

## Ağaoğlu and Fornes: The Critiques of Patriarchal Society and of Gender Hierarchies

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In this paper, two woman dramatists are going to be compared and contrasted as far as their cultures and reflection of cultures on their plays are concerned. Two women playwrights, the Turkish Adalet Ağaoğlu (1929-2020) and the Cuban-American Maria Irene Fornes (1930-2018) are contemporaries and hence are the products of the same historical era.

Ağaoğlu and Fornes had started writing plays in almost the same years. Ağaoğlu was born in 1929 (in Nallıhan, near Ankara) and she entered the world of drama and performance arts in the 1960s. Quite similarly, Fornes was born in 1930 (in Havana, Cuba) but immigrated to the US in 1945. Although they came from different countries and have different cultural backgrounds and codes, they both experimented with innovative dramatic devices and focused on the issues of women. Fornes is involved in the early days of the off-off Broadway in the 1960s. She had used unusual dialogues, unconventional dramatic structures and stage design under the impact of Samuella Beckett. Yet it is difficult to characterize the plays of Fornes but Patricia R. Schoeder locates her within the traditions of realistic theatre and reevaluates the “realism” of Maria Irene Fornes in terms of cultural feminism (1).

Likewise, Ağaoğlu had written avant-garde plays and she is regarded as an absurdist by some of the Turkish and foreign critics. For instance, İpşiroğlu stresses the typical absurd elements in Let's Play House (Evcilik Oyunu), The Cocoons (Kozalar) and Outlet (Çıkış) with the criticism of the patriarchal society and its pressure on the women and men is at its height in these plays (2). John Gassner and Edward Quinn agree that Ağaoğlu was attracted to absurd in her look at gender discrimination in her own society as follows:

“Evcilik Oyunu is perhaps the most daring play in Turkish history to be written about the repressive sexual customs in Turkey. This hilarious farce with serious overtones was hailed in liberal circles and condemned by conservative elements in the press. Mrs. Ağaoğlu's second important play, Çatıdaki Çatlak (The Crack in the Skeleton) is a portrayal form of a sensitive and feminine point of view of some absurdities in economic status quo in Turkey, and their effect on common people” (3).

“How under the pressure of the society in Turkey, the most natural sexual outlets for both men and women are barred from puberty onwards until the individuals are thrown into despair are shown in Ağaoğlu' Evcilik Oyunu” (4).

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Both woman dramatists have focused on the conditions of women in their patriarchal society of their cultures. Fornes plays carry hints from the native tribes of South America and Roman Catholic Spanish conquistadores while Ağaoğlu plays are products of Shaman, Buddhist and Muslim Turkish states like the Göktürks, Uygurs, Seljuks, Ottomans and Turkish Republican cultures. Six plays by Ağaoğlu and five plays by Fornes will be compared and contrasted as they show the results of the gender-sex system that has contributed to the oppression and exploitation of women. Ağaoğlu chose her characters from different socio-economic levels, whereas the woman characters of Fornes are mostly from the lower class. Ağaoğlu puts the blame of the harsh moral values and degradations of both sexes on the agricultural and feudal traditions while Fornes targets only at the male chauvinisms of the society, which leads to the total submission of women.

“Fornes’s plays differ from those of most of her contemporaries in that almost all are set either in a pre-industrial society or on the far edge of middle-class culture. They are filled with a deep compassion for the disenfranchised, for whom survival- rather than the typical bourgeois obsession with individual happiness and freedom- is the bottom line. They do not delight, even covertly, in suffering but take a stand unequivocally against dehumanization and violence in its myriad forms” (5)

In Ağaoğlu’s *The Song That Wrote Itself* (*Kendini Yazan Şarkı*, 1970), Munise, the widow protector of the family is a peasant from a secluded and far away village. She struggles with poverty while trying to support her blind daughter and father-in-law. Her sole hope and only dream is the future of her son Halil who had gone to the city to study at a university. The action of the play starts at the point where Halil comes back to his village as a convict being chased by the police after a students’ uprising. As a self-taught intelligent and diligent woman, Munise is entrapped in the small space of the village. She is torn between antagonizing ideals of two men: the patriotic father-in-law celebrating the ideology of the republic and the leftist son who calls for another ideology. Halil’s girlfriend, the wealthy young girl whose father represents the captain of the capitalistic society is the second heroine in the play who can not be compared to the self-sacrificing mother. Munise’s dreams come to an end when her son is killed by the gendarme who had been an old friend of her son from their village. In the rural space, a woman is totally and naturalistically imprisoned and bound to her fate no matter what her capacities are (6).

Contrary to Munise is Meltem Tura, a woman from the city in *Too Far-So Near* (*Çok Uzak-Fazla Yakın*, 1992). Her urban life is far more different from Munise’s because she is a professional woman who had to raise a son after having divorced her husband. The dramatic action starts when Meltem meets her twin brother whom she had not seen for years, the last time at their mother’s burial ceremony. The dramatic action lapses with flashbacks, which reveal the hardships Meltem had faced as she climbed up the social ladder to become a successful playwright. Just like Munise of the village, Meltem of the city is a lonely woman who needs the warmth, sharing and affection of the opposite sex. Meltem Tura who is a renowned dramatist meets her twin brother the famous poet Aydın whom she had not seen for ages, since their mother’s burial

ceremony. Through the flashbacks, Meltem's miscellaneous social roles as the divorcee, the mother, the professional woman and the daughter are revealed. The rhetoric of the Feminist Movement of the West argues against male aggression. However, what is the role of the woman within the Turkish society? Could the western ideology of feminism be completely adaptable to the Turkish society? Are women historically veiled and segregated in Ağaoğlu's society because of their power? If women had been invisible as historical subjects, how can one explain their participation in great and small events in human (and national) history? If there exists gender discrimination, are women the mere victims in their society? Why did the western type of discrimination, expose women overtly in public space but left them economically tied to masculine gender whereas the once-upon-a-time veiled Turkish women always had economic support and means legally? Are men the only responsible and accusable side for the discrimination in the Turkish society? If there were some kind of a repression, what would the scope and quantity be?

No matter what the fantasy of Orientalism imposes on people about the harem and Turkish gender roles, Ağaoğlu seems to be seeking an answer to these questions in her play *The Outlet*. In this play, the love-hate relation and the conflict of the possessive father and his daughter who is in her early twenties are revealed. It is as if the father and daughter are fatally tied to each other in a claustrophobic space. The protective parents, especially males (fathers, brothers, cousins and even neighbors) shield female chastity. The Girl of 20-25 lives with her father and she shows great care to her doll as if it is the live child of hers. At the same time, she is obsessed with washing and cleaning (her hands and the house). She continuously complains about the bugs and the darkness inside the house. In the meanwhile, the Father ties her emotionally to the house by telling her tales. Besides her father's psychological coercion, she is discouraged by the darkness outside because she is accustomed to going out only with her father. The Turkish society gives the father such a responsibility to protect her that he too is crushed under the burden of it. Too much protection and excessive love strangles. When the doll dies, the Girl sweeps it away calmly (p.303) but longs for her self-destruction. In the second half of the play, the father tries to encourage her to go out alone, telling her that it is shiny outside. Besides, he reveals that he does not have any tales to narrate anymore.

The immature, naive and childish daughter and the father who selfishly but desperately avoids her freedom and emancipation sustain their togetherness until the father releases the daughter out of the room and commits suicide. The liberation of the women initiates at a point where the traditional father-daughter relation turns into a chain with father affectionately but masterly protecting the daughter for a long time.

Contrary to Fornes's viewpoint, Ağaoğlu accuses the women for being indifferent, timid and inactive to the issues of their society. Women do not challenge and fight against the once-good-old customs but willingly accept everything as it is. In other words, the women locate a subject position and are satisfied with it. Ağaoğlu believes that they are

ready to welcome all that is bestowed to them by the society and that they do not ask for more. They do not consider things to be addressing them. In her play *The Cocoon*, her models are three women, two of them who are in early thirties and the third in her early forties. Their common ground is their indulgence in activities that are attributed as women's domain. They enjoy domestic activities, such as handicraft, knitting, gossiping and criticizing others. They imprison themselves in their private world, feeling estranged to the public world. These women sit and remain silent when there begins the noise of the airplanes, bombings, shootings, marching and cries of people off stage. They seem to be satisfied and conforming with the ways of the patriarchal society. In other words, they choose to hide in their cocoon and refuse to notice the outer world, living totally dependent on their husbands. However, as Ağaoğlu makes it clear, the public world should be a shared experience. They are the typical unproductive housewives of the cities. Ağaoğlu wants them to make use of this matriarchally patriarchal society. The famous translator Ahmet Cemal scrutinizes the issue of gender identity in the play and comments on the "oppression of the subject position" (7). Can we call it self-oppression?

As for Maria Irene Fornes, the issues and problems of the female gender are a lot different than Ağaoğlu's. When marriage is the main concern for instance, the women characters of Fornes seem to be confined within the boundaries of the house and wedlock. Since these women are uneducated and thus are totally pushed down to the depths of poverty and submission, they are totally helpless and chained to the male world. In *Fefu and Friends*, eight women gather in a New England farm in 1935 in order to discuss and settle a project on education. In this all-female cast play, there is hardly any situation or conflict since the characters are presented as fragments. Through the display of the tableaux instead of a plot sequence, the emotional and mental interaction among the women reveals the frustration of all. In this play, like Ağaoğlu's women in the cocoon, women are the only characters. Although the cocoon image lies behind both dramatists' argument, women of Fornes's plays are mostly pulled back directly by harsh and violent men. The hostess Fefu who is an independent, bright and elderly woman serves as the ironist of the proceedings. She explains her husband's reason for marrying her as in the first line of the play as: "My husband marries me to have a constant reminder of how loathsome women are" (8).

Fefu, the mouthpiece of Fornes, criticizes the women for not being able to acclaim trust and solidarity among themselves and for their preference to rely on men, being always dependent. The eight women friends of unknown background speak at random, but they speak continuously to a point of obsession about women and sexuality. The play does not tell one story but offers a number of stories as it unfolds in a series of encounters between the women, all of them different personalities reflecting different points of view about human relations. The environmental structure is divided into six scenes, the first and last scene taking place in the living room, the others in the kitchen, the bedroom, study and lawn. There are no men in the play like Ağaoğlu's *Cocoon* but men's presence is felt.

In the female gathering, Fefu leads the conversation. She envies the higher status of men and male solidarity in the society. Hence, she criticizes women for not uniting and because they have chosen to rely on men. She tries to back and encourage Julia who is confined to a wheel chair to act and create. However, although Julia is a college graduate, she refuses stereotyping gender matters because she thinks feminist rhetoric strengthens the gap between the sexes. Julia lives the paradox of the feminist objective. On the one she believes that women are suppressed, on the other hand, she evades defining the personal/public space of a woman. This paralyzed, strange young woman is the thematic key to the play. In a long, painful monologue (the bedroom scene), she catalogues all the hateful attitudes about women propagated by Western culture, in clichés that are comically and tragically grotesque.

The life of Julia had been divided into two, as: before the accident and after the accident. For this reason, she feels herself powerful only in her car. The car has become her public space. What is more drastic is that her love life has come to an end and the young woman is full of death-wish. Although she gives in to the reactionary forces of male-dominated society, Fefu still fights them, although by the end of the play she approaches Julia's vision.

When in the final scene of the play Fefu aims at her husband and kills a rabbit instead, blood mysteriously appears on Julia's head. Fefu accidentally kills Julia while encouraging her to change for the positive and forcing her to socialize. Thus, the will of women to support one another becomes a futile attempt and Fefu accepts at last that Julia is 'dead' to the female struggle.

The women in Fornes's play are feminine figures of a highly patriarchal society who can not find solutions to their problems. The samples of American women that Fornes had observed and created are: Su who continuously visits her psychiatrist and can only live with psychiatric aid; Emma who has extremely powerful sexual desires; Paula and Cecilia who share a lesbian relationship; Cristina who is very timid and who seems to be ready to retreat or to submit to stronger forces whenever possible; Cindy who only has theoretical information about love and sexuality. The women reveal themselves from one room to the other. The tension of the play becomes violent and at the end, frenzy culminates in murder. Through a blend of humor and stream-of consciousness dialogue, Fornes illuminates the concerns and social ills of the Depression era from a female perspective. In this play, Fornes has initiated an argument by questioning and challenging the traditional gender roles, the sexual division of labor and the traditional values.

In *Mud*, Fornes treats the theme of sexual politics and the failure of communication as in other plays. It is a feminist play set on an Appalachian farm where Mae, the main character of the play is a woman who can not find space of her own and vanishes in the men's world. Mae, her husband Lloyd who has barely passed the level of survival

beyond basic instinct and Henry who becomes Mae's lover but is accidentally crippled live in gloom and ignorance are the masculine forces of the play. During the entire play, Mae irons the men's trousers piled up on the table. In the first act, as Mae continuously does domestic work, Lloyd who was brought into the house by Mae's father lives like a parasite, instinctively masturbating, fucking the pigs and asking for dinner.

Their routine changes with the arrival of Henry who is a man of fifty-five. All of a sudden Mae who is an illiterate young woman of twenty-five becomes enchanted with this man, who to Mae's surprise, can read and write. Through Henry, Mae enters the world of knowledge and intellect. Her desire to read and acquire knowledge is the beginning of will and power and personal freedom. Although she is not a very brilliant woman, she starts learning and seeing the flicker to hope for her future. She is hungry for learning. Her dream becomes to finish school and leave Lloyd to whom she says: "You can stay in the mud" (9). With high aspirations, she plunges into a scientific field, which is biology. She feels mesmerized by the sea-star who can substitute a lost leg and by sea crabs who usurp other's space (like Henry does to Lloyd).

Henry seems to be Mae's sole chance until the time he falls and becomes crippled. After this misfortune, life turns into a tragedy, as Mae becomes obliged to look after both men. Being a woman who had been accustomed to living in lower depths, Mae gets frustrated as her attempt to start a new life at intellectual and emotional level fades away. Her dream is to attain sophistication and rise socially, in other words her rebirth lasts very short. In seventeen scenes, the story of struggles for power ends with Henry usurping Lloyd's place in Mae's bed. After Mae learns that knowledge and communication are keys to power, she prepares to leave the stifling farm but the inarticulate Lloyd kills her. The violence committed in this play is the violence of the inarticulate. Hence, a woman's quest for emancipation proves to be an unfulfilled dream. However, as Mae dies she murmurs her longing for the last flicker of hope: "Like the starfish, I live in the dark and my eyes only a faint of light. It is faint and yet it consumes me. I long for it. I thirst for it. I would die for it. Lloyd I am dying" (p. 40).

The title character in *Sarita* is an adolescent Cuban girl from the South Bronx who is infatuated with an idle and destructive young man. Confused by contradicting Cuban and American values and unable to stay away from the boy, Sarita stabs him to death. When she kills her lover, she goes crazy and in the tragic end, she goes to a mental institution. In the play, the three female victims of male aggression are Sarita, her mother Fela and her fortune teller Yeye as follows:

Yeye has become the victim of a husband who refused to accept his daughter. With all her self-sacrifice and as a mother whose heart is broken, Yeye knows very well that she is one day going to be abandoned by this man.

Fela's fate and victimization follow quite a similar path. She was forlorn with her daughter Sarita by her husband Teyo. Due to the immense poverty, the mother and daughter had

sought shelter in neighbors' houses. Later, they hear that Teyo had died. Sarita, the main character of the play is a young girl who had immigrated to South Bronx from Cuba. She was brought up by her mother, since the father who had a short-term relation with her mother had run away. A section of Sarita's life, the period from her thirteen years of age to twenty-one (1939-1947) is exhibited as twenty pieces of tableaux throughout the play.

As the action of the play starts, Sarita is seen on stage wandering to ask the fortuneteller if her love for Julio reciprocates. After a while, Sarita becomes pregnant and leaves the baby into the care of her mother. As her mother tries to influence Sarita to get married to Fernando, Sarita insists in sustaining her relation with Julio although they share a problematic togetherness: quarrelling and making up continuously. Her dilemma leads her to an unbalanced life. On one hand, she is aware that Julio is not a suitable candidate for a socially acclaimed uniting, on the other hand, she can not avoid his attraction. In order to abolish the traces of Julio in her life, she establishes a relation with the Anglo-American Mark. In this respect, Sarita's mental conflict seems to aggravate because of ethnic issues, besides her degradation as a woman and a poor one. Thus, with gender, class and ethnic consciousness, her problem attains more complicated social issues.

Sarita who meditates upon committing suicide at the end of the first act, becomes an optimistic woman at the beginning of the second act because she met Mark at a party. Towards denouement, as Sarita seems to love, be loved and feels happy in her relation with Mark, her emotional confusion broadens as she feels, obliged to choose from among the three men: Mark, whom she loves; Fernando who is her good-hearted supporter and mentor; and Julio, her ex-lover. During the 19th scene, Sarita stabs Julio who threatens her all the time asking for money. In the twentieth tableaux, Sarita is sent to a mental hospital. Sarita's energy and life force diminish and she totally gets lost, as she can not pull herself out of the socio-cultural knot in her life. Her attempt not to be like her mother (sticking to an idle man) and her urges to mate with a socially agreeable man prove futile. She is torn between the powerful drives of class determinism, different Cuban and American traditions and hardships of being a woman. Fornes's heroines are mostly weak individuals who suffer because of male supremacy and who experience the humiliating submission to male authority. Her male characters, on the other hand, are extremely aggressive and violent. However, her overriding theme of misogyny and patriarchy sometimes includes positive as Catherine A. Schuler puts forth:

Although audience resistance to Fornes's work may be explained partially by the centrality of female characters, more problematic is her invitation to the audience to view underside of patriarchal culture through women's eyes (and, author's disclaimers aside, they are angry eyes). Fornes's mirror reflect disturbing images of patriarchy in general and of male behavior in particular, images that will be offensive to audiences who are hungry for traditional male heroism and who demand evidence that patriarchy is still a viable cultural system. Positive male characters do appear in Fornes's plays: Mark in Sarita is an obvious example, but he is also exceptional. More typical are Orlando in

the Conduct of Life, Julio in Sarita, Llyod and Henry in Mud, and even Philip, the offstage husband in Fefu and her Friends (10).

In Danube, Fornes seems to disperse an optimistic resolution for the issues of patriarchy, gendered-existence and cultural origins. However, as for her ethnic choice, instead of bringing in a Cuban-American, she makes American Paul and Hungarian Eve love each other and live through emotional conflicts of man-woman relationship. Love ends with marriage but on the way to harmony, problems start and reconciliation and happy end come after various antagonisms. In this positive man-woman relationship, the fight for power and hegemony leads to harmony and American Paul wins his Hungarian Wife's heart and takes her back to his country. The male domination seems innocent because the difficulty of communication between Paul and Eve is punctuated by the broadcasting of a foreign language instruction tape following each argument. The most striking feature of the play is its tripled speech with players and the language tape. William Gruben analyzes the character dramaturgy of the play from a post-modern perspective and observes:

Fornes depicts human existence as cut off from spontaneous, original thought or expression: as soon as Paul and Mr. Sandor speak, they establish themselves as imitators-shadows of others, shadows even of themselves. The Danube is a chilling play, not because it never names the horror of nuclear war (if that is what the play is "about") but because the replays and repetitions enact a life that looks dead because it is never more than a memory, a race, or a dream (11).

The Conduct of Life takes place in a Latin-American country. Just like in Sarita the play tells the fearful story of three women whose fates are tied to the same brutal men. In a country of frequent social turbulences and economic instabilities, the 43 year-old Leticia who is a very wealthy woman shares her life with a man named Orlando who is ten years younger than her. She had welcomed him into her home when he was a poor young man. In the years to follow, Leticia had wed this man who had become an officer and had been tried for torture cases. The archetype of a courageous man in a uniform who is involved in battle and fight scenes shift to a negative image of masculinity. Orlando's fight becomes a battlefield within the house. The man carries the experience and violence he had gone through in war into his home.

Orlando brings home a girl of eleven and keeps this girl named Nena in the bedroom, raping her frequently at his will. This male adult tries to convince himself and the child that this is a pleasurable activity. In the meanwhile, his wife, knowing all the while of his abuse to the child and having experienced his emotional abuse herself continues to "love" him. Leticia is another woman of high ideals. She wants Alejo, the lieutenant commander who is their friend to help her: "I want you to educate me. I want to study so I am not an ignorant person. I want to go to the university. I want to be knowledgeable. I'm tired of being ignored. I want to study political science. Is political science what



diplomats study? Is that what it is? You have to teach me elemental things because I never finished grammar school.” In contrast to her optimistic attitude, Alejo seems quite pessimistic when he says: “Do you think you can change anything. “Do you think anyone can change anything?” (p.70).

Leticia and her confident servant Olimpia evade the violence at home but Olimpia protects the young Nena as much as she can. The limits of patience are threatened when Orlando accuses his wife for cheating their marriage, exercising brutality and virility on his wife. Having lost all her endurance and tolerance, Leticia grabs a pistol from her drawer and shoots her husband, putting the pistol into Nena’s hands afterwards. The solidarity between women shatters when Leticia decides to put the blames on Nena. Fear, pity and violence reflecting from male brutality may help the women to unite but a solution that is based on common sense, reason and the support of law/State does not seem to be in the air. A husband who resembles Fornes’s Orlando from various perspectives is Sadık, the husband of Fatma the Woman in Crack in the Skeleton. However contrastingly, Sadık is a parasite but not an immoral or violent man.

Being a “spinster,” as women in the rural areas or in older times were named, Fatma lives with her brother Arif who has a small shop where he sells needles, pins, buttons and thread. They are poor people who are happy and contented with what they have. Since Fatma is going to be operated, she hires another Fatma called Fatma the Woman as a household helper. After awhile when Fatma returns home from the hospital, she gets psychologically enslaved by the existence of Fatma the Woman and her husband in the house. She becomes helpless and inactive because her brother Arif in the meanwhile leaves the house having entangled in a love relationship and indulged in drinking alcohol.

Women are mostly backed by State securities or late fathers’ pensions in Turkey. The four women characters of this play reflect the women from different economic and cultural levels but two are shown from horribly naturalistic backgrounds as:

Fatma is a single woman who is dependent on her brother. However, her dependence is economic as well as emotional.

The neighbor of Fatma is another dependent woman who is forced into dependence because she lacks education and enough financial means. In order to survive, she had reluctantly married a second time.

Fatma the Woman is a maid and helper with no social security. She goes to miscellaneous houses daily to clean and tidy. She earns good but endures and hands her money in to an idle husband.

Hale, the feminist charity gatherer who comes to Fatma’s door frequently to collect money like a saleswoman, is in Ağaoğlu’s terms: “a good-willed but half-intellectual woman of forty” (p. 115). Ms. Ağaoğlu considers her social activity as a superfluous, parvenu and hypocritical and self-deceptive occupation because she is an active heated member of the Women’s Progress Association. Adalet Ağaoğlu is very sarcastic and

cynical in her attitude towards this woman who is supposed to be a feminist from the conscious-raising groups. Hale proudly boasts about their achievements for female rights and woman issues like this: "With money we raiser, we bought women thirty pairs of nylon stockings, twenty-two slippers with nice flowers on them, and distributed twenty kilos of akide candy. The poor things like this akide candy so much!" (p.117). Ağaoğlu bravely and overtly criticizes the feminist groups and women who are so alienated and distanced to each other. Just like the woman characters of Maria Irene Fornes, Adalet Ağaoğlu's characters do not support each other and miss the invaluable interaction of solidarity.

In *Let's Play House*, Ağaoğlu once more exposes the lack of solidarity and sisterhood between women in the Turkish society. Since for the 1930s, '40s and '50s, marriage was a dream and social security for girls and female beauty the only treasure, it was popular for the boys and girls of 1960s and '70s to play "the family game" with traditional gender roles. In this play, the issue of marriage is argued by the use of various tableaux, like those of Fornes's plays. In the episodes, the traditional gender roles and the way they are imposed on a boy and a girl are shown in the children's game they play. For instance, the girls were given dolls whereas boys were encouraged to play with guns. Another social criticism was on the way the society perceived and judged the relationship between young people. There can still be examples of these prejudices. For example, the night watchman in the play regards the relationship between a young girl and a young youth as immoral and he tries to teach morality to "the incorrigible youngsters." On the other hand, the parents have different view about this relation because each parent worries about the economic and social superiority and position of the in-law parent. Marriage is sometimes a road to profit and gaining. Through the invaluable protection of the girl's "virginity and morality," the parents will attain a respectable social position. That's why a girl becomes a treasure of values.

The symmetric courtroom scenes at the beginning and at the end of the play exhibit the negative and coercive impact of the society on individual and summarize the traditional intrusions into the privacy of family life and marriage. The boy and girl who have turned into adults at the end of the play have become unhappy and miserable partners in favor of divorce. In the first courtroom scene, the newly-wed couple tell the judge that they want to divorce but they can not give the correct answers to questions like "Do you love each other?" or "How many children do you want?" Their sole wish is to run away from "the space of the home" which has become claustrophobic. If they remain at home, they would be suffocating in the vacuum. However, they do not know who had stolen the air out of their home. At the end, the husband and wife come close to each other in the jail when the night watchman comes and reports that it is prohibited for a woman and a man to sleep in the same cell. Pınar Şenel sees man and woman as the "tragedy of human being doomed to her/his environment," "the oppression of the oppressed" and "the tragedy of womanhood" (12).

No matter how enthusiastically the woman characters of Maria Irene Fornes like Sarita,

Fefu, Mae and Nena struggle to elevate their social status, they nevertheless remain the victims of men. They are predestined to face male oppression. On the contrary, Adalet Ağaoğlu's woman characters seem to be carried away by the "light" patriarchal flow but through their stubborn attempts to reach freedom and emancipation, they attempt to raise their social level a little bit. At least they are given the options. Thus they are not totally entrapped in unchanged situations. Whether they live in rural areas or urban centers, they feel that there is something beyond the horizon. What is similar for the women characters of both dramatists is that their women who are failures are mostly uneducated and unemployed. All the women endure the consequences of being illiterate and outside the world of knowledge. One can feel the aspiration and search of Ağaoğlu and Fornes for non-hierarchical egalitarian relationships between women and men.

### Notes

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This paper was written and dedicated to Ms. Adalet Ağaoğlu in 2000, when I was a lecturer at Dokuz Eylül University, İzmir.