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ÇAĞDAŞ TÜRK EDEBİYATINDA ÖZGÜR BİR KADIN BEDENİ İNŞA ETMEK

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ÖZ

Toplumsal cinsiyet kuramında, Foucault'nun ele aldığı iktidar kavramı, ataerkil toplumun ihtiyaç duyduğu kadın bedenini iktidarın temel mekanizmaları olan "gözetim" (surveillance) ve "bakış" (gaze) ile üretir. Bu mekanizmanın kazanımları şu şekildedir: Kadın bedeni dıştan gelen düzenlemelere alıştırılır, bu düzenlemeler kadın bedeninin yeteneklerini optimize eder, güçlerini gasp eder, kullanışlılığını ve uysallığını arttırır ve onu sisteme entegre eder. Sonuç olarak, bireysellikten uzak bir kadın bedeni yaratılmış olur. Ancak, Foucault'nun da belirttiği gibi, iktidar genel olarak bilindiği üzere sadece tahakküm veya baskıyla işlemez, aynı zamanda direniş deneyimi ile de etkin bir şekilde çalışır. Başka bir deyişle, iktidar "yeni olanaklar yaratıp, yeni şeyler, fikirler ve ilişkiler üretir. Bu da feministlerin" güçlendirme " olarak ifade ettiği kavrama yakın bir ifadedir. Bu yazıda beden-özellikle kadın bedeni- olgusu etrafında iktidarın bedenle ilişkisi ve bunun Türk kadın yazarların yazdığı edebi metinlere (romanlar) yansıması incelenmektedir. Genel olarak şu soruların cevapları aranmaktadır: İktidar bir kadının bedenini nasıl bireysellikten uzaklaştırır? Başka bir deyişle, iktidar, kadın bedenini bireysellikten uzaklaştırmak için ne tür disiplin mekanizmaları üretir? Kadınlar edebiyat yoluyla buna nasıl bir karşı güç gösterirler? Kadın yazarlar özgür / güçlenmiş bir kadın bedeni oluşturabilirler mi ve bunun için hangi anlatı tekniklerini kullanırlar?

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çağdaş Türk Edebiyatı, kadın yazarlar, beden, iktidar, roman.

CONSTRUCTING A FREE WOMAN'S BODY IN MODERN TURKİSH LITERATURE[♣♣]

ABSTRACT

In the concept of gender, power produces the types of women's body which patriarchal society requires through power's principle mechanisms, "surveillance" and "gaze." The acquisitions of this mechanism are the following: Women's body is habituated the external regulation, it optimizes its capabilities, it extorts its forces, it increases its usefulness and docility, and it integrates it into the system. As a result, a disindividualized woman's body is created. However, as Foucault suggests, power does not only operate through domination or oppression as the common knowledge, it also operates through the experience of resistance. In other words, "it creates new possibilities, produces new things, ideas, and relations; this is akin to what feminists call 'empowerment'". In this paper, I will focus on the body and show the relationship of power with the body and the reflection of this in the literary texts written by Turkish women writers. In doing so, I will try to find answers to the questions: How does power disindividualize a woman's body? In other words, what kind of disciplinary mechanisms does power produce to disindividualize women's bodies? How do women resist this in

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literature? Are they able to construct a free/empowered woman's body? If so, what narrative strategies do they use?

Keywords: Modern Turkish Literature, women writers, body, power, novel.

In the first chapter of *The Second Sex*, Simon de Beauvoir asks what a woman is and defines her as follows: “Woman? Very simple, say the fanciers of simple formulas: she is a womb, an ovary; she is a female” (Beauvoir 1972:1). Michel Foucault, agrees that sex has been described as wholly creating women’s bodies (McLaren 2012: 32). Is the most distinctive feature that distinguishes a woman from a man her body? Beauvoir points out, “The body of a woman is one of the essential elements in her situation in the world, but that body is not enough to define her, it does not gain lived reality unless it is taken on by consciousness through activities and in the bosom of a society” (Beauvoir 1972: 37). Needless to say, biology is extremely important to a woman’s being, but biology alone is not enough to give an answer to the question of why a woman is the ’other,’ or in Simone de Beauvoir’s terms, why a woman is “the second sex” (Beauvoir 1972).

The positioning of the body in history begins with its presence in the face of the mind. According to prominent thinkers like Descartes and Bacon, while the ’mind’ is identified as being of man, the body is related to nature and to woman. However, the competition of these two is not an equal rivalry; it is the conflict between the efforts of the body to seduce the mind and the will of the mind to fight against the body. In other words, there is an inequality between the body which is woman, and the reason, which is man. This inequality between man and woman is raised and justified over the “body.” In fact, the idea that women are inferior to men is treated as a natural order and justified by biology.

However, as many scholars have proved (e.g., Simon de Beavoir, Michel Foucault, Jean Baudrillard, and Judith Butler), the body is both a social construct and a biological condition. The body, which is accompanied by powerful cultural, social and political discourses, is a physical reality that has been socially constructed. It has gained significance from the viewpoint of those who constitute a society. Beyond being a biological entity, the body is primarily a social concept because of its ties to cultural, social and political aspects. Thus, it is a product of social practices and political and cultural discourses. As Judith Butler states, “Sex is a regulatory ideal whose materialization is compelled… ‘Sex’ is an ideal construct which is forcibly materialized through time” (Butler 2011:1). In other words, a person is given a certain sex, which is both biological and social. The child is raised to display certain characteristics that are common for the sex assigned at birth based on the child’s genitalia.

However, the construction of the female body is different from the concept of the male body because power relations produce a variety of disciplinary mechanisms in order to suppress, control, and exclude women from political fields. Patriarchal thought desires to establish dominance over the feminine body and to take control of it. I argue that through a variety of disciplinary practices, this power invades and disindividualizes women’s bodies.

The body is the display of profession, sex, faith, class, ideology, etc. In addition, according to Foucault, the body is the instrument of political surveillance and control (Foucault 2012: 25). In patriarchal societies, a man guards and surveils women in order to maintain control over them and to govern them. Foucault states that power operates through social regulation of the physical body and creates “docile bodies” using different disciplinary mechanisms such as institutional disciplining, surveillance, production of desire, and punishment (Foucault 2012). With regard to the concept of gender, power creates the types of women’s bodies which the patriarchal society demands through the use of the power’s principle mechanisms: “surveillance” and “gaze.” The acquisitions of this mechanism are as follows. A woman’s body is habituated to external regulation, it optimizes its capabilities, it extorts its forces, it increases its usefulness and docility, and it integrates it into the system (Foucault 1990:139). As a result, a disindividualized woman’s body is created.

However, Foucault suggests that power does not only operate through domination or oppression as is the common belief. Power operates through the experience of resistance (Foucault 1990). In other words, “It creates new possibilities, produces new things, ideas, and relations; this is akin to what feminists call ‘empowerment’” (McLaren 2012: 41). In this paper, I will focus on the body and show the relationship that exists between power and the body, as well as the reflection of this in the literary texts written by Turkish female writers. In doing this, I attempt to respond to the following questions: How does power disindividualize a woman’s body? That is, what kind of disciplinary mechanisms does power produce to disindividualize women’s bodies? How do women resist this in literature? Are female authors able to construct a free and/or empowered woman’s body? If so, what narrative strategies do they use?

Because the body is socially constructed, patriarchal society surveils and standardizes female bodies whose visualities have become prominent, effectively and effortlessly governing, controlling and ruling them via “the gaze.” Ali Asker Bal expresses this patriarchal thought regarding the feminine body in a very striking way saying, “The woman’s body is standardized by the state, covered by religion, dressed and undressed by fashion, raced by sporting monopolies, adorned by cosmetic products, sawed out by plastic surgery, and reformed from head to toe by media” (Bal 2009: 39).

Foucault argues that power is key in producing ’docile bodies,’ which are bodies that may be subjected, used, transformed, and improved (Foucault 1990:180). I argue that this is especially true when it comes to female bodies. In fact, the female body is constantly theoretically and practically shaped and manipulated to serve masculine pleasures. This results in the disappearance of a woman’s subjectivity and freedom, as well as her individuality. At this point, what is to be expected now is not to present a different and meaningful expression, but to be active at a high level of visibility. For this reason, bodies, especially the female bodies, are shaped differently in different geographies, histories and places. In other words, they are shaped socially, politically, and culturally. This is to say that the kind of body that is imposed upon or offered to women is more important than how women express or see themselves.

If we look at Turkish history, we can clearly see that a woman is reduced to the body and that her body is used as a very important tool to symbolize and indicate the modernization of the state. A woman's appearance out of the private sphere, which Nilüfer Göle refers to as the "mahrem" (Göle 1992) area, has rendered her visible and made her the visible focal points of the patriarchal "gaze"; the woman has thus become a matter of culture and a matter of civilization. Hence, a woman's presence and her bodily integration into the "mahrem" area has been debated primarily by men. Everything, such as what she eats, where she goes, how she walks, how she sits, all was – and is – regulated by the "power."

Foucault directs our attention to bodies as the primary targets for the operation of power because he argues that the body is shaped by a variety of heterogeneous disciplines, discourses, and practices through power relations that account for a multilevel, multilayered social reality (Foucault 2012). In the Turkish context, as women appear more frequently outside of private spaces, the power has developed new strategies to discipline women regarding their appearances in the public arena. A well-known example has to do with conservatives advocating for women to cover themselves with 'turbans' in order to protect themselves from the "sinful gaze." Kemalists oppose this because it damages to the "enlightened" woman's position in laicism (Sunata 2014: 15). There are, however, a variety of additional strategies that the power uses to shape and dominate female bodies, ultimately contributing to the devaluation of women.

The first and most important way in which power is used to discipline women regarding their bodies is to ensure that the female body is associated with the concept of honor, thus disallowing the woman's body to be an individual body and instead making it, and thus the woman herself, society's property. The woman's body is not just her own, but it is instead representative of both her family's and society's honor. She must keep and protect her body for her lawful spouse in order to avoid dishonoring her family and society. Even when a woman gets married, she must show a sign to the male's family that illustrates that she has saved her body only for her husband. On the contrary, it is more acceptable for men to have sexual intercourse before marriage because it proves that they have become adults. Until the 1980s, the common belief in Turkish society was that a woman's honor was held between her legs (Sunata 2001: 83-84). Since the 1980s, however, this idea has shifted a bit, and a woman's honor is no longer though to reside between her two legs; rather, many believe her honor now resides in her brain (Parla 2001). However, most people still connect a woman's honor to her virginity. Fathers, husbands, and male brothers establish their dominance and control by watching women under the guise of protecting their honor.

In addition to women's honor and its relation to women's virginity and cheating, sexuality is another means by which power controls a woman's body. The relationship between the body and sexuality has been an important subject of many different fields with the influence of Foucault's argument that sexuality is a constructed experience which does not have biological origins but historical, social, and cultural roots (Foucault 1990: 29). For this reason, examination of the body and sexuality in literary works is also of great importance. It is especially important for the female writers in Turkish literature to determine whether they are able to address this subject; and if they are able, they must determine how they will do so, as this allows us to better assess whether women authors are able to create their own language or to what extent they have reached their goals.

Foucault argues *in History of Sexuality I* that Western civilization is based on confession (Foucault 1990: 59). On the contrary, as Nilüfer Göle states, the exact opposite is true in the Islamic world (Göle 1992). In Islamic cultures, especially for women, 'mahrem' things, things that are private or confidential, should be kept secret. Literature is often the best way for Turkish women to confess because, through literature, they can share all of the things they are unable to openly describe in Islamic society; the literature allows them to express themselves in more meaningful and satisfactory ways. Relationships, especially sexual relationships between men and women, for example, cannot be discussed openly in Islamic societies. However, through literature, a woman can confess with regard to everything she does, thinks about, or feels, including things having to do with her body, sexuality, and pleasures.

Power objectifies women by suppressing female sexuality. Women are tasked with satisfying men. A woman's subjectivity is only permitted when she is making concessions of femininity. Because the man is considered to be the subject and the woman is considered to be the object, if a woman takes the steps to become a subject, she is stigmatized, oppressed, or even punished. Men who hold power perceive the subjectivity of women as a threat against their own subjectivity because they establish the latter by objectifying another subject.

This leads to the question regarding how power suppresses sexuality. First, as Foucault demonstrates, power functions to limit discourse about sexuality. (Foucault 1990) Women have felt that they are not permitted by society to express their sexual feelings or even to enjoy sex in many contexts. In fact, for women, sexuality is a matter of secrecy that is not discussed with others. Beginning at birth, the notion that men should be more enthusiastic and aggressive about sexuality is supported, while women are taught to feign reluctance. If women do not conform, they are labeled as loose, frivolous, or coquettish. One of the most shameful insults to a man is the accusation that he is not masculine. For a woman, it is that she is sexually loose or a slut. For a man, sleeping with a lot of women can be a point of pride. For a woman, sleeping with a man is a point of shame. While men are encouraged to be open about their sexuality, women are prompted to keep silent regarding theirs. Men are to desire, while women are to be desired (Vance 1985).

How should women resist this hypocrisy? In terms of literature, the female body is seen as a direct source of female writing, so that a powerful alternative discourse seems possible. To produce new discourses about sexuality is one of the most effective ways to resist because to write from the body is to recreate the world. In fact, Irigaray and Cixous argue that "if women are to discover and express who they are, to bring to the surface what masculine history has repressed in them, they must begin with their sexuality."(Rosenfelt and Newton 2013: 91) They continue by highlighting that,

Women historically limited to being sexual objects for men (virgins or prostitutes, wives or mothers), have been prevented from expressing their sexuality in itself or for themselves. If they can do this, and if they can speak about it in the new language it calls for, they will establish a point of view (a site of différence) from which phallogocentric concepts and controls can be seen through and taken apart, not only in theory but also in practice. (Rosenfelt and Newton 2013: 87)

It is clear that masculine power has created the female body (woman) as an object to be viewed. In this way, the disciplinary practices can be applied more easily and effectively and with the approval of the woman. Sandra Bartky examines the disciplinary practices specific to women by dividing them into three groups (Bartky 1997: 95). The first of these practices is to produce a body of a certain shape and size. The second practice is to elicit a certain repertoire of gestures. The third practice is to encourage bodily adornment (Bartky 1997). Bartky skillfully demonstrates the ways that these practices form and shape the feminine body. She notes that these disciplinary practices work with the oppressive patriarchal structure (Bartky 1997). The effect of power on the body can be visible through the glorification of beauty. Thus, women are directed to diet, exercise, do gymnastics, pluck their bows, do their makeup, etc., so that they can be rendered visible and can thus be controlled. The statement that suggests that ’there is no ugly woman; there is a neglected woman’ is one of the discursive examples of these same social body politics.

Bodies in Resistance: Embodiment Through Writing

In most Turkish literary works, the evaluation of honor within the framework of sexual honor is emphasized as one of the most important value judgments in Turkish society. However, for most female authors, it is very problematic to express the concept of honor by means of women. While most female writers I analyze deal with this issue consciously and in different ways, only a few of them hold ideas parallel with traditional thought.

In the majority of the novels, there is the idea that the male character will marry an honorable –- generally understood to mean “virginal” -– girl and build a home. However, in the novels I analyze here, authors express this same idea to critique the attitude of male characters, and, more importantly, to critique society. For example, in *Dün ve Ferda*, the rightist and conservative Prof. Kazım Beyazıt has several girlfriends, but he chooses to marry an honorable or virtuous woman (namus-u mucessem).

Kazım Beyazıt did not see any harm in marrying a maiden his mother found. It was good to roll with educated, broad-minded girls, but when it comes to marriage the choice of Kazım Beyazıt, whose lungs are full of dominant air of 1920s and 1930s’ Germany, was a young girl who has agreed her place at home and in the marriage and has known her limitations. What the Germans said: kirche, kuhe, kinder, meaning church, kitchen and child. (p.102)

Erendiz Atasü criticizes the common societal belief that girls who are educated and open-minded are the opposite of virtuous maidens. By constructing it as the preference of the novel’s antagonist, the author shows that this juxtaposition is not true at all. However, Atasü indirectly expressed this social criticism by having the university professor Kazım Beyazıt marry his wife in Germany because the subject of honor for women is still very serious and important in Turkish society where Erendiz Atasü lives.

In the same novel, the professor deceives his wife many times after marrying her, yet there is no question of or objection regarding his honor. Further, although his wife is aware of this situation, she did not – or could not – say anything because she did not want to disturb the “happy” nest (p.102).

In another novel, *Mor*, Ilhan Sacit goes to meet his first wife’s family. The author constructs a profile characterized by a low socioeconomic status as she describes the family. She expresses how the family has had difficulties. They sacrificed when they raised their daughter Revan and they want to marry her in ’honor’ by all manner of means (p.43). In a conversation between Revan and Ilhan Sacit, the author brings this matter to light, and she explains how this societal expectation must change and how this change will happen:

Girls prefer love to friendship. They are very hasty to get married to have children. They want to see men as some sort of insurance, a life guarantee. Have you ever been in love, Revan? “No,” said Revan blushingly. She found İlhan’s words both unusual and important. “The society is complaining that a young girl is making friends with men,” she said. “They get a bad reputation and the men are thinking that way too. What can a girl, who has to protect her honor, do?” “Right, the concept of honor in society and in the minds, is backward. But these will change over time. We will change.” “But how?” Revan asked. “Too hard.” With reason, logic, courage. We will reject the old, antiquated one and will be open to new, liberating thought (p. 39).

Thus, İnci Aral presents her ideas to the reader through two novel characters who suggest that society possesses a misunderstanding regarding the concept of “honor.” The author succeeds in describing honor as an outdated phenomenon and asserts that this understanding of honor must change via reason, logic, courage, and with openness.

Another issue from the same novel that is related to honor has to do with the difference between how society views men and women’s deception of one another differently. In Mor, men can go to other females, and there is no objection in terms of honor in society. However, the results are not the same for women.

Once in a while, if he is so enthusiastic, no one would say a word to him for going to another woman whom he desires. He goes, comes, who’s to stop… But, he should appreciate his home, wife, sister in-law (p.18).

Further, in *İki Genç Kızın Romanı*, the concept of honor is explained through women. For example, Leman, one of the most prominent characters in the novel, is known as the “bad woman.” But because the man who fell in love with her returned to his wife and family, there was no harm to his family’s honor. However, the same cannot be said for Leman. The effects of this dishonor are seen when Leman’s daughter tells Behiye that she had a relationship with Erim, and Behiye blames Handan for following in her mother’s path (p.235).

Among the novels I analyze here, *Bir Deliler Evinin Yalan Yanlış Anlatılan Kısa Tarihi* is the one that serves as a sociological anthology. The author Ayfer Tunç has gathered together a variety of people from different backgrounds. She talks about the importance of honor and virginity through the characters. For example, Leyla’s mother

Nazife asks her daughter, who occasionally goes away by herself, before her wedding whether she is a virgin.

If they bring you back after nuptial chamber since you are impure, I don't say you are my child and I swear up and down that I will strangle you with my hands. Tell me right now, are you virgin? (p.181).

Nazife awaits the result with great curiosity and concern, and finally the good news is given to her. When she sees the bedclothes, a proof of her daughter's virginity, she weeps with joy (p.182).

There are also significant differences between male and female deception in the same novel. For example, in a family both the man and the woman deceive each other, but society treats their actions differently. While society sees no problem with the divorced man marrying the woman with whom he had an affair and deceived his wife, the woman in the same situation faces harsher criticism. Society calls her names, suppresses her, and ultimately isolates her.

Fatma Karabıyık Barbarosoğlu, once again, questions the issue of honor through female characters in her novel *Fatma Aliye: Uzak Ülke*. Fatma Aliye's daughter escapes with a non-Muslim man, an act that serves to blemish the family's name and that brings the family dishonor. For this reason, Fatma Aliye spends her life in great sadness and sorrow.

In the novel *Düğümlere Üfleyen Kadınlar*, one of the female characters, Amira, is a dancer. This profession is indicative of a lower social status for women in the Middle East. As a matter of fact, Amira has always been battered and despised by her family because she dishonored her family's name. In Middle Eastern society, even the presence of a woman's body in a coffeehouse[1]2 is enough for a woman to be regarded as "bad" or referred to as a "prostitute." In fact, when Maryam, Amira, and the journalist go to a coffeehouse, all of the men present look at them before one of them approaches the women and says, "Miss, this is men's coffeehouse" (p. 44). The women object to this, which prompt the men to label them "bitches" (p. 45). Ece Temelkuran creates a completely contrasting character for this situation: Madam Lila. It could be said that Madam Lila is the most important figure of the novel. Despite being considered a "bad" woman as a result of her past profession, the author reveals her to be a very strong character who has very effective relations with important people all around the world.

As in *Dün ve Ferda*, *Düğümlere Üfleyen Kadınlar* also cynically criticizes society's notion of women in relation to their bodies:

Bad woman?! Please do not say such a thing, dear Maryam! You too? Do you not know that the urban woman who knows what she wants is always bad in our culture. The virgin girl from the village is good, but the woman who speaks and smokes with a mouthpiece is bad (p. 346).

[1] Coffee houses in the Middle East are mostly places for men to hang out.

In another example, the blonde woman is referred to as a bad woman (p.351). These examples show that women are labeled through their "bodies" and their individuality is stripped from them. Ece Temelkuran has criticized this by setting up a story and typology that contrasts the situation in society.

The final novel I will discuss in terms of honor is *Baba ve Piç*. Even the name of the novel makes a direct reference to the concept of honor by its use of the offensive word "piç," which means bastard. Elif Şafak states here, in a striking manner, society refers to children as bastards (i.e., that is how children are identified) before the children are even given their own names. The primary themes in this novel have to do with the body and with honor. One of the novel's primary heroines was raped by her brother, and as a result, she become pregnant with a girl. Conventionally, this woman would have been left to die because she had been raped. In the best of circumstances, she would have been rejected and ignored by her family. Normally, when the family members are accused of this, they "lose face" in society. However, in this novel, one can observe the opposite. The woman's family chose to look after both the child and the woman. Generally, in literature, as in many of the previous novels, the woman's image is presented such that it suggests that she is deserving of death. However, in this novel, it is instead suggested that the male character is deserving of death, and, in fact, the male character is punished by death at the end of the novel. Despite the fact that in much of Turkish fiction, female characters who have been raped have usually committed suicide or have been killed by male family members, in this novel, the woman holds on to life. Together with her family, she tries to overcome this horrific rape. In this case, the man's life is instead shattered, and as a result he is punished by death. Therefore, Şafak stands against the concept of honor as being related exclusively to women's bodies, and she suggests an alternative way in which society can act when presented with a similar situation; this is the author's example of resistance. However, I argue that this is not a strong example of resistance because the only reason this woman stays alive is because there are no men in her family other than the brother who raped her. Unfortunately, Şafak uses men's language, she says through Gülsüm, Zeliha's mother the following.

Are you bringing an illegitimate child to this family? A bastard! Thankfully there is no man in this family. Otherwise, they wouldn't leave you alive, you know (p. 35).

Ironically, in the same novel, the woman, in reference to the body, sustains her life by tattooing. In other words, she shapes not just her own body but also the bodies of others, so that she helps them to freely use and express their bodies.

Previously, while only specific identities and roles for women were presented in Turkish novels, in time, identities and actions aimed at women, such as birth, motherhood, and menopause, are emphasized. Although sexuality is an important concept that garners questions, unfortunately, most of the female authors I have discussed here have yet to address it as openly as they perhaps should. Considering sexuality in novels, it is not possible to mention the presence of a common language among women. While a few authors can openly discuss sexuality in their novels (*Mor, Dün ve Ferda*), others either only briefly touch upon this subject (*Bir Deliler Evinin Yalan Yanlış Anlatılan Kısa Tarihi, Baba ve Piç, Cinayet Fakültesi, İki Genç Kızın*

Romanı, Düğümlere Üfleyen Kadınlar) or never mention it at all (*Fatma Aliye: Uzak Ülke*). One of the authors I analyze here, Elif Şafak, even states that female characters written by men live their sexuality and femininity more freely than female characters written by female authors,[2] and this is suggestive of the restrictions female authors face. However, almost all of the authors frequently prefer to create masculinized female characters in their stories in order to refer to sexuality as something that belongs to the man who holds power. In doing this, authors can create more and freer spaces for their female characters.

İnci Aral would be the first author to bluntly talk about sexuality in *Mor*. Almost every main character there in has a sexual relationship and these moments are described by the author in a detailed way (Aral 2010:20,75,91,92,136,140,145,184). Additionally, in *Dün ve Ferda*, Erendiz Atasü is very straightforward about the moments during which Ferda is cheating on her husband (Atasü 2013:134-135). Although only two of the authors I analyze here (İnci Aral and Erendiz Atasü) so blatantly touch on the subject of sexuality, almost all of authors discussed here create a masculinized woman type in their novels. Beginning with *Düğümlere Üfleyen Kadınlar*, Maryam is a perfect example of these types of women. The narrator describes Maryam as follows:

Egyptian Maryam could have been a young boy if she was not wearing a nightgown. It could not be known what kind of power a person would feel with this deep voice if she had not opened her mouth (p. 7).

Maryam has a flat, long body. It does not unravel even if you pull the thread, it is that concrete. Everything in her face should be where it should be; but she looks so tough as if she is hanging a “closed” signboard that she never takes down. A person can think for a long time about whether she has been away from femininity because she was put into this world with this body or when the body became self-sanitizing from any sex, it moved away from femininity in time (p.19).

The author creates this character as if Maryam herself – like Ümmü Gülsüm – did not choose to be like this way for herself; instead, she is presented as if she is the way she is as the result of the difficult life conditions women face. When they are talking about Ümmü Gülsum Maryam says, “Ümmü had no choice. She had no choice but to be a man” (p. 13). She adds, “You think women who are like men are winning, honey?” (p. 13). Interestingly, at the end of the novel, when all of the women have won their battles with themselves and have acquired their identities, Maryam chose to become a “mother” and raise a powerful girl. Therefore, the author delivers a message that suggests that if a woman wants to be a strong woman, she can accomplish this only by being herself, not by acting as men in power would have her act. For this reason, Madam Lila, the most powerful character of the novel, has been able to maintain her power even with all of her femininity.

In *İki Genç Kızın Romanı*, we meet Behiye, another masculinized woman heroine. She is portrayed as a young girl who is far removed from womanhood until

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[2]“Kadın roman kahramanlari cinselliklerini ozgurce yaşayabiliyorlar mı?,” https://kazete.com.tr/haber/kadinroman- kahramanlari-cinselliklerini-ozgurce-yasayabiliyorlar-mi-3102, retrieved in December 2017.

she meets Handan. After meeting Handan, she wants to change in herself in order to escape her unhappy life, but she encounters an end that results in misery. Like Ece Temelkuran, Perihan Mağden emphasizes the importance of ’subjectivity’ instead of making concessions regarding femininity.

It is possible to find characters similar to Maryam and Behiye in other novels as well. Almost all of the authors communicate to readers in a variety of ways in order to suggest that they are against this situation. Either through creating miserable characters or by describing them as happy and successful when they acquire their subjectivity, they show that being masculine does not mean being strong; on the contrary, it means being part of the order built by men.

In the novels analyzed here, there is a lot of emphasis on objectified woman, but criticism on this issue takes different forms. For example, in *Dün ve Ferda*, we encounter a heroine entirely outside of the general judgments and stereotypes. The author constructs Ferda as a heroine, who is not only physically different but who is also different in terms of altitudes, behaviors, and decision-making. She is a short-haired, short, and petite woman, and the author frequently describes her as an “iron chickpea” (p. 84-85). She chooses to wear clothing outside the norm, wearing a diamond brooch over a sports jacket (p.84). At first, her style is found absurd, especially by men, but when they talk to her and realize the success and confidence she has, her style no longer holds any importance. Erendiz Atasü draws a distinct portrait of a woman using general perception and stereotypes. She creates a heroine who is demanding with regard to sex and unusual in clothing, yet excels in terms of business and finding solutions to the problems; further, she is rational, successful, interrogating, seeking, and self-confident. Even when she gets married in order to fight against the power, she shows an example of resistance by refusing to take her husband’s last name.

Furthermore, in *Baba ve Piç*, Zeliha, the female protagonist often faces criticism from her brother with regard to her body, her piercings, and the way she dresses. Because of her appearance, she becomes an ’object’ of shopkeepers, drivers, and all other men’s ’gazes’ (p. 9). The writer here attempts to reveal the oppressive ways men approach or control women’s bodies. However, although Zeliha opposes this and argues that men cannot restrict her, society still judges her. Further, the male character (Zeliha’s brother) cannot contain his desires for the female character (Zeliha). In other words, the agent of the incident, whether unconsciously or not, is the woman.

In Cinayet Fakültesi, it is suggested that the female body is used primarily for male sovereignty and for political purposes. The portrayal of Banu Sayar offers a clear example of this; first, she is presented as a completely naked woman and then as a completely covered character, which shows that the veiling and unveiling of female bodies is the direct result of the men’s power and the male gaze.

In *Düğümlere Üfleyen Kadınlar*, Ece Temelkuran reveals four different types of women. Madam Lila is admired both because of her physical appearance and her manner and behavior. Ece Temelkuran has created a mighty character who represents mind, money, and beauty all together. On the other hand, Amira is flirtatious, coquettish, and physically attractive, but she is powerless and naïve, which is the type of women power aims to create. Although she is perceived differently, she is still a creation of man. In addition, Maryam is physically bald and has a masculine attitude that contrasts the general order, but the author considers this attitude to be an option available to women offered by men in power for their own interests. For this reason, by creating a mother figure from this masculine character at the end, Temelkuran seeks to emphasize that a woman can become freer and happier by just being herself and doing whatever she wants. The last important female type is the writer / narrator. There is not enough information about her physical appearance to make an inference about this aspect of her character; however, in terms of her manners and behaviors, one might surmise that she has a rebellious personality because she has not been silent against what her colleagues experience in her country. That also explains why she is in trouble. When she is just about to return to her country, give up and obey the rules of the system, she finds herself on an adventure. The author assures readers that these four unhappy and helpless women return to their original selves by resisting and taking revenge on the power structure that that men have created.

It is also possible to meet many different types of feminine characters in the novel *Bir Deliler Evinin Yalan Yanlış Anlatılmış Kısa Tarihi,* such as a policeman's wife who is physically very beautiful, a woman who beat her father with an iron, a very ugly but hardworking woman, a beautiful but obsessed woman, a woman with heavy makeup, a neglected woman, and a fat woman. However, by ultimately burning this house the author wants to emphasize that bodies cannot be kept under pressure.

Fatma Aliye presents herself as a very conservative woman and in accordance with the conditions of the period, she creates a female profile of herself that does not accurately portray herself but strays from her given position.

In *İki Genç Kızın Romanı*, Perihan Mağden places Handan and Leman in opposition to Behiye's masculinity, fatness, and neglectful nature. By creating physical types that match the standards determined by power, Mağden shows in a striking way that bodies are under the surveillance, control and even pressure of power. She also explicitly addresses the way in which women's magazines aim to create individuals who are ready to serve in the male dominated society (p. 82).

In *Mor*, topics related to women's bodies, such as how men rule female bodies, how the female body loses its importance and value if it is outside of societal standards, and the inevitability of staying within the boundaries determined by male dominance, are presented at every opportunity. For example, if a comparison is made between the protagonist's ex-wife and his new girlfriend, we see that the former wife is now a neglected, unkept, and aged woman. However, the new girlfriend is described as the exact opposite; she possesses physical beauty, standardized female body measurements, flashy clothes, heavy make-up, and a body that is always at the service of her man. Further, in the relationship between the protagonist's brother and his wife, the female body plays an important role. The protagonist's brother describes his relationship through his wife's body. Although he and his wife are in a rough period, he is impressed by the young and lively appearance of his wife when he sees her a bikini, but he tells her that she should not wear a white bikini because she is not as young as before. In this way the author is depicting the wife as a sexual object to be looked at, and she is also making it clear that this women is expected to be under the control of her husband. However, the wife pushes back against her husband's attempt at control, and she demonstrates resistance, saying that she can wear whatever she wants (p. 76).

By considering women to be sexual objects and by acting in accordance with this consideration, power finds the opportunity to look at, protect, and oppress the female body. Therefore, the female body becomes one of the most important tools of political surveillance and control. In other words, the female body, which is the product of others' pleasures, desires, and gazes, assumes only one purpose within society, and that is to serve man.

Unfortunately, another way to discipline a woman's body is through violence. This can be physical, sexual, or psychological violence. In *Düğümlere Üfleyen Kadınlar*, almost all of the heroines depicted – Madam Lila, Amira, Maryam, and the Turkish journalist – experience suppression. All four women try to escape these tortures by escaping from their own lives, but through Madam Lila, they discover happiness and freedom by finding themselves and doing what they want to do. Ultimately, the women escape from men and the system that has been created for women.

In *Baba ve Piç*, the protagonist of the novel is raped; she is thus exposed to the violence of a man. However, the woman is avenged when another woman kills the man.

In *Iki Genç Kızın Romanı*, Behiye is always oppressed by her brother. At the end of the novel, she suffers heavily from her brother's physical abuse. Behiye escapes from the house, and she takes all of her brother's money, but she is ultimately unable to escape her brother. Another female character in the same novel, Leman, is also subjected to violence at the hands of men. Men use Leman only for their own desires and then they leave her behind, and this has a profound and negative impact on Leman.

In *Cinayet Fakültesi*, we are again confronted by physical, psychological, and sexual violence. And we again see a woman take revenge on a man.

In *Dün ve Ferda*, the author chooses to include physical violence against women because of the political events of the period. When the psychiatrist asks about her political life and whether she has experienced any kind of violence, Ferda does not want to talk about it, but she responds by thinking to herself, "Spraying cold water on the vagina itself, sending electricity through the tips of the nipples is not like listening to patients from Chile" (p. 51).

In addition, by sharing Ferda's feelings, the narrator describes violence toward as follows:

Actually, she was lucky. She did not see severe torture. Her flesh was not exposed to insults which dismiss conscious from body, alienate it and completely detach it from the body. She, strapped with eyes, was taken away to interrogation without permission to wear her shoes. She also had a slap. She had suffered the pain of being dragged into the unknown in spite of her will and tried to resist by remembering the connection between past, present and future comrades and herself. Every time he heard an explicit or indirect mention of the phenomenon of torture, the channel was activated and Ferda Basarir identified herself with other whose vagina were torn (p. 51).

In addition, the author addresses torture that exists in the relationship between Ferda and her husband. The latter is unexpectedly physically violent toward Ferda, and because of this, he will always be regretful.

In *Mor*, we come across violence first with the protagonist's father and then his sister. The effect of the father's psychological abuse on both the mother and his children plays a large role in the novel.

In *Fatma Aliye: Uzak Ülke*, as a result of the characteristics of the era, women's lives are under pressure in general, and Fatma Aliye endures her share of it. As a matter of fact, she had to publish her first translation under her pen name "Bir Hanım" (A Lady) rather than her own name.

As we can see in these examples, the body is not currently considered the center of all life. The body is something that is constructed and does not need to be constantly inspected by reason. It is not a category of otherness that is punished, excluded, overshadowed, and cursed. Rather, it is a strong referent that is constructed on the basis of joy and desire, made "visible" and disindividualized.

Conclusion

Foucault states that power has a very different meaning than that which is commonly presented or is a part of the collective common knowledge; he describes power as an interconnected web of relationships between two "bodies" such as institutions, or individual people, groups, and ideas (Foucault 1990). Per this definition, each 'body' exercises some level of power, and each entity is both the giver and the receiver of forces. Through out this paper, I made use of Foucault's reasoning as I closely analyzed the interconnected relationship that exists between men and women, as two different bodies, in women authors'novels. As I analyzed this relationship, I focused primarily on female characters to see if there was evidence of Foucault's description of power in these novels. In other words, I explored whether women exercise any level of power in this interconnected relationship, as Foucault suggests.

Power determines a pattern of how human beings should behave, and as long as individuals cannot say no to this pattern and cannot thus be subjects, they have to be objects. Throughout history, in many cultures and traditions, men have been subjects, while women have been dependent on them. Many discourses and actions in history have served only to otherize or objectify women. To evaluate today's conditions, we can assess rules which are mostly in accordance with men's interests; people are indoctrinated regarding these rules that have to do with religion, tradition, and custom. Women have been trapped between the walls as a result of social pressure and taboos, and they have thus become unable to express themselves. Because of childcare, cooking, and other housework, which they are forced to do, women have been compelled to live in a slave-like state far removed from the lives they desire.

As argued throughout the paper, women are often not even permitted agency over their own bodies. A woman who does not have the right to speak regarding her own body has no say in her own private life, and is not allowed input pertinent to what to wear, where and when to go, and how to behave. The problem here has to do with individuals who possess the mentality that supports the words about women's bodies, sets the rules and otherizes women from individuality. The most effective means of addressing this objectification is gaining consciousness such that the objects reconstructing themselves as subjects. Women struggle with identity, with becoming individuals, in literature just as they do in society; this continues even today. Certainly, women have achieved some means of power – not enough, of course – through their writing, and most importantly, they have begun "destabilizing the gender system." (Sılay 1997:212) Women have been able to "gain entrance into the club,"(Sılay 1997:213) as Kemal Sılay states, in effort to establish a measure of equality for both genders in the club.

As such, Turkish women authors have yet to install a true female literary authority in literature; however, they have been able to upend, to some degree, the dominant patriarchal system. It seems that Turkish women have achieved important progress in terms of exercising some means of power, but they need to be further empowered if they are to become individualized members of society. Per the evidence currently available, it seems fair to suggest that although women writers have been able to address issues such that they may be considered "brave," they have been unable to get beyond common knowledge and what society deems acceptable. Although women authors are aware of their second-class status in literature (and in society), they remain unable to construct their own language, speak and write for themselves, and they still serve to repeatedly reproduce the dominant language.

Once again, returning to Simon de Beaouvior, who argues that in order for women to have freedom, they should acquire "subjectivity" and "agency" as opposed to degrading stereotypes that tend to reduce 'being woman' to 'being feminine' and 'being feminine' to sex and body only (Beauvoir 1972). Here, freedom means that women should be free from the social order that is created by power, which reduces them to solely being bodies that are viewed as sexual objects, taking away their individuality. In Turkish literature, freedom can only be acquired when women form their own language. As seen in the examples, a female author's language has changed in many ways; however, it is still not possible to talk about a completely free, new, and constructive language for all of them.

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