

TEACHING OF AMERICAN LITERATURE: DEVELOPING A COMPARATIVE ANTHOLOGY/COMPILATION OF FEMALE WRITERS

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ABSTRACT

This study discusses female discourse as a common female experience basing on the intercultural aspects of the works of female writers and proposes a comparative technique for the compilation of female writers as an attempt to facilitate and contextualize teaching of American female writers' works in Turkey at university level in both language teaching and literature departments. Comparative compilation technique in literature teaching is a creative process where the instructor can act like an anthology writer. Basic steps of the process are the categorisation of widely used topics and the selection of sample works suitable for the sub-categories determined. This study handles female literary discourse on the bases of common reading experience and thematic content and aims at motivating the students by introducing works of American and Turkish female writers side by side. The themes and the writers used for comparison are: awakening of female gender, enlightenment of women (Kate Chopin, Adalet Ağaoğlu), the vicious circle of intellectual women, dissatisfaction and suicide (Sylvia Plath, Tezer. Özlü, Nilgün Marmara), surreal and utopic female images (Suzette Haden-Elgin, Nazlı Eray), clash of female roles as wife/mother/woman (Joyce Carol Oates, Emily Dickinson, Erendiz Atasü), women in rural life (Nazlı Eray, Erendiz Atasü, Joyce Carol Oates)

ÖZET

"Amerikan Yazının Öğretimi: Karşılaştırmalı Kadın Yazarlar Antolojisi/Derlemesi Yöntemi" başlıklı bu çalışmada kadının yazın söyleminin kültürler arası niteliğinden yola çıkılarak önce kadın söyleminin evrenselliği tartışılmakta ardından Amerikalı kadın yazarların yapıtlarının öğretimini kolaylaştırmak amacıyla karşılaştırmalı kadın yazarlar seçkisi yöntemi önerilmektedir. Yazın öğretiminde karşılaştırmalı derleme tekniği yaratıcı bir süreçtir. Bu sürecin aşamaları kadın yazınında yaygınlıkla işlenen konuların sınıflanması, Türkiye'de Amerikan kadın yazınının öğretiminde güdüleyici - anadil ve kültürün yazınına da tanıtmayı amaçlayan- bir yaklaşımla çeşitli yazınsal türlerden belirlenen temel konulara uygun yapıtların seçilip sunulmasıyla gerçekleşmektedir. Kadının yazınsal söylemine okuma ve metin odaklı bakan bu çalışmada belirlenen konu başlıkları ve örneklemede kullanılan yazarlar şunlardır: kadın cinsinin uyanışı, kadının aydınlanması (Kate Chopin, Adalet Ağaoğlu), aydın kadının kısır döngüsü, doyumsuzluk, intihar (Sylvia Plath, Tezer. Özlü, Nilgün Marmara), gerçeküstü, bilim kurgusal, ütopik kadın imgeleri (Suzette Haden-Elgin, Nazlı Eray), kadınlık rollerinin çatışması, eş, anne ve kadın olmak (Joyce Carol Oates, Emily Dickinson, Erendiz Atasü), kırsal kesimde kadın olmak (Nazlı Eray, Erendiz Atasü, Joyce Carol Oates)

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This study is concerned with the teaching of American female writers through the comparison of their female gender specific works with works of the same nature of Turkish female writers. The main idea suggested here is the developing of a compilation of fictional works of female writers of two different cultures with the assumption that the female experience has certain universal references that are independent of cultural boundaries. In thematic compilations, each of the thematic units is made up of works that address to a significant aspect of an overall issue if the units are designed to be parts of a whole. So, the general framework to be drawn here is the literature instructor's own compilation/anthology against "set books/chronology, period, writer or genre based anthologies of leading publishing companies" in literature teaching, while the specific framework remains the female gender specific works of American and Turkish female writers.

"Anthology is a matter of preference/ taste, it is subjective," says Tank Dursun K., a Turkish writer and columnist.¹ "The anthologies reflect the personal preferences of the researcher who compiles them. They gain their value through the aspect of being "selected" in terms of the texts preferred in a field, in a genre depending on the focus of compilation. For the reader or the user of the anthology this is a fact taken granted" Dursun K. further says and adds "each sample that has been taken into an anthology and used that way makes one share the preference of the compiler. The advantage of having a variety of anthologies in circulation lies more in the fact that anthologies oppose in nature, passivity, the conditioned, indifferent attitude, the traditionally approved frames and criteria of selection. They challenge the inertia of mind."

Female fiction, gender fiction in general, as a production of a homo-social group is an idea entertained in the works of women's studies scholar Diaz-Diocaretz². At this point, I would like to quote from Diaz-Diocaretz trying not to emphasize the feminist tone in her discussion of "the muted group theory". In classifying gender fiction as homo-socially arranged discourse Diaz-Diocaretz stresses the fact that "...findings in a given object of study often depend greatly not only on what we read but on how we read" and "before reading any set of texts shaping a type of homo-social discourse, it is necessary to decode the paradigms of oppression in all its traceable manifestations for the study of a diachronically and synchronically related components..." (Diaz-Diocaretz 1985:55). Thus in an account of literary contexts in the form of a comparative anthology, the study of thematic links, concurrent use of images, or any other portions of content might help us shape up our strategy of compilation.

Pam Morris in recognition of a shared tradition under the title "writing by women"³ asserts that "new anthologies and new editions of women's writing have made the presence of women's literary productivity an indisputable fact. This inevitably raises new questions for literary studies. How should we respond to all this women's writing? For what reasons should we welcome it? Do we need to develop new critical skills to read it?" (Morris 1993:59) Following from where this quotation leaves we might say that "we need not only new critical skills but also comparative and contrastive skills to read and teach." Part of the problem mentioned above, for those dealing with American literature overseas outside its

original cultural contexts, can thus be overcome.

After the introduction of possible topics/thematic units around which a comparative compilation of the above sort can be designed, we will exemplify our points with the use of specific extracts from the works of certain female writers of both cultures classifying extracts, that is, the writers, as a set of typical comparative illustrations of a thematic unit.

Our choice of American female writers, Kate Chopin, Joyce Carol Oates, Suzette Haden Elgin, Sylvia Plath and Emily Dickinson are renowned figures of world literature as well as of their own cultures. Here the originality of the present study lies in its claim that the choice of Turkish female writers (Adalet Ağaoğlu, Tezer Özlü, Nilgün Marmara, Nazlı Eray, Erendiz Atasü), who are renowned figures of our literature and just as universal and comprehensive in their forms and contents as their American counterparts promise a rich exemplification grounds with which we hope to inspire the course designs in teaching of female figures of American literature. We believe that the present set of comparative examples will also serve to promote the works of renowned female figures of Turkish literature in the international scale to those who are not very familiar with the Turkish female literary canon, giving them a chance to learn about the outstanding pens of female issues in our culture and their points of view of the universal issues of female gender. The writers in question and their works might not have borne any genre-specific, stylistic or chronological resemblance whatsoever other than the focus applied here.

The list of possible themes that can be exploited as focusing angles in "the comparative trip to female issues as depicted by female writers" is as follows:

1. the awakening of the female gender, female enlightenment
2. the vicious circle of the intellectual women, dissatisfaction, suicide
3. utopic or dystopic images of women, science fiction, surreal texts
4. women and marriage, motherhood, spouse role in clash with female identity
5. women of the rural areas, the ghettos and the shanty towns

Since our inclination here is the "teaching of literature and the facilitating factors to be employed for that end", the focusing criteria purposefully excluded the stylistic representations of the differences among female fiction, feminine fiction and feminist fiction as displayed in the extracts, labelling all of the extracts, samples of women's fictional discourse, as literary products of female gender. Now, we will follow the above list of themes in our exemplification of the comparative extracts⁴.

The first thematic unit in our list is the female enlightenment, the pioneers of feminism and the writers to be compared are Kate Chopin (1851-1904) and Adalet Ağaoğlu (1929-) Both Chopin and Ağaoğlu deal with the dilemma of woman with respect to identity crisis. The works that will be cited are *The Awakening* of Kate Chopin and *Ölmeye Yatmak (Lying Down to Die)* and *Hayır (No)* of Adalet Ağaoğlu, the second book of the famous trilogy by the author⁵. Suicide is the common point in both as an instinct, a drive developed against the hurting realities of everyday female experience. Edna of *The Awakening* and Aysel of *Lying Down to Die* and *No* are both married women "who seek love

outside their stuffy, middle-class marriages" and both novels depict "the minds of women seeking fulfillment of their essential natures"⁶. The important difference between the two female characters is that Edna finds peace in death whereas Aysel gets up from the bed in which she has lied down to die with a powerful drive to survive.

"...Edna had found her old bathing suit still hanging, faded upon its accustomed peg. She put it on, leaving her clothing in the bath-house...How strange and awful it seemed to stand naked under the sky! How delicious! She felt like some newborn creature, opening its eyes in a familiar world that it had never known...The water was deep, but she lifted her white body and reached out with a long, sweeping stroke...

She went on and on...She thought of Leonce and the children. They were a part of her life. But they needed to have thought that they could possess her, body and soul.... 'Good-bye- because I love you'...the shore was far behind her and her strength was gone. She looked into the distance and the old terror flamed up for an instant: then sank again..."

from *The Awakening*
Kate Chopin p.301-302

"...Ölüm bazen o denli çabuk gelmiyor. Ölümle savaşmak gerekiyor...Ölmeye yatarken ölümle savaşmak gerekeceğini düşünmemiştim... Söyle bana Engin: Şimdi hayran hayran ve güvenle yüzüne baktığın kadın özgür mü? Söyle Engin. Kurtardı mı bir şeyleri? Bu mümkün mü? Tek başına kurtulmak ve kurtarmak mümkün mü?... Ben de yeniden giyiniyorum işte...Yağmurluğumu giydim. Önünü iyice kapattım. Kapının dışına astığım "Lütfen Rahatsız Etmeyiniz" levhasını tersine çevirdim.Anahtarını aldım. Kapıyı örttüm, koridora çıktım...Bir süre daha boğuşup çocuğumu büyütme istiyorum...Belki de çocuk yoktur. Belki de kendimim yeniden büyümek istediğim; saksısını çatlatmış..."

from *Ölmeye Yatmak (Lying Down to Die)*
Adalet Ağaoğlu pp.5, 312, 316

(Death does not come that quick at times. You are supposed to fight with death...It had never occurred to me that death called for fight when I decided to lie down to die... Tell me Engin: Is this woman whose face you are looking at with admiration and trust now free? Tell it Engin. Could she save things? Is that possible? Is that possible to be saved and to save on your own?...Now I am getting dressed again...I put my raincoat on and zipped it up. I reversed the 'Please Do Not Disturb' sign that I had hung outside the door. I took the keys. Closed the door and went out to the hall.

I want to struggle for a little more to raise my child...There might be no child though. Perhaps it is me whom I want to raise once more: me who cracked up her shell...)

"...Kolay sanmıştım ilk düşündüğümde. Zayıf kadınlar yapmıştı bu işi. Alçakgönüllülük istiyor, kendini beğenmişlik değil. Cesare Pavese, bin dokuz yüz elli. Zayıf kadınlar, ha? Stefan'a ne buyrulur, genç, güçlü, kuvvetli Mayakovsky'ye ne buyrulur, ya Krillov'a, peki kendinize ne buyrulur? Sorun zayıflık olsa! Başkaldırı...Başkaldırı...Parçalanmış değerler karşısında hayatla uyum sağlamak ikiyüzlülüktür...Aysel kıyıda, sandala hayli kuşkulu bakıyor...İşte, olgun yaşta bir

kadın, durgun suda, sisle çevrelenmiş bir sandalın içinde oturmaktadır. Tek başına. Geceyle gündüzün arasında...Sandalda bir delik açabilir, onu usul usul batırabilirsin...Varlığın -sonsuz özgürlüğün- teklifini seçenler: sanatçılar, yazarlar, düşünürler, dolayısıyla bazı roman kahramanları; bütün seçilmiş ölümler, istençli silinimler ve reddedilmişler, yinelenişe ve uzlaşmaya "Hayır..." diyenler...Hayatın yakasının hiçbir anlamda koyvermeyelim dostlarım...Baştan alabilirim. Parçaları kendimce yan yana dizebilir, üst üste yığabilir, birini ötekinden farklı uzaklıklara koyabilirim..."

from Hayır (No)
Adalet Ağaoğlu p.5-6, 321-22-323

(..At first I thought it to be easy. Weak women had done this. It requires humbleness, not extravagance. Cesare Pavese, ninteen fifty. Weak Women, hah? A,What would you then say to Stefan, to young and robust Mayakovsky, or Krilow, and what wolud you say to yourself? If weakness were the matter! Protest ..Protest...It is hypocrisy to try to reconcile with life, confronting shattered values all along... Aysel is by the shore, looking at the boat quite suspiciously ... Here is a woman of mature age, on the still water, sitting in a boat surrounded by the fog. On her own. Between night and day... You can open up a hole in the boat and let it sink slow by slow... Those who chose the oneness of existence of eternal freedom: artists, authors, philosophers, thus certain fictional characters, all of the chosen deaths, free willed removals and oppositions, those saying 'No...' to repetition and reconciliation...Let us not let the collar of life go friends...I can rewind it. I can put the pieces side by side, load them up on top of one another, can put one at distances different from one another...)

Now, we would like to continue with the second thematic unit in our list, with writers who, we believe, would take their places at the top of the list if we were asked to categorize American and Turkish female writers who were too frustrated and dissatisfied with the state of human life in general and created fictional characters who felt the same way: Sylvia Plath and Tezer Özlü. Unlike Chopin and Ağaoğlu, these two renowned writers of both cultures produced works somewhat autobiographical in nature, the fates of their characters were actually part of theirs, fiction coming true in a sense. Of course, it will not be doing justice to Sylvia Plath (1932-1963) and Tezer Özlü -and Nilgün Marmara (1958-1987)^{vii}- to mark their quite short lives as unhappy examples of female literary experience. One should mention their literary career with phrases other than "too frustrated were they and much too hopeless about the future of human experience and the reactions of the people to go on". These experiences can rather be labeled as the catastrophic end of females in any culture who are too sensitive, wise and fragile to deal with the everyday harsh realities and the shallowness of human interaction.

Sylvia Plath's poems (such as "Lady Lazarus") are cries from the depth of the heart, so is her novel *The Bell Jar*, the nearly success story to be ended as a failure due to the lack of hope and the necessary desire to survive. Tezer Özlü, "the lyric princess of Turkish literature", is a typical symbol of "a success story to be" if not ended tragically with cancer. These two young intellectuals alongside with others of the same fate could fill up an anthology volume of their own whose stories touch the hearts making us think "how can such brilliant women feel that

frustrated and depressed?" or "If only they could survive; they certainly had a lot more to create." Tezer Özlü's *Yaşamın Ucuna Yolculuk (Journey to the Edge of Life)* is a counterpart of Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* in certain ways:

"... Her sevginin başlangıcı ve süreci, o sevginin bitişinin getireceği boşluk ve yalnızlık ile dolu. Belirsizlikler arasında belirlemeye çalıştığımız yaşam gibi... Yaşamın, daha doğrusu yaşamın ortasında tüm özlemlerimin doyumsuz kaldığını nasıl da algılıyorum. Ama artık yorulmaksızın aramak yok... Onu ne denli seviyorum... Bazı insanlar sabır, bazıları sabırsızlık dolu. Ben ikincilerdenim...Gitmeliyim. Gitmeliyim. Gitmeliyim. Gitmeliyim. Gitmeliyim. Ben giderken, ben ya da tren görüntülerin içinden, kentlerden, köylerden...tanımadığım insanlar hızla gidiş yönünün aksi yönünde yitip giderken, her görüntüyle birlikte benden uzaklaşırken, yitip giderken, işte ancak o zaman uzaklaşıyorum yaşamın sonundan. Başlangıcından. Gitmeliyim..."

from *Journey to the Edge of Life*

Tezer Özlü pp.11,13,116

(..The beginning and the process of each love is filled with the emptiness and the loneliness that will be brought about with the end of that love. Just like the life we are striving to make more certain among all the uncertainties...I perceive how all my longings remain unsatisfied in life, in fact in the middle of life. No more searching from now on without giving up...How I love him...Some people are filled with endurance, some with impatience. I am of the second category...I have to. I have to go. I have to go. I have to go. I have to go. As I go, either me or the train, among the reflections,, the cities, the villages...as the people unknown to me disappear in the direction opposite to the one we are heading as they move away from me with each reflection, as they disappear, only then I start moving away from the end of life. From its beginning. I have to go...)

"...I knew something was wrong with me that summer, because all I could think about was Rosenbergs and how stupid I'd been to buy all those uncomfortable, expensive clothes...I was supposed to be having the time of my life....The face in the mirror looked like a sick Indian. I dropped the compact into my pocket- book and stared out of the train window. Like a colossal junkyard the swamps and backs lots of Connecticut flashed past one brooken down fragment bearing no relation to another. What a hotch-potch the world was!...SCHOLARSHIP GIRL MISSING MOTHER WORRIED...SLEEPING PILLS FEARED MISSING WITH THE GIRL...GIRL FOUND ALIVE!...I took a deep breath and listened to the old brag of my heart. I am. I am. I am..."

from *The Bell Jar*

Sylvia Plath pp.2,210-211,236

Now, let us have a look at the manifestations of Suzette Haden-Elgin, American female science fiction writer, and Nazlı Eray (1945-), Turkish surrealist female writer noticing how similar they look in their focus of the science fictional, surrealistic depiction of the female world. The science fiction and the surreal serve as a medium for the narration of fantasies in favor or disfavor of women, eliminating the borders between "now, here reality" and "then, there blurred reality". This section is reserved for the exemplification of the third thematic unit in our list.

Suzette Haden-Elgin in her influential novel, *The Native Tongue* builds up

a science fictional world where females fight to exist developing their own concepts and language, their native tongue. This female language is only for those who are able to perceive better and subtler.

"...ARTICLE XXV (declared in force March 11.1991)

Section I. No female citizen of the United States shall be allowed to serve n any elected or appointed office to participate in any capacity (official or unofficial) in the scholarly or scientific professions to hold employment outside home without the written permission of her husbaud or (should she be unmarried) a responsible male related by blood or appointed her guardian by law or to exercise control over money or other property or assets without such written permission. Section 2. The natural limitations of women being clear and present danger to the national welfare when not constrained by the careful and constant supervision of a responsible male citizen of the United States of the female gender shall be deemed legally minors, regardless of their chronological age: except that they shall be tried as adults in courts of law if they are eighteen years of age or older..."

from Native Tongue

Suzette Haden-Elgin p.7

Nazlı Eray is mostly renowned by her short stories and novellas in which she frequently deals with the female experience with a fantastic and "mock-realistic" focus. In her story "Bir Yağmur Sonrası" ("After a Rain") she reverses the spouse roles making the husband a houseman, a homemaker who also works outside and the wife a breadwinner. "Özel Oda" ("Private Room") is the sequel of "After a Rain" taking place in the hospital post delivery room of Metin, the male character of the story who gives birth to a baby.

Nasıl "...Oğlum Metin, elektronik yüksek mühendisi, henüz bekar...Yirmi sekiz yaşında. Ehh, o ayrı oturur... Ama düşkündür bana, haftada üç gün uğrar... 'Şadiye Hanım,' dedim, 'oğlunuz (Metin) benden üç buçuk aylık hamile.' ... 'Olamaz! Bir tanem, oğlum benim! Okulunu en iyi derecelerle bitirdi. Gelecek onun...Nasıl hamile kalır? Nasıl doğurmak ister? olur da mesleğini mahveder?' diye haykırdı...'Sakin olun, Şadiye Hanım...' dedim. 'Alacağım onu...Evleneceğiz yani...'"

from "Bir Yağmur Sonrası"(After a Rain)

Nazlı Eray pp. 41-45

(...Metin, my son, he is an engineer of electronics, still a bachelor...twenty-eight Ahh, lives on his own...Yet, he is deeply devoted to me, calls me three times a week... 'Ms. Şadiye,' said I, 'Your son (Metin) is three and a half months pregnant by me'... 'Can't be true! My precious son, oh my! He graduated from his school with the best of degrees. The future is all his...How can he get pregnant? How can he decide to deliver it? How can he ruin his career like that?' she cried... 'Take it easy Ms. Şadiye...' said I. 'I will take him. We will get married that is...')

We would like to quote Adalet Ağaoğlu's short story "Tanrı'nın Sonuncu Tebliği" ("The Last Proclamation of God") in the present thematic category as well. This story reverses the apostle roles, let alone the gender roles of males and females.

"...Bugünü yarına bağlayan gece yarısında toplanacak olan Olağanüstü Kutsal Kongre'ye gözlemei-haberçi olarak çağrılı bulunuyorsunuz...İmza TANRI...Altında ise şu not: Kıyafet mecburidir...Eğer Tanrı kadın olsaydı, bu giyim kuşam meselesini böyle belirsiz bırakmaz, ayrıntılarıyla açıklardı... Tanrı, tebliğinde ayrıca, yeni bir kaosun eşiğine gelindiğini...bildiriyordu. Kendisi duruma Tanrısal çözüm yolları düşünürken sayısız kadın kapısını aşındırmaya başlamıştı....Kadınlar özetle dünyayı erkek peygamberlerin kirli, yırtık, delik bir hale getirdiğini söyleyip hayatın düzenini bir kere de kendi cinslerinden peygamberlere bırakmasını istemişler. Tamı sonuçta erkek peygamberleri emekliye ayırıp, yerlerine bu kadınlar arasından Dahlia, Sarah, Maria ve Laila'yı peygamberliğe seçtiğini bildiriyordu..."

from "Tanrı'nın Son Tebliği" (The Last Proclamation of God)
Adalet Ağaoğlu pp. 110-116

(...You have been kindly invited to the Extraordinary Holy Congress which will be summoned at midnight the day after today as an observer-messenger... Signed by GOD. And a short note below: Dress code required...If God were female he would not leave this matter of dress code ambiguous as such, he would provide the details...God, in his proclamation, was mentioning a new chaos awaiting at our door- step... While he was looking for Godly ways of solution, innumerable women went to his door... Women, in short, were asking God to leave the order of life for once to the apostles from their sex, stating that the male apostles made the world a filthy...place. God, in the end, claimed that he ordered the male apostles to get retired and appointed Dahlia, Sarah, Maria and Laila among these women as apostles in their places..."

Now, to have an idea about the possible comparative exemplifications of the fourth theme, that is, the breakdowns of married women, we will be referring to the works of Joyce Carol Oates (1938-), Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) and Eréndiz Atasü (1947-). J.C.Oates frequently deals with the problems of married women in her fiction. The following extract from the short story "Extenuating Circumstances" published in the collection titled *Haunted: Tales from the Grotesque* by her displays the clash between female identity and motherhood. The story is one of the most touching gender stories by the writer. It voices the cries of a new mother whose child of two years comes in an unfavored and unexpected fashion. Being left by the father of the child on top it, makes life a hell for this very young and vulnerable mother who sacrificed everything she had for the love of this man. In the end of the story all the hopes vanish, society's intolerant and unsympathetic reactions and the stressful position she is in makes the young single mother the murderer of her only child.

"...Because it was a mercy. Because God even in His cruelty will sometimes grant mercy... Because he cried, you do not know how he cried... Because he remembered you, he knew the word Daddy... Because he would whimper Mommy? in that way that tore my heart...Because I loved you more than you loved me even from the first time your eyes moved on my face like a candle flame... Because there was shame in it. Loving you knowing you would not love me enough...Because you did not want him to be borne...Because that time it almost happened, the boiling water overturned onto him. I saw how easy it would

be...Because you hated him, your son...Because you were not here to stop me, were you? Because I loved him. Because love hurts so bad.”

from “Extenuating Circumstances”

Joyce Carol Oates pp. 147-153

Emily Dickinson, likewise, reserves a considerable amount of her gender poems to the problem of female identity in clash with the spouse role. In the following poems the discrimination of genders, the inferior status of the female gender, the status gained through marriage seem to be the main points made by the poet who herself never got married.

Poem 199

“I’m ‘wife’- I’ve finished that-
That other state-
I’m czar- I’m ‘woman’ now-
It’s safer so-...”

Poem 732

“She rose to his Requirement- dropt
The playthings of Her Life
To take the Honorable work
Of Woman and of Wfe...”

Erendiz Atasü, one of the leading novelists and short fiction writers of woman’s issues in Turkey, deals with the identity crisis of women as a theme interwoven with the sub-theme of decision to quit, to divorce, to finalize the marital status in her short story “Dullara Yas Yakışır” (“Mourning Becomes Widows”) in the collection titled the same. The following extract is an example of a typical situation for a woman after divorce in a society where breaking the marriage is considered unacceptable.

“- Biliyor musun, dedi (Fikriye), vazgeçmenin bir zamanı vardır. Çocuklarımızdan, erkeklerimizden, hayat tarzlarından, mutluluktan ve yas tutmaktan. Saati gelince hepsinden vazgeçmesini bildim... Hayatımda hiçbir şeyi sadece görevimdir diye yapmadım. Öyle davrandım çünkü başka türlü elimden gelmezdi...(Çocuklar) Bıraktığımda küçüktüler. Ne acılar çektiler, kim bilir. Ne umabilirim? Hakkım yok...Pişmanım sanma. Ya inandığım gibi yaşayacaktım, ya da... "Ya da" sı yok...İnanıldığı gibi yaşadım...”

from “Dullara Yas Yakışır” (Mourning Becomes Widows)

Erendiz Atasü pp.214-215

(...Do you know what, said she (Fikriye), there is a certain time for quittal. Of our children, our men, our ways of life, of happiness and mourning. I knew how to forsake them all when it was time... I haven’t done a thing in my life other than taking it as a task to be fulfilled. I did so, cause I could not do otherwise...They were small when I left them (her children)...God knows how they suffered...What can I expect? I have no right... Do not think I am ungrateful. I would either live the way I believe or... no place for ‘or’...I lived as I believed...)

The fifth theme, the women of the rural areas- the ghettos and the shanty

towns as well- and their problems is a theme frequently employed by many contemporary Turkish female writers among whom Adalet Ağaoğlu, Nazlı Eray and Erendiz Atasü in our earlier thematic exemplifications can be listed with respect to their certain works of the mentioned topics. "Dar Odanın Karanlığı" ("The Dark of the Small Room") by Ağaoğlu from the collection titled *Hadi Gidelim* (Let Us Go), "Bayım" ("Mister") by Eray from the collection titled *Ah Bayım Ah* (Oh, Mister) and "Sevgi'nin Romanı" ("Sevgi's Story") from *Dullara Yas Yakışır* (Mourning Becomes Widows) by Atasü and "Bir Kimlik Aranıyor" ("An Identity Being Sought") in *Kadınlar da Vardır* (Women Do Exist). Among the American writers we have so far mentioned in earlier categories Joyce Carol Oates can be taken into this fifth group with certain examples of her short fiction. One story we may refer to here by Oates is "By the River" the plot of which could easily pass for a rural Anatolian story. The story successfully exemplifies the rural value judgements, how cruel they might get and the inferior role depicted for females because of their dependence to the family. The young married woman in the story, who left her family, is taken to the river bank on her return by her father to be killed in his hands. Thus, the task of getting rid of the disobedient, lustrous daughter who disregarded the traditional and marital bonds is fulfilled. The society urges punishment and the father fulfills the deed.

"...Her father got slowly to his feet and she saw in his hand a knife she had been seeing all her life. Her eyes seized upon it and her mind tried to remember: where had she seen it last, whose was it, her father's or her brother's? He came to her and touched her shoulder as if waking her, and they looked at each other, Helen so terrified by now that she was no longer afraid but only curious with the muted marblelike curiosity of a child, and her father stern and silent until a rush of hatred transformed his face into a mass of wrinkles, the skin mottled red and white. He did not raise the knife but slammed it into her chest, up to the hilt, so that his whitened fist struck her body and her blood exploded out upon it..."

from "By the River"
J.C.Oates p. 260

Nazlı Eray's short story "Bayım" (Mister) deals with a problem of similar sort, which is the morals imposed on the female population of the ghettos, their having to wait for a proper husband and behave well in the meantime preserving their virginity, chastity. The extract we will quote here from "Mister" gives a clear idea about the expectations of a woman from the ghettos from a wealthy man eventhough this relation meant becoming the man's mistress.

"Bana niçin öyle dikkatli dikkatli bakıyorsunuz bayım? Sanki kafamdan geçenleri okumak istermiş gibi baktınız bana...Ben yaşlı annemle otururum, ebe okulundan mezunum...Sizin konuşmanız, davranışlarınız ne kadar başka, bayım. Hiç dostluk etmemiştim daha önce böyle sizin gibi bir beyefendiyle...Nasıl da elimi tutuverdin, bayım?.. Ama çekemiyorum elimi. Sen çok güçlüsün, bayım, çok güçlüsün sen...Çok korkuyorum bayım, çok korkuyorum...Ne yapacağımı bilemiyorum, bayım...Neden aramıyorsanız ki beni bunca zamandır, bayım?...O anlattığın kadını

düşünüp duruyorum, bayım... Mutsuzum ben de işte. Mutsuzluk dediğin budur, değil mi, bayım?"

from "Bayım" (Mister)
Nazlı Eray pp. 23-29

(..Why do you look at me that seriously, Mister? You have looked at me as if trying to read my mind...I live with my old mother. I graduated from the school for nurses... How differently you speak and behave, Mister? I have never talked to a gentleman like you before... How did you hold my hand all of a sudden, Mister?... I cannot take it away. You are so strong, Mister, so strong you are...I m scared Mister, so scared...I don't know what to do Mister. Why didn't you call me all that time?...I keep thinking of the woman you were talking about...I am sad, you see. Isn't this what they call sadness, Mister?..)

We believe that the opening up of such a comparative ground for the teaching of literature, especially in intercultural teaching contexts, will help us embrace the experiences of the women of different cultures. To conclude, we would like to quote a few lines from Suzette Haden-Elgin's *Native Tongue* as a wrapping up confirming our focus of the universality of female experience all around the world:

Sorrowing Song With the Words All Wrong
(a 20th c. ballad set to an even older tune called "House of the Rising Sun")

"Now the only song a woman knows is the song she learns at birth
A sorrowing song with the words all wrong, in many tongues of Earth
The things a woman wants to say, the tales she longs to tell...
They take all day in the tongues of Earth and half the night as well.
So nobody listens to what a woman says, except the man of power
Who sit and listen right willingly at a hundred dollars an hour...
Sayin' "Who on Earth would want to talk about such foolish things?
Oh, the tongues of Earth don't lend themselves to the songs a woman sings!
There is a whole lot more to a woman's song, a whole lot more to learn:
But the words aren't in the tongues of Earth, and there is no place else to turn...

So the women they talk and the men they laugh and there's little a woman can say
But a sarrowing song with the words all wrong, and a hurt that won't go away,
The women go workin' the manly tongues, in the crafts that mankind do.
But the women that stammer, they're everywhere and the well-spoken ones are few
'Cause the only song a woman knows is the song she learns at birth
A sorrowing song with the words all wrong, in the manyl tongues of Earth."

from *Native Tongue* p. 265

Notes:

- 1.Dursun K. Tarık, Yeni Yüzyıl, 27, January, 1998, p.15.
- 2.Miriam Diaz-Diocaretz's work titled Translating Poetic Discourse. (1985) deals with the problematic status of female fiction mainly with reference to the poetry samples, yet the insights she draws in the work seem to be applicable to literary/poetic discourse in general.
- 3.Pam Morris gives us a sketch of the present status of feminist criticism from the perspectives of female criticism and traditional criticism in the collection titled Literature and Feminism (1993). Her views on the emergence and importance of new anthologies comply with the creativity aspect we speak of in this study.
- 4.The translation of the Turkish extracts into English is done by me for the purposes of this study.
- 5.Adalet Ağaoğlu's trilogy includes Bir Düğün Gecesi (A Wedding Ceremony Night), Ölmeye Yatmak (Lying Down to Die) and Hayır (No) (details of publication are given in the reference page)
- 6.The phrases in between quotation marks are taken from the back cover of The Awakening, yet, we took the liberty of pluralizing the referent of the original phrases and applying them to both female characters in comparison.
- 7.Turkish poetess who carried out a comprehensive research on Sylvia Plath at university and followed Plath's fate at the same age (thirty), which was found to be tragic a coincidence by everyone knowing how much influence Plath and her works had on her life and works.

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