.
 23.

<sup>4</sup> Georg Lukacs, "Wilhelm Meister's Years of Apprenticeship", *The Theory of Novel*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1971, p. 135.

ter modernity. He also discusses that the image of youth serves to depict the modernity in which some rapid changes such as class mobility and industrialization have occurred.<sup>5</sup> In this sense, modernity can be identified via a rebellious person who confronts certain changes in their lives. Moretti focuses on the relationship between the modern world and the bildungsroman which takes on a new identity. The experience, that is, the growth of the character exposed to some events, is regarded as a loss rather than a crucial value. Hence, the transition from youth to maturity becomes more problematic as writers do not aim to show the individual and society in harmony anymore.

It can be argued that the tension between individuals and society is much more obvious in female bildungsroman in which the history of not a young man but a woman, who passes from childhood to adolescence along with some necessary conflicts to reach maturity, is narrated. One of the most important reasons for the tension is that while the female characters take on the roles such as mother and housewife, they take refuge in dreams and imagination to embrace their desires. This may give rise to the assumption that they are far from the reality of sexist oppression going on around them. On the other hand, Susan Rosowski explains the importance of dreams and imagination for the female character's development and argues that women characters awaken to the social roles imposed on them thanks to the confrontation between what they desire and what the reality is. 6 Moreover, the conflict between reality and imagination has the potential to nurture the spiritual selves of the characters whose identities begin to be formed by values peculiar to childhood which requires the power of imagination. At this point, it is possible to observe that what Rosowski discusses in her work has a connection with romantic elements which reveals one of the essential aspects of the bildungsroman.

As Petru Golban draws attention to in his article, the bildungsroman emerges from the context of romanticism and is nurtured by romantic elements, especially because of thematic concerns such as "personal, private, inner, individual experience and all its related thematic perspectives—including childhood, nature, rustic life, pantheism, the dualism of existence, escapism, rebelliousness." <sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Franco Moretti, *The Way of the World*, London, Thetford Press, 1987, p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> Susan J. Rosowski, "The Novel of Awakening", *The Voyage In*, London, University Press of New England, 1983, p. 68.

Petru Golban, "An Attempt to Establish a Bildungsroman Development History", Humanitas, vol. 5, 2017, p. 125.

The relationship between imagination and childhood, which has roots in nature, constitutes the thematic concerns of bildungsroman, too. The creative spirit within human beings is reinforced by these values and contributes to freedom of mind and the formation of an identity.

Seen in this light, as being one of the typical ingredients of the bildungsroman, romantic themes also shed light on the problems of heroines. One of the main problems of the female bildungsroman is that it is impossible to conceive their maturation as a process of becoming unified. The reason for such a seemingly failure stems from the difference between male and female maturity reflected in the bildungsroman. Maroula Joannou puts forward that while

"The coming-of-age journey in the classical bildungsroman is based on the assumption of the male self as the universal self and the quest – whether geographical or the inner quest for spirituality or truth – is a quintessential aspect of human experience, It is not possible for a woman to venture forth into the unknown if the very act of stepping out onto a public thoroughfare exposes her to the risk of jeopardy to the person, ridicule, loss of reputation, or sexual assault."

When the domestic roles attained to women by patriarchy are exposed to change, the sense of self-coherency is disturbed. In this sense, Maroula Joannou highlights the necessity of defining women's journey which also requires a closer look at the definition of the bildungsroman as it comes to the foreground as goal-centered and prioritizes the maturity as a contract between society and individual. For this reason, she visits *The Voyage: In Fictions of Female Development* in which "Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsch and Elizabeth Langland emphasize the inferiority of a woman's journey of self-discovery and the difference between the life experiences of women and their male counterparts." In this work, generic definitions of bildungsroman are explored and found that classic bildungsroman is encapsulated with the male norms which exclude women's active participation in society. "While male protagonists struggle to find a hospitable context in which to realize their aspirations, female protagonists must frequently struggle to voice any aspirations." This definition is especially true for the nineteenth-century female bildungsromans such as *Jane Eyre*, *Villette*, *The Mill on the Floss* and *Little Women*. "

<sup>8</sup> Maroula Joannou, "The Female Bildungsroman in the Twentieth Century", *A History of the Bildungsroman*, ed. Sarah Garaham, U.K, Cambridge, 2019, p. 202.

<sup>9</sup> Joanna, *a.g.m.*, p. 203.

<sup>10</sup> Elizabeth Abel - Marianne Hirsch - Elizabeth Langland, *The Voyage In*, London, University Press of New England, 1983, p. 7.

Elizabeth Abel - Marianne Hirsch - Elizabeth Langland, a.g.e., p. 7.

Seen in this context, the critics in *The Voyage In* try to focus on the dilemma between the inward life of the female characters and their "outward existence which is that of social roles, the roles of wife and mother." This conflict is resolved with the emergence of an awareness of the social forces imposed on the female character.

It should be noted that bildungsroman in a general and female bildungsroman change their ways along with the world and should be evaluated in both cultural and historical frameworks because it can change in parallel with the conditions of the society and ideology of the time it is written. Maroula Joannou argues that the representation of women in twentieth-century British novels changed as writers including Dorothy Richardson, Doris Lessing, Angela Carter, Jeannette Winterson and Sarah Winterson questioned the "temporal logic of the classical bildungsroman as they disputed the ameliorative optimism of the form. In multiple reworkings, women have rejected the conventional ending in marriage as a metaphor for the social contract, the "pact" between the individual and the world."<sup>13</sup>

What can be concluded from the female development in the bildungsroman is that the term bildungsroman has a complex and dynamic definition rather than a static one. For this reason, as Todd Kontje remarks, "if the genre of the bildungsroman is to be retained as a useful category of critical analysis [...] it must be conceived in a flexible enough way to include the possibility of parody, compromise, and disappointment within a pattern that theoretically leads to personal maturation and social affirmation."<sup>14</sup>

In addition, structural elements in bildungsroman may vary. Golban and Karabakır draw attention to this issue and emphasize that "unlike the thematic elements, which are less susceptible to change and replacement, the structural elements (that is, narrative features and techniques) would often be subject to modification. The authors search for and assume new perspectives and new methods, techniques, and means of artistic expression as championed by the period, or movement, or trend to which they belong."<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Susan J. Rosowski, "The Novel of Awakening", *The Voyage In*, London, University Press of New England, 1983, p. 53.

<sup>13</sup> Maroula Joannau, "The Female Bildungsroman in the Twentieth Century", *A History of the Bildungsroman*, ed. Sarah Garaham, U.K, Cambridge, 2019, p. 202.

<sup>14</sup> Todd Kontje, "The German Tradition of the Bildungsroman", A History of Bildungsromans, p. 14

<sup>15</sup> Petru Golban - Tamer Karabakır, "The Bildungsroman as Monomythic Fictional Discourse: Identity Formation and Assertion in Great Expectations", *Humanitas*, vol. 7, no. 14, 2019, p. 323.

From this perspective, both the development of the characters and narrative techniques should be evaluated within the context of culture and the society they live in as these elements may change the direction of the bildungsroman.

Seen in this light, the novels under scrutiny in this study focus on the development of female characters who live in different periods and are from different cultures and societies. While Jane Eyre, written in 1847, reflects Victorian society, the other two novels Tante Rosa and Sevgili Arsız Ölüm, penned in 1968 and 1983 respectively, mirror Turkish society. In this respect, the norms and expectations of each society vary and offer different representations of women. "In Victorian England, the dominant culture was bourgeois and male and the maxims that dictated what a woman must do more for the middle-class male psyche than they ever did for women." When approached from this perspective, the perception of women in Victorian society in the nineteenth century is predicated upon the culture dominated by men. This is also reflected in the novels. Arlene Young mentions the view of Victorian society on women and compares the women in the real world with fictional women. She argues that the "cultural constraints on women are more, if anything, even more, restrictive than those on women in the real world. Feminine modesty notwithstanding, to be of any significance in a narrative a woman must be sexual; that is, she either must be fallen and outcast or she must marry, the standard happy ending for the heroine."17 The common experience of women suggests that narrative options are limited for the female characters in a Victorian female bildungsroman. George Eliot's Maggie Tuliver, Brontë's Shirley, and Alcott's Little Women can be given as examples that represent the position of women in patriarchal culture during the nineteenth century.

Similarly, the position of women in Turkey is portrayed in Turkish literature. Çimen Günay Erkol examines the change and transformation of womanhood from Ottoman-Turkish novel to contemporary Turkish novel. According to her, "womanhood in Turkish literature is the key component of a self-questioning which reveals anxieties and expectations about modernization." Male-female relationship, issues such as the distinction between public and private spheres and privacy are central debates during the modernization of the Ottoman society.

<sup>16</sup> Arlene Young, *Culture, Class and Gender in the Victorian Novel*, St Martin's Press, 1999, p. 123.

<sup>17</sup> Arlene Young, *Culture, Class and Gender in the Victorian Novel*, St Martin's Press, 1999, p. 123.

<sup>18</sup> Çimen Günay–Erkol, "Osmanlı -Türk Romanından Çağdaş Türk Romanına Kadınlık: Değişim ve Dönüşüm", *Türkiyat Mecmuası*, 21, 2011, s. 148.

She believes that femininity and women's freedom cannot be independent of the dominant ideologies in Turkish society. She "sets out from canonical texts of Ottoman-Turkish novel and moves toward contemporary Turkish novel"19 and shows that the images of women are polarized and represented as either "good and bad," or "troublemakers" in Ottoman-Turkish novels such as Felatun Bey ile Rakım Efendi (1875) and İntibah (1876). The novels of the early Republican Era such as Sevivve Talip (1910) and Kiralik Konak (1922) connect women's identity with patriotism. Fatih Harbiye (1931), Huzur (1949), Tutunamayanlar (1972), and Ölmeye Yatmak (1975) reveal women's contradictions about their social roles. Based on these novels, it is seen that "femininity has not been an issue in its own right, but has always been a subset of larger ideological issues,"20 Most importantly, "although the motifs related to womanhood change in time, the basis for the formation of phallocentric discourses stands and this creates a continuity in texts of different periods."21 Women's roles created by male-dominated culture also shed light on the conflict between traditional roles and the ideal chaste patriotic woman image attributed to her after modernization.

After the decline of the Ottoman Empire, the newly founded Turkish republic uses the representation of women as the basic strategic tenet for the construction of the society. Serpil Sancar argues that "the identity of women in Turkey is defined in two different axes of views. These are the radical style of women's liberation to the extent that they resemble men and the blessing of wives and maternity."<sup>22</sup> While the expectations of the founding republic on women are predicated upon being an educated and modernized individual, traditional roles of women continue to create tension.

When we look at the female representation of both communities, it is seen that the society has its expectations, but still converges on one point. The conflict between society and women, in general, is between the emotional behavior assigned to women and the rational behavior dictated by society. Rita Felski draws attention to this issue and talks about how Western society defined women in the nineteenth century. According to her, "the psychic investment in an idealized maternal, precultural realm is itself a function of the privatization of the family within Western culture, with the mother assuming exclusive responsibility for the care of her children, and of emerging norms of the self which define women

<sup>19</sup> Çimen Günay–Erkol, a.g.m., s. 148.

<sup>20</sup> Çimen Günay–Erkol, a.g.m., s. 172.

<sup>21</sup> Çimen Günay-Erkol, a.g.m., s. 148.

<sup>22</sup> Serpil Sancar, Türk Modernleşmesinin Cinsiyeti, İstanbul, İletişim Yayınları, 2017, s. 157.

as natural and emotional creatures in the context of an increasing demarcation between the private and public life." <sup>23</sup> If a woman does not restrain her feelings and does not act within the framework of the logic set by society, this situation brings the danger of being excluded from society. The identification of women with emotions and passion is also seen in Turkish society. Serpil Sancar, who focuses on the representation process of women in Turkey, mentions that women, who were the subject of newspapers after the 1940s, were mentioned together with events such as escape, rape, and suicide, and were dealt with within the criminal discourse. According to her, this situation is an effort to create a discourse that deals with what can happen to an individual when emotions are not controlled and passions are not restrained, through the female gender. Although the perception of women in both societies is formed by different dynamics, it is seen that there are similarities, too. This is reflected in the novels written by Charlotte Brontë<sup>24</sup>, Sevgi Soysal<sup>25</sup> and Latife Tekin<sup>26</sup>. Female characters are shown as acting more with their emotions and passions. This is the common problem of the social attitude toward female protagonists in the novels. They are considered objects lacking in reason and fond of imagination.

The other most important common feature of the three novels is that when women are socially oppressed, they take refuge in nature, and women's moments of freedom are provided through nature images. This is included in the novels as an element that sheds light on the development of their inner selves, which contributes to their growth. Comparing these characters offers a good starting point to explore how they are treated in societies with different social codes and how they respond to the society they live in. In this respect, their position in society is questioned in the novels, too. They are generally associated with domestic roles and expected to behave under the social norms. On the other hand, these characters stand against the regulations of society and try to gain their subjectivity. This issue will be discussed because of female subjectivity.

<sup>23</sup> Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity*, Harvard University Press, 1995, p. 39.

<sup>24</sup> Brontë was born in Thornton in 1816. She is one of the most famous Victorian writers. She published her earlier works, including *Jane Eyre* under the pen name Curer Bell. Then she wrote novels such as *Shirley* (1849) and *Villette* (1853). In her novels, she tried to demonstrate the position of women in the face of the dominant ideology.

<sup>25</sup> Sevgi Soysal was born in Istanbul in 1976. She was charged with "obscenity" because of his first novel *Yürümek* which revolves around male-female relations and marriage. She also wrote novels like *Yenişehir'de Bir Öğle Vakti* (1973), and Şafak (1975). She died in 1976.

<sup>26</sup> She was born in 1957 in Kayseri. She published her first novel *Sevgili, Arsız, Öl*üm in 1983. She also wrote novels such as *Berci Kristin* Çöp *Masalları* (1984), and *Gece Dersleri* (1986). In her works, she usually focuses on suburban life and gender roles.

### Female Subjectivity Versus Masculine Forces

In view of romanticism which sets the ground for subjectivity, *Jane Eyre*, *Tante Rosa* and *Sevgili Arsız Ölüm* are novels in which Jane, Tante Rosa, and Dirmit challenge the social virtues such as being kind, gentle, and "angel in the house.<sup>27</sup>" The novels revolve around child heroines who do not comply with the regulations of society. They are outcast characters trying to maintain their individuality despite the traditional assumptions about their social roles. In this sense, their childhood experiences play a significant role in showing their self-assertion.

The heroines are exposed to injustice from the very beginning of their child-hood trying to find a way to develop their selfhood and female identity. The characters, in conflict with the social norms, are preoccupied with the creative drive towards their authentic voices. Therefore, what makes these texts important as bildungsroman is their concern with the female subjects who struggle to gain a sense of self as they are equipped with romantic elements that strengthen their identity by providing an awakening to their social roles imposed by society.

In *Jane Eyre*, Brontë's way of handling Jane is based on giving high value to female subjectivity. In *Charlotte Brontë and Victorian Psychology* Sally Shuttleworth discusses the oppression of Victorian society on women and says, "throughout Charlotte Brontë's fiction, her heroines relentlessly pursue their quest for self-definition and identity. Although they invoke the rhetoric of freedom, their language and categories of thought are nonetheless inevitably caught up within the contradictions of Victorian discourses on femininity." On the other hand, Brontë's persistence to make Jane a distinctive romantic heroine is worthy of notice. The writer's romantic engagement with Jane Eyre shows the emergence of selfhood which is contrasted with social forces that try to operate on the construction of the individual. Jane experienced such kind of operation from the very beginning of her childhood.

In *Jane Eyre*, Jane is an orphan raised by her cruel aunt who represents the cruelty of society. Through the voice of Jane Eyre, Brontë criticizes the patriarchal society which prevents individuals and women from expressing themselves freely. She is in the notion that patriarchal power is the source of the pressure women

<sup>27 &</sup>quot;Angel in the House" is a phrase used by Coventry Patmore in his poem to indicate the ideal Victorian woman. On the other hand, it is considered the repository for the widespread image of Victorian womanhood. which represents the repressive ideal of women. For detailed information see Nel Noddings, *Women and Evil*, University of California Press, 1989, p. 59.

<sup>28</sup> Sally Shuttleworth, *Charlotte Brontë and Victorian Psychology*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 71.

face in their own homes.<sup>29</sup> Accordingly, Jane Eyre is depicted as a character who tries to move beyond the prescribed roles associated with being an *angel* in the house. However, she comes into prominence with her wild attitude. It is clear in the case of fighting with her cousin. Her aunt's warning against Jane; "until you can speak pleasantly, remain silent"<sup>30</sup> reveals how she is doomed to subordinate to the rules and what kind of a woman is expected in her social environment.

Like Jane, Dirmit in Sevgili Arsız Ölüm is a character, who is treated with traditional tendencies. For instance, when she was born, she is found worthless because of not being a boy.31 In both novels, it is obvious that masculinity is favored in the social and cultural atmosphere and the dominance of the patriarchal family can be recognized easily. As Tekin dwells on country folk, traditions and customs, the social expectations of women are given in detail. For instance, a girl's virginity becomes a matter of honor, or the girls are asked to behave in proper ways. For example, Dirmit's mother Atiye gives her some advice on not "talking much or not crossing her legs."32 Tekin challenges the traditional tendency of viewing women in the spectrum of sacred roles revealing the social attitudes toward women. This situation is related to the roles of women in Turkish society, namely the perception based on the distinction between "chaste women and unchaste women."33 In the Victorian period, society has expectations of women, too. While the lady-like speech is favored by society, Jane Eyre seems to be an outcast figure because she exhibits a fight for self-definition. On the other hand, Mr. Reed's calling her "rat" shows how she is degraded to an animal. It can be seen clearly that the cult of the perfect Victorian woman harbors a dehumanizing effect.

Like Jane Eyre and Dirmit, Tante Rosa, an eleven-year-old girl, contradicts social codes from the very beginning of the novel. For instance, she dreams of being an Equestrian performer after reading a magazine titled "Cheek by Jowl with You," which provides readers with romances and the life of aristocrats. The magazine pictures queen Victoria riding a horse which Tante is amazed extremely. As might be expected, Tante is exposed to physical violence by her father when

<sup>29</sup> Eren Bolat, *Postcolonial Representation of the African Woman in the Selected Works of Ngugi and Adichie*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2022, p. 31.

<sup>30</sup> Charlotte Brontë, Jane Eyre, USA, W.W. Norton&Company, INC, 2001, p. 5.

<sup>31</sup> Latife Tekin, Sevgili Arsız Ölüm, İstanbul, Everest, 2004, s. 8.

<sup>32</sup> Tekin, a.g.e., s. 120.

<sup>33</sup> Serpil Sancar, *Türk Modernleşmesinin Cinsiyeti, Erkekler Devlet, Kadınlar Aile Kurar.* İletişim, 2017, s. 231.

<sup>34</sup> Brontë, a.g.e., p. 8.

she insists on working in the circus. The childhood experiences of each of these characters show that the heroines try to create a world of their own, but they are restricted to certain norms. It is particularly obvious in Jane's and Dirmit's cases.

For instance, Jane's imprisonment in the red room by Mrs. Reed shows the suppression of not only the female body but also the confinement of the individual psyche fighting for gaining an identity. The same struggle for having a self-definition is obvious in Dirmit's childhood. Like Jane Eyre, Dirmit is confined to the storehouse by her mother because of her wild temperament. Despite all her insistence, she is not allowed to go outside. Moreover, she is exposed to physical violence whenever she attempts to identify herself with nature. For example, when she eats soil, she is beaten by her mother. Thus, Dirmit's struggle to liberate herself from a familial relationship based on the denial of selfhood seems an endless effort.

The female self-development in both *Jane Eyre* and *Sevgili Arsız Ölüm* is supported by positive teacher figures who inspire the heroines with their personality that opens new gates for them in contrast to social expectations. For instance, Dirmit always holds a notebook under wraps that reminds her of the village's teacher. The teacher stands for radical thoughts for villagers while he promises hope for Dirmit to escape the boundaries of the village. For instance, when she sees a plane in the sky, she associates it with the teacher. Likewise, Jane Eyre takes Miss Temple as a model for herself at Lowood Institution which is a school for orphans. Jane Eyre finds refuge and peace in her behaviors. "Thus, Lowood, in this discourse, can be regarded as a strong symbolic precursor of individuality that, among other things, helps Jane to recognize herself and survive in a harsh space". <sup>35</sup>

When Jane is found as a liar by Mr. Brocklehurst, the headmaster of the institution, Miss Temple gives her a chance to defend herself against accusations. Jane explains the role of Miss Temple in her life saying, "she had stood me in the stead of mother, governess, and, latterly, companion." In the novel, Miss Temple represents justice against the orders of Mr. Brocklehurst who "uses his power to oppress the girls and 8 teachers at the school, to teach them to know their place in society and repress their individuality and identity." Jane describes Mr.

<sup>35</sup> Erol Gülüştür - Eren Bolat, "The Providential Impact of Lowood on Jane in *Jane Eyre*", *Uluslararası Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi / The Journal of International Social Research*, vol. 11, no. 58, 2018.

<sup>36</sup> Brontë, a.g.e., p. 71.

<sup>37</sup> Angela Andersson, "Identity and Independence in Jane Eyre", (Unpublished Dissertation), MidSweden University, 2011, p. 7.

Brocklehurst as "a black pillar [...] a sable clad shape standing erect on the rug: the grim face at the top was like a carved mask, placed above the shaft by way of capital."<sup>38</sup> The domination of Mr. Brocklehurst does not allow children to live there to gain self-identity. Moreover, their selfhood is under the threat of religion which is used as a means of controlling and taming their instincts by Mr. Brocklehurst. For instance, the children are exposed to poor conditions at the institution. However, Mr. Brocklehurst compares them to Christian martyrs. In doing so, he uses religion as a silencing device.

The similar attitude also exists in *Sevgili Arsız Ölüm* and *Tante Rosa*. Traditional beliefs are put as an obstacle to forming oneself. Evil forces like the *djinns*, fairies, or ghost images are used to prevent women's gaining self-awareness. For instance, Dirmit feels under compulsion to believe that both the teacher and "the plane is a djinn." The sole remedy Dirmit finds to reach the teacher is to provoke the djinns; break their rules which are believed to annoy them. In this way, she supposes that djinn, that is, the teacher will appear. Dirmit's way of challenging the traditional assumptions comes into prominence via this example. Tante Rosa, too, faces the hypocrisy of people who exploit religion naming Tante as a "sinner." Any behavior which serves the aim of the flesh is regarded as sin in the Monastery by nuns. Moreover, she is dismissed from the school as she does not obey the rules of the school.

It is obvious from these examples that social oppression takes many forms in the novels under the different social and cultural codes and the heroines are exposed to prejudice. On the other hand, the hidden inner landscape of heroines develops throughout their experiences, especially in *Jane Eyre* and *Sevgili Arsız Ölüm*. The rebellious nature of the characters challenges the social norms. For instance, Jane accepts the marriage proposal of Rochester does not concede her selfhood and Dirmit does not give up writing poems despite all the restrictions of her family. On the other hand, Tante Rosa's way of rebellion differs from other heroines. Throughout the novel, Tante waits for a prince to rescue her from pain. While the two heroines try to reach an ideal order for themselves fighting against the male order, the heroine in *Tante Rosa* comes into being with her contradictory features which do not require being an ideal figure thanks to the romantic irony used in the novel. In her thesis, Selen Erdoğan draws attention to the use of romantic irony in the novel and explains its function. She describes an ironic attitu-

<sup>38</sup> Brontë, a.g.e., p. 26.

<sup>39</sup> Tekin, a.g.e., s. 49.

<sup>40</sup> Sevgi Soysal, *Tante Rosa*, İstanbul, İletişim Yayınları, 2012, s. 22.

de as a "true model of life for Romantics" and adds; "(...) as well as a rejection of reason, such understanding of life is also a denial of life as an activity aimed for a certain purpose."41 After making a detailed explanation of romantic irony, Erdoğan addresses Tante Rosa as a novel in which the main character frees herself from being an ideal figure. According to Erdoğan, what makes Tante free is the "contradictory coexistence of awareness and ignorance" [which] erases the possibility of a coherent self for Rosa."42 Rosa's fantasies about becoming a princess despite a series of misfortune show that she embraces the illusion of fairy tales becoming both aware and ignorant of the impossibility of meeting a prince. In doing so, she adopts an ironic attitude toward life masculine domination. Because she failed to become a princess, the represented reality in the text is shattered but makes the heroine capable of exerting power over masculine forces. She achieves this by not revolting against roles ascribed to women traditionally, on the contrary, adopting those roles without any complaint. For instance, she finds herself in an endless effort to find a husband by looking at advertisements in the newspaper. Her emotional hunger for finding a prince is portrayed with the image of a woman singing a song for herself in the novel; "she was struggling for singing love songs for herself by playing guitar. Tante Rosa Tante Rosa, I Love You!."43 Moreover, Tante tries to elevate her position socially when she is ridiculed by a person who calls her "countess." After hearing this kind of 'courtesy title', she thinks that "everybody can be mocked, on the other hand, to elevate mockery of oneself is always possible." 45 After that, she imagines herself as a "royal person" keeping a parrot in her hands and decides to masquerade as a countess. The predominance of courtly love that defines gender roles based on social expectations is clear. Tante is aware of what kind of hegemony exists in the social spectrum. For this reason, she cannot be described as a subservient woman.

In this respect, the concern of romanticism for the rise of subjectivity can be easily recognized in the novels in which Jane, Dirmit and Tante undergo many phases of trouble that enable us to explore their position in society.

<sup>41</sup> Selen Erdoğan, "With(in) İrony Writing As Woman: Tante Rosa and Cüce", (Unpublished Dissertation), Sabancı University, 2011, p. 7.

<sup>42</sup> Erdoğan, a.g.e., p. 15.

<sup>43</sup> Soysal, a.g.e., s. 65.

<sup>44</sup> Soysal, a.g.e., s. 82.

<sup>45</sup> Soysal, a.g.e., s. 82.

### Childhood and Nature: The Source of Imagination

It is a general view that childhood is one of the main concerns of romanticism. Innocence, imagination, nature, and primitiveness are key elements of the child figure. All these qualities are attributed to Jane Eyre, Dirmit and Tante Rosa during their development. These heroines embody innocence while they are exposed to the corruptions of adult life which tries to oppress their instincts. The passionate girls in Jane Evre and Sevgili Arsız Ölüm fight against the adults around them to construct an integral self. Nature stands as a key element that enforces their imagination and reveals the power of self-identity, especially women's struggle for autonomy. The uncontrollable nature reminds the general assumptions about women who are associated with terms such as hysteria, passion, and hot temper. However, in a social environment such qualities are tried to be eliminated because order, rationality and discipline are the main expectations from the individual and women. Jane and Dirmit, on the other hand, strive to establish their selfhood without setting any limits on their nature since they are always in touch with nature, which leads to their self-examinations. In this context, walking in nature plays an important role for romantics and it is regarded as a "romantic trope." "As Irwing Babbitt explains, walking is particularly congenial to imaginative reflection."47 Brown examines the walking metaphor in Jane Eyre and focuses on how important walking is for Jane. According to the writer, walking provides self-development for Jane. It is obvious in the statement which opens the novel: "there was no possibility of taking a walk that day." Brown argues that this statement indicates restriction and confinement. On the other hand, she also draws attention to the fact that it is not disappointing at all because "taking a walk within the borders of Mrs. Reed's environment is not the liberation of body and mind."49 What Jane appreciates is the natural landscape which puts no limit on the body and soul. As Warren Edminster states "She is attracted to birds and nature, and she feels oppressed by the walls and locks of Gateshead."50 It seems that Jane feels helpless within the boundaries of Gateshead Hall. Jane explains her position and says; "I was a discord in Gateshead Hall: I was like no-

<sup>46</sup> Ariella Bechofer Brown, "(En)gendering Romanticism: A Study of Charlotte Brontës' Novels", (Unpublished Dissertation), The City University of New York., 1996, p. 6.

<sup>47</sup> Brown, a.g.e., p. 7.

<sup>48</sup> Brontë, a.g.e., p. 5.

<sup>49</sup> Brown, a.g.e., p. 99.

<sup>50</sup> Warren Edminster, "Fairies and Feminism: Recurrent Patterns in Chaucer's "The Wife of Bath's Tale" and Brontë's Jane Eyre", *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations: Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre*, ed. Harold Bloom, New York, Chelsea Publishers, 2007, p. 184.

body there; I had nothing in harmony with Mrs. Reed or her children."<sup>51</sup> On the other hand, nature promises her compassion as she thinks; "I have no relative but the universal mother, nature, "I will seek her breast and ask repose."<sup>52</sup> Jane takes shelter in nature and develops intimacy with natural elements. Like Jane's relationship with nature, Dirmit frequently communicates with nature in *Sevgili Arsız Ölüm* which so perfectly mirrors Dirmit's discovery of her selfhood. However, unlike jane, Dirmit's relationship with nature is built in the context of "animism,"<sup>53</sup> which is based on the view that everything in nature is alive and has a soul in a different dimension because Dirmit comes to the fore as an animist character.

Dirmit communicates with a great variety of natural elements such as "stones" and "flowers" and even supernatural forces called djinns. For this reason, she is regarded as a demonical girl55 and not allowed to walk outside. Whenever she meets nature which gives her a chance for self-development, that opportunity is taken away from her by her mother or other family members. The same social attitude also exists in *Tante Rosa*. During the time Tante gets an education in the monastery, it is stated in the novel that running around the school garden while dressed in a long "black tunic" is rather arduous. <sup>56</sup> On the other hand, contrary to Jane, Tante does not hesitate to run as she imagines herself as a princess. Tante is so committed to the dream of being a princess that she even takes the risk of being punished by the nuns. Given Tante's feminine energy, it is apparent that she favors becoming in touch with her wild, disorderly side.

The same is true for Dirmit, as well. As Deniz Gündoğan states her communication with nature serves the aim of breaking "the surrounding patriarchal constraints." Nature itself is seen as an escape from social oppression. Her dialogue with plants, moon and stars shows that she tries to build up her world which takes its power from being a resistant female figure.

In Sevgili Arsız Ölüm, seeking liberation through nature is remarkable. Dirmit's final decision for self-fulfillment by writing poems blossoms and is pro-

<sup>51</sup> Brontë, a.g.e., p. 12.

<sup>52</sup> Brontë, a.g.e., p. 275.

<sup>53</sup> Ahmet Can, "Latife Tekin'in Romanlarında İnsan ve Doğa İlişkisi", (Yayımlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi), Hacettepe Üniversitesi, Ankara, 2018.

<sup>54</sup> Tekin, a.g.e., s. 23.

<sup>55</sup> Tekin, a.g.e., s. 56.

<sup>56</sup> Soysal, a.g.e., s. 21.

<sup>57</sup> Deniz Gündoğan, "From Similitude to the Beyond; An Alternative Female Subjectivity via Feminine Magical Realism", (Unpublished Dissertation), Central European University, 2009, p. 43.

voked by her "passion." SAs she is always exposed to domestic violence, she decides not to move away from the borders of the house but to write poems which provides her mind to act freely. While doing so, she engages herself with nature, the sun and moon. On the other hand, the most praiseworthy source is found in Dirmit herself. She gives utmost importance to her inner voice. The tension between Dirmit and social forces gets clearer in this way. When the papers on which she writes her poems were cut into parts, she yells at crowds following the advice of "snow." She even runs the risk of being mad rather than losing her poems saying, "let's go mad rather than allowing my poem to flee." It is also notable that Dirmit's hysterical behavior which is generally associated with women revealed because of losing her poems. On the other hand, natural supports and provides her with an inherent power while she yells at crowds.

The use of nature in *Jane Eyre*, *Tante Rosa* and *Sevgili Arsız Ölüm* seems to indicate the tension between the inner life of the heroines and the external world. The disruptive forces of female energy are associated with nature and regarded as a threat by society. Female subjectivity is sustained by nature because, in these novels, nature allows the protagonists to gain self-awareness and development despite their social limitations, and it becomes a guide in searching for ways to assert their subjectivity. Therefore, the negative image of a woman who is emotional and unable to restrain her passions is transformed through the image of nature. Nature becomes an instrument that enables the characters to realize their potential. In this sense, the heroines frequently get in touch with nature to assert their authority. The "restlessness" in Jane and the rebelliousness in Dirmit and Tante Rosa reflect their intimate relationship with nature which stands for limitless energy and free space for liberating oneself.

#### The Rise of a Dominant Female Voice

As argued before, Romantics' attitudes toward life are shaped by the elevation of individuality, imagination, childhood, and nature. All these elements bring about the heroines' declaration of authority at the end of the novels. As outcast figures who conflict with social rules, Brontë's Jane Eyre, Tekin's Dirmit and Soysal's Tante reach a female authority although Tante and Dirmit seem to have an unhappy ending.

<sup>58</sup> Tekin, a.g.e., s. 163.

<sup>59</sup> Tekin, a.g.e., s. 166.

<sup>60</sup> Tekin, a.g.e., s. 183.

<sup>61</sup> Brontë, a.g.e., p. 93.

For instance, Jane reveals her authoritative voice during the time she spends at Thornfield. Rochester, the master of Thornfield where Jane works as a governess proposes to her but on the day of the ceremony, Jane leaves Rochester as she learns that he has a mad wife constrained in the attic. Her rejection shows how she dismisses being the mistress of Rochester. Besides, while she is away from Thornfield, she gets another proposal from a clergyman called St. John but rejects him as she knows that he does not love her. As Linder points "Jane's decision to refuse St. John's proposal is based on a clear-sighted evaluation of her innate personality." She imagines what kind of a life is waiting for her if she accepts St. John's offer and says, "I must disown my half nature, stifle half my faculties, wrest my tastes from their original bent, force myself to the adoption of pursuits for which I had a natural vocation. He wanted to train me to an elevation I could never reach; ... the thing was as impossible as to mold my irregular features to his correct and classic pattern..." <sup>63</sup>

Jane's most noticeable characteristic is her passionate nature, which prevents her from having a relationship with St. John, who proposes to her a missionary task. Jane's decision not to marry him shows the moral progress of Jane. Despite her missionary work, her rejection emphasizes the fact that nothing is more important than her inner voice. After Jane decides to trust her feelings, she hears a supernatural voice that calls her to Thornfield. Rochester gets blind and becomes a widower because of a fire. All these events provide equal conditions for their marriage. At the end of the novel, it can be observed that the romantic attitude of Jane is used as a tool for her self-expression.

Another distinctive female voice can also be heard in Dirmit and Tante Rosa. Dirmit's devotion to the writing that takes its power from nature emphasizes the fact that she engages herself with the act of creativity. Although she is assigned the role of passivity, her rebellious personality rejects all these labels. She even challenges the rules of God while her mother is about to die. While Atiye thinks about what to say to God about her deeds, Dirmit's suggestion shows that she positions herself against her family's traditional views. She suggests her mother telling God; "if you are the destiny maker of my deeds, I had nothing to do with my deeds but reading and practicing it." Berna Moran argues that Dirmit's reply

<sup>62</sup> Cynthia A. Linder, *Romantic Imagery in the Novels of Charlotte Brontë*, London, Macmillan, 1985, p. 33.

<sup>63</sup> Brontë, a.g.e., p. 339.

<sup>64</sup> Tekin, a.g.e., s. 209.

marks the maturation that causes her to split with her family.<sup>65</sup> Dirmit's rebellious spirit which draws its strength from the romantic attitude provides her with an authoritative voice as she "walks on her way and makes friends with the life outside the home; with streets and sea."<sup>66</sup> "She writes poems at nights, and then reads her poems to sea in the mornings."<sup>67</sup> Dirmit's self-awareness process is formed essentially by her passionate spirit. The same is true for Tante, too.

Tante's passionate nature provides a romantic perspective in the novel. Her rebellious personality during her childhood and extraordinary dreams that she hopes to come true demonstrates why she is isolated from society. Although it can be assumed that the roles such as cleaning animals' dung, being a wife, and working as a restroom cleaner make her a passive character, the fact that she is aware of social norms that require a woman to be passive makes her an authoritative person. Especially the statement used in the novel crystallizes her ideas on the ridiculous side of traditional gender roles; "in a meeting of married women, someone who emulates 'the angel in the house' may desire to be the most ideal prostitute. Why not?" For Tante there is no difference between the image of the fallen and the ideal woman. What matters most is an individual's feelings and passion.

#### Conclusion

Jane Eyre, Tante Rosa and Sevgili Arsız Ölüm are works that carry the promises of female bildungsroman focusing on female characters' development. These novels follow a similar pattern during the self-development of the female protagonists and make use of romantic features. The way the authors of these novels employ romantic tools leads the main characters to awaken to their social roles, which makes these novels different from male bildungsromans. The most important contribution of the romantic elements is that the female characters realize the difference between social roles imposed by society and their desires as women. Especially their childhood periods provide important clues to see what society expects from a woman and how women are perceived in society. They are brought up to be pure, innocent, and submissive. When they conflict with the expectations of society, nature becomes a place where women take shelter to feel their freedom or escape from their current perceived roles. It is foregrounded as

<sup>65</sup> Berna Moran, Türk Romanına Eleştirel bir Bakış 3, İstanbul, İletişim Yayınları, 2004, s. 82.

<sup>66</sup> Moran, a.g.e., s. 82.

<sup>67</sup> Tekin, a.g.e., s. 199.

<sup>68</sup> Soysal, a.g.e., s. 69.

a source of inspiration to reveal their desires which are silenced by society. The landscapes in Jane Evre. Tante Rosa and Sevgili Arsız Ölüm give the heroines opportunity to declare their freedom. Therefore, nature is also a place where they realize that they are limited by society and accordingly gain consciousness about their roles. Their communication with nature enables them to hear and raise their inner voice. On the other hand, the conflict between the feelings of the characters and the rational attitude of society increases. This is particularly evident in social institutions used in the novels. Female protagonists' school years indicate a process in which women's identities are suppressed socially. This suppression is due to society's expectations of how women should behave. Since the society in which the characters live differ, it should be emphasized that there is a perception of women predicated upon different dynamics. For instance, women are identified with concepts such as perfect housewife, child-raiser, and purity in Victorian society. It is possible to see such identifications in *Jane Eyre*. In Turkish novels, Tante Rosa and Sevgili Arsız Ölüm, women's identities constructed by the expectations of society draw attention, too. A woman is expected to behave morally, not to speak up, and to assume passive roles. They can be easily stigmatized as an unchaste woman if they disobey the rules of society.

There are also differences in the way the novels end. While Jane Eyre accepts the marriage proposal and signs a pact with society, Tante and Dirmit are alienated from society. On the other hand, the common point of these characters is not whether they come to terms with the society or not, but their awareness of the conflict between the roles that society imposes on them and their desires. This conflict and realization should also be interpreted as a growth that gives way to a new vision of female characters and an insight into the roles of females.

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## Arastırmacıların Katkı Oranı

Araştırmanın her aşamasından yazar sorumludur.

# Çatışma Beyanı

Araştırmada herhangi bir çıkar çatışması bulunmamaktadır.