

34. Women in gothic fiction: Depiction of female figures in horror stories**Senem ÜSTÜN KAYA¹****APA:** Üstün Kaya, S. (2022). Women in gothic fiction: Depiction of female figures in horror stories. *RumeliDE Dil ve Edebiyat Arařtırmaları Dergisi*, (Ö11), 501-512. DOI: 10.29000/rumelide.1146701.**Abstract**

Emerged as a reaction to the strict laws, firm regulations and scientific reasoning of the Enlightenment Era, Gothic literature is accepted as the darker strain, developed during the Romantic Period in the 18th century. The authors of Gothic literature tended to create terror and suspense with the uncanny, supernatural, spiritual, and irrational elements to replace order and accepted beliefs of the Age of Reason. Gothic fiction possesses certain traits: setting as the abandoned castles, cemeteries, towers, isolated churches; mysterious and gloomy atmosphere; the use of supernatural powers such as witches, vampires, ghosts or spirits; magic, mystery and curse. Although as a genre, gothic has been associated with men, women gain crucial roles in horror stories in literature of the western and Turkish cultures. There are various epithets attributed to female characters in gothic fiction: damsels in distress, victims, domestic governesses, evils, predators or prisoners; however, in this study, victims and femme fatales in horror narration are comparatively analyzed. Within this scope, examples from western and Turkish literatures were chosen for the analysis to specify the similarities among gothic female literary characters. Based on the analysis, it could be concluded that while the victims are forced to struggle with the evil forces to resist patriarchy, femme fatale gothic figures create them to challenge patriarchy.

Keywords: Gothic, victims, femme fatales, patriarchy**Gotik kurguda kadınlar: Korku hikayelerinde diři řahısların tasviri****Öz**

Aydınlanma Döneminin katı kuralları, bozulamaz uygulamaları ve bilimsel düşünüşüne tepki olarak ortaya çıkan Gotik edebiyatı, 18. yüzyıl Romantik dönemi boyunca gelişen karanlık bir akım olarak kabul edilir. Gotik edebiyatı yazarları, Aydınlanma Çağının düzen ve kabul edilen inaçlarını deęiřtirmek için, ilginç, doğaüstü, deęişik ve mantıkdışı öğeler için korku ve merak yaratmaya meyilliydi. Gotik eserlerin bazı belirli özellikleri vardır: terkedilmiş kaleler, mezarlıklar, kuleler, ıssız kiliselerden oluşan ortam; gizemli ve kasvetli atmosfer; cadılar, vampirler, hayaletler ve ruhlar gibi doğaüstü varlıkların kullanılması; büyü, gizem ve lanetler. Üslup olarak gotik, erkeklerle özdeşleşse de, batı ve Türk kültürü edebiyatındaki korku hikâyelerinde, kadınların önemli rolleri vardır. Gotik kurgusunda kadınlarla özdeşleşen birçok sıfat vardır: zor durumdaki kızlar, kurbanlar, evcimen sahibeler, avcılar veya hapis olanlar, ancak, bu çalışmada, korku anlatımındaki kurbanlar ve ölümcül kadınlar karşılařtırma olarak incelenmiştir. Bu bağlamda, edebi diřil gotik karakterler arasındaki benzerlikleri belirlemek adına batı ve Türk edebiyatlarındaki örnekler analiz için seçilmiştir. İncelemeye göre, kurbanlar ataerkil düzene karşı koymak adına şeytani öğelerle mücadele ederken, ölümcül gotik karakterler, ataerkil düzene başkaldırmak adına şeytani öğeleri yaratmaktadır.

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Anahtar kelimeler: Gotik, kurbanlar, tehlikeliler, ataerkil

Introduction

'Gothic' was first coined during the Renaissance "to describe [pejoratively] a type of anti-classical architecture associated with barbarism, obscurity and excess" (Davison 2009: 25) with cathedrals, castles or churches and their gloomy atmosphere and "hidden passageways" (Botting 1996: 2-3). It referred to the Germanic tribes, 'Goths', which lived in the Gotland region in Scandinavia in the 5th century (Arargüç 2016: 246; Davison 2009: 25) and became a menace for the Roman Empire (Abrams & Harpham 2009). The tribe was believed to be nomadic and barbarian group of people (Beksaç 1996: 116; Sowerby 2000: 16). They destroyed the Roman empire and settled in France and Spain in 410 B.C. (Kendrick 1991: 41-42), and were famous with barbarism, terror and destruction. Therefore, the Gothic novel is considered to be "anachronistic because it emerged during the Enlightenment when novels generally focused their lens on contemporary reality, and paradoxical because [...] it registers a collision between the past and the present" (Davison 2009: 25).

As a genre related to the Romantic Movement, Gothic counterpoints to the Enlightenment ideals of order, balance, harmony and unity and favors the strange, chaotic, dark, imaginative and irrational: "imagination and emotional effects exceed reason. Passion, excitement, sensation transgress social proprieties and moral laws. Ambivalence and uncertainty obscure single meaning" (Botting 1996: 2). In the western literature, gothic was used as a reaction to the 18th century Enlightenment and its strict laws and firm regulations on people: "The Gothic, an underground stream during the first three quarters of the eighteenth century, emerged in full spate as part of the Romantic movement. By the end of the century, Imagination seemed to have won out over Reason" (Ringel 1995: 26). As the synonym of 'supernatural', 'grotesque' or fantastic, gothic opposed to the accepted beliefs and imposed rules of beauty and morals via the uncanny, strange and irrational:

It is remarkable that there was a great interest in gothic literature, which recall barbarism, disorder, chaos, fear and terror; which involve supernatural elements; nourished by imagination and superstitions in such a period that foregrounded mind and rationality as the leading factors of man's social life and thought by destroying the accepted norms of the Middle Ages to reform all in terms of mind and rationalism. Behind this situation, the main cause was the reaction against the Enlightenment Movement and the appropriate, balanced and prudent form of the classicism. In other words, gothic literature is one of the products and shelters of fiction, imagination, repressed thoughts and feelings of the Enlightenment Period (Yücesoy 2007: 10).

In Gothic tradition, authors created mysterious and terrifying stories to enhance tension and suspense for the readers (Urgan 1991: 94). According to Jackson (1981: 95-96), Gothic is a "literature of unreason and terror" or "a reaction to historical events, particularly to the spread of industrialism and urbanization" and science. Gothic literature emerged in England, whose foggy and dark atmosphere corresponded horror and pessimism (Polikar 1999: 10). *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) by Horace Walpole is the earliest Gothic work that influenced Ann Radcliffe, Edgar Alan Poe, Bram Stoker and Mary Shelley.

Gothic fiction possesses certain traits, which distinguish it from different forms of literature. The first one is setting: the stories set place within the images of abandoned castles, cemeteries, towers, isolated churches, mysterious and gloomy atmosphere or the deserted places that confront the fear (Uğur 2019: 341). Secondly, the supernatural powers such as witches, vampires, ghosts, spirits or goblins (Scognamillo 1994: 27; Soyşekerci 2019), "specters, monsters, demons, corpses, skeletons, evil aristocrats, monks and nuns, fainting heroines and bandits" (Botting 1996: 2) are foregrounded in

narration of the gothic. Moreover, in gothic fiction, the aim is to create suspense and terror for the reader via miracles, murders, superstitions and false religious beliefs. However, although the characters in gothic stories tend to be evil, monstrous or dangerous, “the borders between the good and the bad is blurred” (Spooner 2006: 78). The characters, places and feelings change frequently within the flow of actions and these cause fear, terror and disorder. Madness, psychological disturbance and uncanny emotions dramatize uncertainty while presenting the conflicts of the individuals in challenging “social situation” (Jackson 1981: 97).

The gothic tradition of the western culture rarely appeared in the Turkish literature throughout 1900s (Türkmenoğlu 2018: 176-183) with slight differences: “There are significant differences of gothic concept between the Anglo-Saxon culture and Turkish culture in regards to the social conditions beyond the religious dimensions” (Yücesoy 2007: 43). As a form, gothic was observed in the Islamic oriented Turkish literature many years after the western culture because it was an Anglo-Saxon tradition. In Christianity, evil is a gothic figure and the struggle between evil and God caused and shaped gothic. However, in Islamic culture, the dominance of evil was not considered as a threat, and thus, gothic elements of Anglo-Saxon tradition were not apparent in the concept of Islam (Ibid.: 43). The concept of ‘evil’ and the struggle between the devil and God in Christianity paved way to the rise of gothic elements in western literature; however, in Turkish culture, supernatural forces as evil, monster, fairy, gin, ghosts or spirits are not used to frighten readers. Instead they were the elements used in fairytales and legends both to convey moral messages and attract readers’ attention (Sakaoğlu 2005: 93).

Muhayyelat, written by Giritli Aziz Efendi was published in 1852 and it involved many short stories in imaginary spaces and with the depiction of supernatural forces, magic, fairies and fantastic elements. However, it would be improper to label this work as a sample of gothic novel because the supernatural forces provide comic scenes within narration rather than frighten the reader, as indicated by the author himself in ‘Preface’ (Ali Aziz Efendi 1999: 5). During the Tanzimat period, fantastic narratives were not preferred by many authors, led by Namık Kemal, who believed that supernatural forces in novels caused misinterpretations and Turkish novel should be refined from such narrations (Yetiş 1996: 349). Similarly, Ahmet Haşim criticized the popularity of gothic narration in the western literature stating that the elements of gothic would lose its power because murders, ghosts, blood sheds and dark atmosphere would be humorous in the near future (Haşim 1923).

Suat Derviş was one of the novelists who presented an early sample of gothic in Turkish literature with her work *Ne Bir Ses Ne Bir Nefes* (1923) in which Deviş used the elements of fear and tension. In the novel, the protagonist Osman marries a young woman, Zeliha. However, he begins to see nightmares every night and thinks that he will be killed by his wife and his son, Kemal because of a forbidden relationship. Writing all his breakdowns and fears in his diary, Osman becomes insane and kills his son. According to Öktem (2018), the samples of gothic culture in Turkish literature were rare because authors were afraid to be isolated from the literary canon.

The gothic, as a genre, did not become popular until the late 1980s in Turkish culture due to the instabilities in political and social areas between the 1950s and 1980s. After the 1960s, gothic fiction was neglected due to the political upheavals in Turkey because between, 1960 and 1980, the fiction was used as a platform for the political messages and ideologies. Therefore, Turkish authors did not prefer gothic form, based on the stories of supernatural stories (Yücesoy 2008: 109) to convey their messages with fantasy and imagination. In Turkish literature, all the folk tales and oral stories, including fantastic elements were appropriate for horror stories. Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar’s *Gulyabani* (1915), *Cadı* (1915),

Mezarından Kalkan Şehit (1916); Suat Derviş's *Kara Kitap* (1920), *Ne Bir Ses Ne Bir Nefes* (1923), *Buhran Gecesi* (1923) and *Fatma'nın Günahı* (1924); Cemil Cahit's *Kan İçen Hortlak* (1931); Daniş Remzi Korok's *Ölü Ciğeri Yiyen Adam: Yamyam Yusuf* (1944); Peride Celal's *Yıldız Tepe* (1945) and Kerime Nadir Azrak's *Dehşet Gecesi* (1958) are the samples of gothic stories in Turkish culture.

While in the western literature, vampires, evil, cursed spirits, castles, cathedrals and fantasy are foregrounded, in Turkish culture, motifs as magic, gins and isolated lands are used to create horror stories. However, in each culture, terror and suspense are universal and attractive for the readers. Although as a genre, gothic has been associated with men, women gain crucial roles in horror stories in literature of the western and Turkish cultures. In Gothic fiction, there are various female depictions: domestic governesses, women in need to be rescued, modern, disgraced or evil, yet, this study focuses on two types of females: victims and evils. This comparative study aims to analyze the depiction of females in gothic stories. Within this scope, female figures from western and Turkish literatures were chosen to specify the similarities among women in horror stories. The study concludes that female figures in Gothic stories vary in regards to appearance and function; however, this study examines two types of Gothic females: the victims that try to discover 'the other' to resist patriarchy and the femme fatales that challenge 'the other' to dominate patriarchy. In other words, the victimized female Gothic characters struggle with the evils surrounding them and bravely resist the dangers, caused by men while the evil femme fatales create the dangers for men to dominate and control them. Therefore, the following part presents the samples of victims and femme fatales in the western and Turkish literatures.

Analysis: Female Figures in Gothic Fiction

The first group, 'victims', are females that are portrayed as weak, selfless, passive, innocent and desperate. They are the victims, 'maiden in distress' and they need a man to save them from the evils. Female protagonist, a decent young girl from a lower class, struggles with the evil and is rewarded with marriage in the end. The victims are exposed to evil forces and the unknown mysteries by leading beyond the borders of domestic spheres in castles or deserted spaces. Despite their bravery, they are saved by the male protector and taken to their homes as wives and mothers because they are accepted as weak, fragile, sensitive and 'victimized'.

Emily in Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) is an example of the victimized female gothic figure. Emily St Aubert peacefully lived with her parents at the castle of La Vallée in Gascogne. After the death of her mother and due to the poor health of her father, they left La Vallée and started a trip throughout the Pyrenees to the Mediterranean coast. During the journey, they encounter the handsome young gentleman, Valancourt and she fell in love. However, St Aubert died and Emily had to live with her cruel aunt, Madame Cheron. Madame Cheron marries Montoni who wants his friend Count Morano to become Emily's husband. However, as he discovers that Morano is almost ruined, Montoni brings Emily and her aunt to his remote castle of Udolpho. Threatened by Montoni, who forces her to sign over her properties, the aunt dies. Emily is left alone with the dark corridors, the fear of rape and psychological violence in Udolpho. The novel ends as Emily manages to escape, takes control of the property and is reunited with Valancourt.

Emily is the representation of a typical woman from the 18th century as she embodies "the new enlightenment and liberty order, anachronistically having a fashionable sensibility, tastes and manners of 18th century Britain" (Howard 2001: xi). She is educated by her father who has given her "a general view of the sciences, and an exact acquaintance with every part of elegant literature. He taught her Latin

and English; chiefly that she might understand the sublimity of their best poets” (Radcliffe 2008: 6). In nature, she is soft, beautiful, sentimental and full of grace. However, Emily is trapped in the danger of patriarchy and becomes the physical and psychological victim of a man (Figs 1990: 57). Similar to other victimized gothic heroines, she is passivized and imprisoned by men:

But this transformation cannot serve as an expose of the fundamental reality that the bourgeois home is a gothic prison for women, for at the end of the text life returns to a normality that is ratified by its difference from the nightmare counterpart. The gothic forms of domesticity evaporate, enabling the heroine to return to the real version, now purified of its contaminated forms, so that women’s continuing incarceration in the home that is always the man’s castle is assured (Wolff 1979: 76).

When taken to Udoplho, Emily realizes her misfortune and her “heart sunk, and she seemed, as if she was going into her prison; the gloomy court, into which she passed, served to conform the idea, and her imagination, ever to awake to circumstances, suggested even more terrors, than her reason could justify” (Radcliffe 2008: 227). She is exposed to the torments of Montoni, the representation of patriarchy and in this patriarchal system, Emily “finds herself living in a world where men can compel her to assume the status of the Other. They propose to stabilize her as object and to doom her to immanence” (Beauvoir 1956: 27). She is treated as a possession by Montoni who commands her to “wear the most splendid dress she had. . . [and sit] between [two of the cavaliers who have] an expression of wild fierceness, of subtle design, or of licentious passions” (Radcliffe 2008: 311-312).

Emily’s removal from her pastoral home to the castle of Udoplho indicates “the epitome of the idealized private world of selflessness and benign relations . . . is set in opposition to the public realm of self-interest, male conflict and aggression” (Kilgour 1995: 117). She is taken into the masculine dominated world and she needs a man to save her as Valancourt states: “It would not be possible at all for you to reason thus coolly, therefore, deliberately if you did. I am torn with the suffering at the possibility that we might separate, and of evils which could be awaiting you because of it; I would stand in the face of any dangers just to prevent it and save you” (Radcliffe 2008: 158). However, Emily struggles with the evil as a victorious brave female Gothic heroine:

The typical gothic heroine will always triumph over the evil due to the fact that she is entirely virtuous; her goals are, at all times, entirely pure; her speech and conduct are always above the reproaches. No corruption spot can ever touch her; therefore, she will always fend off and destroy the ones oppressing, and that is because the good eventually triumphs above evil, which is a very powerful philosophy – that the goodness or the professional femininity will always win out-exists at the gothic feminist mythology core, reassuring the women that their cautiously cultivated facade, their masquerade of long-suffering and patience is going to be rewarded. Again, we seem to be in the terrain of the “wise passiveness,” of the waiting for the self-destruction of the tyrant through consequences of his own imprudent, evil actions (Hoeveler 1998: 95).

Her struggle is apt to her resistance to male oppression with courage, power, knowledge and determination:

we see that the female virtue coupled with initiative is capable of prevailing over its enemies. It must be strengthened through tests, until knowledge that was nominally forbidden comes to the surface as evidence of the guiding hand of providence, concurring finally with the heroine’s own voice of reason (Ellis 1989: 131).

By exploring the dark corridors of the labyrinth and secret passageways, she tries to overcome the fear of unknown and is rewarded in the end:

Emily is rewarded, not by a mature adulthood, but by a promise of fairy tale sex that titillates rather than fulfills. Radcliffe waves her magic hand in the final pages of the book and rekindles the love of

Emily and Valancourt “by the spell of a fairy”. Such is the ending of any children’s story where the fairy godmother unites the princess and the prince, and such is the ending of the formula most popular among adult women readers (Wallace & Smith 2009: 100-101).

The novel ends as the victim female marries and is “brought safely into a social order which is affirmed in the end” (Kilgour 1995: 37), which indicates the dominance of male and patriarchal expectations that entrap women. In other words, despite the struggles of a brave heroine against the evils of the world, “women’s continuing incarceration in the home that is always the man’s castle is assured” (Kilgour 1995: 38). Although her resistance to male order is “heroic rather than monstrous” (Johnson 1995: 108), Radcliffe conveyed the message that women could only be happy within the borders of patriarchy despite their struggle to overcome difficulties for self-assertion and emancipation in patriarchal orders.

The second victimized female gothic heroine is Muhsine in Turkish author, Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar’s *Gulyabani* (The Bogey) (1913). Through the adventures of Muhsine, Gürpınar aimed to present a moral lesson about the false beliefs, significance of education and dangers of superstitious: “Hüseyin Rahmi was one of the artists who focused on the superstitions of Turkish social life” (Moran 1998: 68). The female protagonist, Muhsine, is a naive and good-natured widow who becomes a maid in Yedi Çobanlar Farm after the death of her husband. The farm is isolated and the estate is mysterious. On her way, she is told that the farm and the house are haunted and the former owner of the farm had gone insane because of the fairies and spirits. The ghost that dominates the estate is called ‘Gulyabani’. In the estate, Muhsine works with Çeşmifelek Kalfa and Ruşen Kadın, two superstitious and weak women. They advise Muhsine beware of the ghosts and spirits that appear at nights:

Do not wear blue garment. Do not tie your waistband against the Kiblah. Do not knot your waist. Do not place your bed through the wall. At night, untie your braids. Do not wink your eyes seven times at the same time. When they scare you, rub the nails of your toes. Hold your earlobes. If you can find, press on with an iron. Scream as ‘Your order the gin! I am ready’ (Gürpınar 2005: 66).

Similar to Emily in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, Muhsine is brave, decisive and strong enough to struggle against the unknown by discovering all the mysterious events in the estate:

I thought, thought... I could not overcome that fear of curiosity flowing in my veins. There was a passage that bind the two flats of the estate. I walked there with a candlestick... in the end, a door appeared. I tried, it was deadlock. I put an ear. I did not hear anything. I went back. There was another room next to the room I had just saw. I tried and it opened. However, I was warned that it was forbidden to enter this room. I held the candlestick and looked inside: Empty, a big dusty room... There was neither fairy nor gin... (Gürpınar 2005: 79).

While Muhsine fights against the voices, shadows, Gulyabani and mysterious events, the novel ends with a revelation: the nephews and maids had plotted against the owner of the estate to gain all money and the estate. Muhsine is the innocent and naive victim that faces the evil, spells, charms and superstitions who is rewarded with marriage of a higher ranked man. Eventually, after the convicts are caught and sentenced, Muhsine marries Hasan and starts a new life in the estate.

Another victimized female figure in Turkish gothic is the protagonist in ‘Unutulan’ (Forgotten) by Oğuz Atay in his work, *Korkuyu Beklerken* (1975). The story presents the revelation of “the dead or the hidden” with fantasy. The nameless female protagonist decides to find the old books in the attic of her house: “For years, she has not been to this dusty darkness full of spiders. Some insects, after the light, escaped. She was afraid, yet, felt the courage when she considered its benefits” (Atay 2008: 27-28). While searching the books in the attic, she sees her ex boyfriend’s ghost:

However, there, there were bulges that do not resemble to book chest. She held the torch to that weird heap. She stepped back with fear: There was somebody there, sitting. She wanted to escape through the hole with the torch, she could not move. Despite her fear, she approached it with the torch (Ibid.: 29-30).

As in many gothic stories, the female protagonist is in a challenging situation and tries to overcome her fears in a boring, dark and dreary attic (Koçsoy 2010: 94), recalling gothic tradition. It is revealed that her ex boyfriend had committed suicide in the attic of the house where she lives with her new boy friend.

There are various scenes that recall gothic elements in the story: the scene when she sees the ghost: “The insects had eaten his brain, the softest part. May be the cockroach was carrying the last piece. She could not keep herself: “Did they leave you so alone, my love?” (Atay 2008: 34). Similar to Emily and Muhsine, the female protagonist of ‘Unutulan’ is on a journey, yet, her journey is to her past memories. She talks to her dead husband, remembers her parents and her old life and questions her life. Moreover, similar to Muhsine and Emily, due to her bravery, she completes the journey and is rewarded with the love of a new boyfriend:

Then she remembered: One day, the old love went up to the attic, after a harsh argument. It was a day, they both were fed up... She had gone out by leaving him in the attic: She felt he was going to die. Then she saw ‘him’ [her new boyfriend] on the street; somehow, she had realized the difference that took one away, the interest in ‘his’ eyes despite her desire to die and despite her weakness and all sorrow (Atay 2008: 30)

The second type of female Gothic is evil ‘femme fatale’ figures. Throughout the 19th century, femme fatale appeared as “an ethereal and often supernatural presence in Gothic ballads and novels” (Braun 2012: 239) and was accepted as “a threat to the middle-class conception of order, either as a criminal or as an unstable element” (Whelan 2010: 78) in the Victorian ideology. In other words, in the 20th century, the typical Gothic heroines were replaced by ‘femme fatales’ by losing their innocence (Spooner 2006: 40) rather than maiden in distress. The victim and femme fatale encompass “a world of binary oppositions” (Mulvey-Roberts 1998: 108) and the evil anti-heroine is accepted as a “masculine woman” (Hoeveler 1998: 31) who is the villain of the story, driven by passions and impulses: “Always destroyed by the conclusion of the novel, these women represent the antithesis of the feminine bourgeois ideology. Their extreme libidinous emotions, adulterous passions and lusts, and intense desire for power and status doom them to a life of desperate and thwarted designs” (Ibid.: 60). According to Gilbert and Gubar (1984: 16), such strong female characters “perversely display ‘monstrous’ autonomy”. Instead of a trapped victimized innocent female figure that waits for a saviour, the evil female gothic saves herself by overcoming the evil forces. This new figure is manipulative, intriguing, seductive and indecent.

Matilda in Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk* (1796) is an example to this type of female Gothic figure. The novel opens in the 18th century Madrid where Ambrosio is a famous monk. A wealthy young man, Lorenzo falls in love with the beautiful Antonia during Ambrosio’s speech at church. As a virtuous and strict monk, Ambrosio is deceived by Matilda, who introduced herself as a young monk, Rosario. The monk struggles with his desires, but is tempted by having sex with Matilda. Meanwhile, Ambrosio falls in love with Antonia and begins to visit her family’s house. Matilda deals with the demon and offers her assistance by giving Ambrosio a magical myrtle branch, which unlocks the doors to Antonia’s house. When Ambrosio secretly enters the house to rape Antonia, her mother appears and Ambrosio kills her and flees. Throughout the end of story, Ambrosio rapes Antonia in the dark crypt and she dies in Lorenzo’s arms. Ambrosio and Matilda are caught and taken to the Inquisition, and accused of rape, murder, and sorcery. Ambrosio decides to sell his soul to the devil to avoid execution. However, he learns

that Antonia was his sister and Matilda was a demon in human form. The devil leaves Ambrosio to eagles which rip him into pieces and the monk dies in agony.

Matilda embodies the traits of femme fatale who has a power over Ambrosio: “I have sacrificed a pebble, and saved a diamond. My death preserves a life valuable to the world, and more dear to me than my own - yes father, I am poisoned, but know that the poison once circulated in your veins” (Lewis 2002: 79). She controls and dominates Ambrosio, which indicates that a woman leads a submissive passive man:

“Beware of what you do”, interrupted Matilda, “your sudden change of sentiment may naturally create surprise, and may give birth to suspicions which it is most our interest to avoid. Rather redouble your outward austerity, and thunder and menaces against the errors of others, the better to conceal your own. Abandon the nun to her fate [...] Give me the lamp Ambrosio I must descend alone into these caverns; wait here and if any one approaches warn me by your voice” (Ibid.: 199).

At the beginning of the novel, Matilda is disguised as a male monk, named Rosario, and later, as a woman, who seduces Ambrosio. She is dominant with masculine traits that are “ill calculated to please him” (Ibid.: 210). Matilda controls Ambrosio with her sexuality and uses black magic to encourage him to rape and murder the innocent Antonia. Matilda is depicted as a “sublimely superhuman creature who makes the world as she wishes it to be” (Heiland 2004: 39) and represents the “female autonomy... in the late eighteenth-century society” (Brewer 2004: 193) by using her beauty, power and intelligence.

Matilda is considered to be a demon, a mortal woman who practices witchcraft (Brewer, 2004: 195-202), manipulative, seductive and intriguing and Ambrosio becomes her slave: “Matilda I follow you” “Do with me what you will!” (Lewis 2002: 233) after she reveals the “courage and manliness in her manners and discourse” (Ibid.: 231-32). By dealing with the devil, Matilda explains that “I [Matilda] have preserved a life, which otherwise I had lost in torture; and I have obtained the power of procuring every bliss, which can make that life delicious! The Infernal Spirits obey me as their Sovereign . . . I go impatient to exercise my newly-gained dominion. I pant to be at liberty” (Ibid.: 428-9).

Lewis depicted Matilda as a perfect sample of femme fatale that takes control of her life and focus on her own pleasures. Matilda has evil intentions for all characters, including nun Agnes: “Abandon the nun to her fate” (Ibid.: 209) and she speaks “to command” with a “superiority of . . . judgment” and “astonishing powers of her mind” (Ibid.: 233). She is, thus, undermining “previous literary constructions of femininity” (Wright 2002: 49) by revealing the potential power and danger of women.

Another femme fatale in Gothic fiction is Estella in Charles Dickens’s *Great Expectations* (1861). The depiction of her by the narrator reveals her as a hellish woman: “Estella’s face in the fire with her pretty hair fluttering in the wind” (Dickens 1964: 40). Recalling a ‘witch’, her ‘dark hair’ suggests her free spirit and fallen sexuality (Ofek 2009). As explained in the novel, Estella is “against reason” (Dickens 1964: 55) and “irresistible” (Ibid.: 55) when she tries to kiss Pip. Unlike the traditional Victorian women, she is the evil that attempts to seduce Pip. Having trained by Miss Havisham, Estella becomes a man hater and uses her body to achieve her aim (Campbell 2009: 202). Estella resembles to a ‘machine-like’ figure and a ‘heartless’ figure because she lacks emotions (Johnson 2009). As explained by Ayres (1998: 90), Estella is “the archetype of ‘woman’ bred to be desired but able to have no desire herself”.

Estella is opposite of the ‘Angel in the House’, she is hard, intriguing and malicious: “‘You must know,’ said Estella, condescending to me as a beautiful woman might, ‘that I have no heart- if that has anything to do with my memory’” (Dickens, 1964: 235) because she was taught that love is weakness. As a rebel to the unconstrained Victorian ideal woman, Estella “was always treated as if I had insisted on being

born in opposition to the dictates of reason, religion, and morality, and against the arguments of my best friends” (Ibid.: 29). When she marries Drummble, despite the love of Pip, her mere aim is to gain his wealth and title. In the novel, Estella humiliates, scorns and uses the men around her for her selfish needs, and thus, she is the female that challenges patriarchy.

Selma, in *Selma ve Gölgesi* (Selma and Her Shadow) (1939), by Peyami Safa is a sample of an evil female in Gothic Turkish fiction. The story is a detective story about the suicides occurred around a woman. Nevzat falls in love with Selma, the evil, dangerous, manipulative and intriguing woman, yet, he has hesitations about her past. Thus, he asks help from his best friend, Halim, to have an intimacy with Selma to learn the truths about the suicides in her past. While Nevzat describes Halim his emotions about Selma, he declares that

I love a widow, I want to marry, but I am afraid. I have a fear as big as love. These two feelings clash and sometimes it torments me in a way to suicide. I love and fear. However, these are not any of the fears related to being single: not the fear of disgust; not the fear of being unloved; not the fear of being cheated; not the fear of frustration. With the two words, it is the fear of death. ... I am afraid of death if I marry this woman... This wonderful woman gives the man the love and fear of death together (Safa 2006: 5-6).

It is narrated that in the past, there were four suicides around Selma. Her father had committed suicide due to a plantation when she was seventeen, and this suicide was followed by the suicides of her two husbands and her handmaiden: “even before Selma appears on stage, she is centered in narration as a woman who is the focus of doubts” (Özkök 2007: 83). Selma lives in a distant mansion in Çubuklu and she has a mysterious nature and appearance. When children see her, they escape by yelling: “There comes the ghost”. In her mansion, the colour black and silence accompany her attitudes.

The mysterious suicides in Selma’s life story, her obsession with the death and the deads, her love of darkness and strange manners make her a femme fatale. Moreover, all the men are attracted by her mysterious nature: sometimes silent and passive and often nervous and angry. There are many scenes that indicate her evil nature such as watching a suffering dog that is about to die, waiting for the death of a gondolier who is almost dead and being frustrated when he is not in Venice: “Oh, it would be so nice to see a dead gondolier” (Safa 2006: 142). Moreover, like all femme fatales, she uses her beauty and sexuality against men: “Firstly, she [Selma] cannot be controlled because of her sexuality and living away from civilization in her gothic mansion in the middle of nature. Selma’s space is away from civilization, the materialistic form against the terror of patriarchy towards women” (Özkök 2007: 85). In other words, she is a perfect sample of gothic femme fatale: “That is, her state reminds the famous femme fatale figure. I do not actually believe in such types. I guess they are only in novels and movies” (Safa 2006: 25). When Nevzat realizes her evil nature after the death of Halim, he decides to follow her. The story ends as Selma admits her crimes and tries to kill herself. In this last scene, she gives the gun to Nevzat and asks for help. Suddenly, the gun fires and Nevzat dies.

Autonomous, lusty, aggressive and evil female gothic figures replace the angel in distress character in Gothic literature. While the victims are rewarded with marriage, femme fatales gain triumph over patriarchy by deviating from the constraints of traditional feminine virtues and achieve their desires and shape their own happiness.

Conclusion

As a conclusion, gothic literature involves stories that are suspenseful, imaginative, gloomy and enriched with supernatural forces as spirits, ghosts, witches, vampires, gins, fairies or goblins appear in cemeteries, castles, cathedrals, mysterious houses, towers, isolated places and deserted estates. Gothic, which emerged in the 18th century western culture, became popular in Turkish literature in the 19th century. While castles, vampires, evil, curse and cursed spirits are used in the western culture, in Turkish literature, spell and magic were foregrounded to warn the readers about the falsity of superstitions.

Although gothic has been associated with men, women have undeniable contributions to gothic genre narration in the literatures of the western and Turkish cultures. There are various female depictions in gothic stories: domestic governesses, women in need to be rescued, modern, disgraced or evil, but, in this study, only two types of females (victims and femme fatales) are comparatively analyzed. Victims are similarly depicted as female figures that try to discover 'the other' in order to resist patriarchy while the femme fatales challenge 'the other' to dominate patriarchy.

Victimized females bravely struggle with the evils surrounding them and femme fatales create the dangers for men to dominate and control them. Emily, Muhsine and Atay's heroine are rewarded after their victory over the villain forces and unknown world, which indicates that although women are brave enough and achieve an awakening, they need a protector to survive. Matilda, Estella and Selma cause both their own and the others destruction in the end, which conveys that reacting against patriarchy lead to destruction. To conclude, it would be proper to state that victims are forced to struggle with the evil forces by patriarchy while femme fatales create the evil forces for the patriarchy.

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