

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS IN THE CONTEXT OF LITERARY SOCIOLOGY: *REFET* AND *JANE EYRE*

Edebiyat Sosyolojisi Bağlamında Karşılaştırmalı Bir Analiz: Refet ve Jane Eyre



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Araştırma Makalesi/Research Article

Geliş/Received
03.08.2024

Kabul/Accepted
25.12.2024

Sayfa/ Page
190-203



Abstract

Literary Sociology, which examines the relationship between literature and society, has been handled in a multifaceted way since the 1900s by providing readers new perspectives to evaluate the events in history. Feminism, for instance, has been an altering concept of literary canon and is one of the essential studies of literary sociology. Although it has been defined and evaluated in various ways, feminism refers to women's struggle for equal rights and liberty. While the women's movement emerged and accelerated in the Western societies at the beginning of the 19th century, it became efficiently prominent in the Turkish society and the culture after the reforms of the Tanzimat in 1839. Through a literary sociology framework, this study follows the traces of feministic improvements in the Victorian and the Tanzimat Periods: two groundbreaking periods of the British and the Turkish cultures. Written at times when feminism was discussed, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and Fatma Aliye's *Refet* (1898) represent women's status with the new laws and regulations in the 19th century patriarchal societies. Therefore, within the scope of this study, *Jane Eyre* and *Refet* were comparatively analyzed to present a sociological interpretation of the British and Turkish cultures, regarding the women's movements in the 19th century.

Keywords: Literary Sociology, feminism, the Victorian and the Tanzimat Periods, Jane Eyre, Refet.

Öz

Edebiyat ve toplum arasındaki ilişkiyi konu alan Edebiyat Sosyolojisi, okuyuculara tarihteki olayları değerlendirmede yeni bakış açıları sunarak 1900'lü yıllardan itibaren çok yönlü bir şekilde ele alınmıştır. Örneğin feminizm, edebiyat kanonunu değiştiren bir kavram olmuştur ve edebiyat sosyolojisinin temel çalışmalarından biridir. Feminizm, çeşitli şekillerde tanımlanıp değerlendirilse de kadınların eşit hak ve özgürlük mücadelesini ifade eder. Kadın hareketi 19. yüzyılın başlarında Batı toplumlarında ortaya çıkıp hızlanırken, Türk kültüründe 1839 Tanzimat'dan sonraki reformlar sonucunda etkin olarak toplumda öne çıktı. Bu çalışma, edebiyat sosyolojisi çerçevesinde, İngiliz ve Türk kültürlerinin çığır açan iki dönemi olan Viktorya ve Tanzimat Dönemlerindeki feminist gelişmelerin izlerini açıklığa kavuşturmaktadır. Feminizmin tartışıldığı dönemlerde yazılan Charlotte Brontë'nin *Jane Eyre* (1847) ve Fatma Aliye'nin *Refet* (1898) adlı eserleri 19. yüzyılda yeni yasa ve düzenlemelerle ataerkil toplumlarda kadının statüsünü temsil eder. Bu nedenle bu çalışma kapsamında İngiliz ve Türk kültürlerinin 19. yüzyıldaki kadın hareketlerine sosyolojik bir yorum sunabilmek amacıyla *Jane Eyre* ve *Refet* karşılaştırmalı olarak analiz edilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Edebiyat Sosyolojisi, feminizm, Viktorya ve Tanzimat Dönemleri, Jane Eyre, Refet

Atıf/Citation: Üstün Kaya, S. (2024). A Comparative analysis in the context of literary sociology: *Refet* and *Jane Eyre*. *International Journal of Filologia*. ISSN: 2667-7318 7(12), 190-203.

Introduction

As a discipline, Literary Sociology examines the interaction between literature and society to provide readers the interpretation of historical and social changes (Alver, 2012, p. 11). The relationship between literature and society has been handled in a multifaceted way since the 1900s and literary sociology has shed light for the readers to gain new perspectives to evaluate the events in history. Literature is the fictionalization of the interaction between human beings and societies and as literature mirrors the sociology of a society, the indicators in literary texts provide readers world view.

Considering this close relation between literature and sociology, every literary work is accepted as a nation's "diary" (Jusdanis, 1998, p. 76) or "document" (Sağlık, 2019, p. 260). For Alver (2012), literature is a medium to witness a society's beliefs, written or unwritten laws, religion, lifestyle, culture, language, social movements and all social layers. Literary sociology, within this scope, follows the traces of societal events and the study of literary texts aims to scrutinize the relation between the events and their impacts on individuals (Şan, 2012, p. 127). Thus, literature and sociology are complementary study fields and literary critics and historians have used literature as a starting point for sociological interpretation of societies. By analyzing, examining and evaluating the social changes through literary works, literary critics and researchers have used the sociological method of the relation between the author and their work.

While certain texts mirror the ideologies based on historical spheres, some enhance the development of movements in history. One of the greatest influences foreshadowing the French revolution and its reforms in women's roles was Jean-Jacques Rousseau's treatise *Emile* (1762) (Landes, 1988). Originally appeared in England during the 18th century, feminism became prominent with Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792). This work is credited as being the first scholarly work on the topic of feminism (Sevim, 2005, p. 7-8). Wollstonecraft challenged the patriarchal order's assertion and gender roles (Andree, 1993, p. 45-46) and urged the importance of female education to define female identity and liberty in patriarchal societies (Wollstonecraft, 1792, p. 54). From the 19th to the 21st century, feminism was separated into various waves, but the main aim of feminists remained the same: equal rights and freedoms for women through the eradication of the patriarchal order's social oppression. While the women's movement emerged and accelerated in the Western societies at the beginning of the 19th century, it became popular after the Tanzimat Reforms in 1839 in the Turkish culture.

Through a literary sociology framework, this study tracks the social changes in feminism in the Victorian and the Tanzimat Periods: two groundbreaking periods of the British and the Turkish cultures. Since every literary work is considered as the "document" (Sağlık, 2019, p. 260) of a nation, for this study, *Jane Eyre* (1847) by Charlotte Brontë and *Refet* (1898) by Fatma Aliye were comparatively analyzed for specific reasons. The first reason is that both Brontë and Aliye are outstanding, educated, intellectual and feminist writers who aimed to educate female readers. Secondly, *Refet* and *Jane Eyre* could be considered as the documents of the British and Turkish nations in terms of initial feminist movements. Finally, although they belong to different cultures, both Aliye and Brontë depicted two of the first heroines that contributed to the female movements and become role models for the 19th century female readers in world literature. Written at times when feminism was discussed, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Fatma Aliye's *Refet* represent women's status with the new laws and regulations in the 19th century. Therefore, *Jane Eyre* and *Refet* were comparatively analyzed to present a sociological interpretation of the British and Turkish cultures regarding the women's movements in the 19th century.

1. THE PERIODS AND THE AUTHORS

1.1. The Victorian and the Tanzimat Periods

The familiar and the old were always at odds with the new and unusual and humanity has to challenge the difficulties while adjusting to new circumstances. The Victorian Era (1837-1901) and the Tanzimat Period (1839-1876) are the periods when severe changes happened with new laws and regulations. After the Industrial Revolution, Victorian England was forced to adjust to a new social structure that was unprecedented. Mass manufacturing of machinery helped the empire, but it also brought about many

social and cultural issues that had an impact on literature and arts. Many people were impacted by the factories and the mechanization caused by the Industrial Revolution: “[...] Victorian Britain [was undergoing] a revolutionary change without revolution. The price paid, culturally, was a deep ambivalence about past and future[...].” (Gilmour, 1986, p. 22). As Charles Dickens points out, what distinguished the Victorian Period (1837-1901) from the earlier periods was the appearance of extreme contradictions in the society:

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way- in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only (Dickens, 1988, p. 1).

One of the main clashes was between the adopted Puritan views and a rigid moral code and the transformation of the society in the first half of the 20th century. Besides, women’s movements emerged with the new laws such as the right to vote, divorce, receive education or employment (Heywood, 2013, p. 240).

Similarly, when the modernization movements started during the Tanzimat Period, new reforms in the Turkish society were conducted (Eryılmaz, 1992, p. 91). Women were “behind the cages” (Yaraman, 1992, p. 23)¹ before the Tanzimat period because they were discouraged from appearing in public: “Women live in private, confidential worlds, while men exist in public domains. Women are assigned domestic responsibilities, while men are assigned roles and tasks pertaining to the outside world” (Çakır, 2016, p. 226). They were not permitted to work and support themselves in the Ottoman society because they were the parts of patriarchal foundations.

The Ottoman Empire’s institutional framework underwent numerous changes during the 19th century and the social, cultural, and educational spheres later adopted reforms that were implemented extensively (Merder, 2005, p. 21). The 19th century was the period when the Ottomans “started a progress that emphasized the replacement of religion by science and rationality in order to achieve enlightenment in line with the West” (Çaha, 1996, 85). The breaking point of the women’s struggle corresponded to the reforms of Tanzimat and women began to involve in the public (Denizli, 2004, p. 4). Feminist movements during the Tanzimat reform included the struggle of women for their rights to participate in the public sphere, get involved in politics, receive education and work. In this context, for the first time in the Ottoman Empire, the position of women in society was questioned and criticized, leading to new rights: the right to choose a spouse, to get education, inheritance and divorce (Koç, 2016, p. 31; Soysal, 2020, p. 400). During the reform period, journals published articles to focus on the women’s rights, as cited by Bayvertan (2010):

We wish for the equal enlightenment of men and women and all of humanity resulting from them. The mission of a woman is not to be unhappy by caring only for children and housework, living in fear of losing the man's power at any moment. Women are men's true friends, helpers and protectors of their children. When a woman joins society as an educated woman, she creates a safe environment for home life and protects her family from unhappiness that may come from outside (p. 135-136).

In *Takvim-i Vekayi*, for instance, it was mentioned that education was the upmost significant reform for women: “The survival of a country depends on public education... Our boys have acquired knowledge in the schools opened so far. However, it is both an obligation and a duty for our daughters to acquire knowledge” (Kumbaracılar, 1969, p. 80). Although female education was considered as prior, it involved training women to be competent in domestic duties: “It will only be possible for men who do hard work to feel comfortable in housework if women obey their husbands’ orders by knowing their religion and world, avoid doing what they do not want, and protect their chastity and be content” (Kartal, 2007, p. 172). Besides, the only profession for women at that time was considered to be “teaching”,

¹ All translations in the article was made by the author of this study.

enabling them to train future generations for a prosperous nation (Kaplan, 1998, p. 8). The Ottoman women, despite the laws and regulations, still had to confront with patriarchal codes and societal expectations.

Although the Victorian and the Tanzimat periods were transformation years when feminism notably accelerated, men dominated, governed and ruled both the societies and literary canon as the act of writing was seen as a masculine activity. Although Tanzimat reforms provided rights of education, inheritance, divorce, political involvement and social liberty for the Turkish women, women still had to challenge the patriarchal codes. Similarly, in the Victorian era, despite the regulations and rights provided to women, they were imprisoned to the domestic spheres, where they could be the angels of their houses because their rights were limited and faced the loss of their property once they married (Buckner, 2005). In both cultures, female authors, thus, could not use their real names in their writings. Fatma Aliye, for instance, published her first works under the pseudonym: “Bir Kadın” (A Woman) (Esen, 2020, p. 118) and in England in the 19th century, some female writers like George Eliot or the Brontë sisters also used pseudonyms.

1.2. Fatma Aliye and Charlotte Brontë

When Fatma Aliye (1862-1936) began writing, the Ottoman society was going under a severe change in military, educational, social and cultural life in the Ottoman Empire with the proclamation of the Tanzimat reforms in 1839. Fatma Aliye Hanım was influential in the women’s movement, which foregrounded issues that directly concerned femininity, such as the equality between men and women, women’s education and work rights, the forms of marriage, polygamy, divorce, the place of women in Islam, and women’s visibility in social life.

Born in İstanbul in 1862, Fatma Aliye was the daughter of the intellectual Ahmet Cevdet Paşa, a statesman, historian, and lawyer. Grown up in a mansion by the Bosphorus, she was interested in books and French (Ahmet Mithat, 1994, p. 26). Although Fatma Aliye was trained by a tutor and her father, after her marriage, her husband did not allow her to read or write (Ahmet Mithat, 1994, p. 76).

After she suffered from postpartum depression, Fatma Aliye’s husband realized her desire for literature (Esen, 2020, p. 144) and supported her as a writer. In 1890, Fatma Aliye translated George Ohnet’s book *Volonte* and it was published under the name of *Meram* with the pseudonym ‘Bir Kadın’ (A Woman). She wrote *Hayal ve Hakikat* (Dream and Reality) with Ahmet Mithat Efendi, again under the pseudonym ‘A Woman’ (Okuducu, 2014, p. 145). However, from 1892 to 1915, she published novels *Muhaddarat*, *Refet* and *Udi* with her actual name. The main issues in her fiction were gender relations, women and Islam, the impacts of westernization, women’s education, arranged marriages, and the roles of women in the Ottoman Islamic culture (Okuducu, 2014, p. 146).

Fatma Aliye is accepted as the first influential feminist who could synthesize the Islamic codes and the rational thought of westernization. The ideal, conveyed through her fiction, was expected to blend the western modernity with Ottoman manners and education. Therefore, she coined the term “Islam woman”, which referred to the intellectual woman, who adopted the western modernization while preserving the traditional way of Islamic culture (Zihnioğlu, 2003, p. 76). For Fatma Aliye, education was the only salvation for women who could also raise the new generations. With her conferences, speeches, novels and articles, Fatma Aliye highlighted the noteworthiness of education and employment for female self-assertion and respect in society.

The British author Charlotte Brontë (1816-1855) was born in 1816 as one of the six children of a priest (Gaskell, 2005, p. 13). She lived in the Victorian period when class distinctions, mechanization, bourgeois hypocrisy, poverty and arranged marriages were prominent (Urgan, 1991, p. 173). After the death of her mother, the Brontë sisters were brought up by their aunt and later at boarding schools. Charlotte Brontë, like her character Jane, worked as a governess in various wealthy homes: “Taken as a whole, the life of Charlotte Brontë was among the saddest in literature. At a miserable school, where she herself was unhappy, she saw her two elder sisters stricken down and carried home to die. In her home was the narrowest poverty” (Shorter, 2015, p. 21).

In her later ages, Charlotte Brontë worked as a teacher and began writing (Gaskell, 2005, p. 14-15). Similar to Fatma Aliye, Brontë used the penname “Curren Bell” while her sisters Emily and Anne Brontë used “Ellis Bell” and “Acton Bell” to publish their works:

The Brontës “decision to use pen names was validated when James Lorimer published a review of their novels, asserting if they are the productions of a woman, she must be a woman pretty unsexed” and Charlotte seems to have been summarizing several reviews when she wrote to W. S. Williams in August 1849, complaining that *Jane Eyre* is praised [...] if written by a man—and pronounced “odious” if it is work of a woman” (Fisk, 2008, p. 223).

Since it was unacceptable for a woman to write a novel (Gaskell, 2005, p. 17). Charlotte Brontë’s first novel *Jane Eyre* was published in 1847 under the name of “Curren Bell” (Gaskell, 2005, p. 17). Her other novels, *Shirley* (1848) and *Villette* (1853) also involve female struggle with the male oppression and dominance, arranged marriages, social status quo and women’s place in patriarchal societies.

Brontë challenged the traditional gender roles of the Victorian era by developing her heroines as independent, assertive, and self-reliant in her novels. Even though it was not appropriate for a woman in Victorian society to voice these kinds of ideas, her characters were open to express them. According to Sally Shuttleworth (1996), Charlotte Brontë’s heroines are attempting to define their identities, gain financial independence and self-assertion in society rather than marrying a reliable husband (Poovey, 1989). To critique the male dominance and oppression, Charlotte Brontë’s heroines embark on journeys for self-assertion and economic independence to challenge the Victorian patriarchy. The analysis part of this study presents a literary sociological analysis based on the Victorian and the Tanzimat periods through the indicators in *Refet* by Fatma Aliye and *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë.

2. *Refet* and *Jane Eyre*

Fatma Aliye’s *Refet* narrates the story of Refet, the daughter of Hayati Efendi and Binnaz Hanım. Although Hayati Efendi is married with children, on one of his visits to İstanbul, he has an affair with Binnaz Hanım. After Binnaz Hanım gives birth to Refet, Hayati Efendi takes her to his hometown as his second wife with the baby. However, after he dies, Binnaz and Refet are exposed to psychological and physical violence of their relatives. Refet spends her early childhood years ill and alienated and thus, Binnaz Hanım leaves home and receives the support of Mürüvvet Hanım. To look after her daughter, Binnaz Hanım works at different jobs such as doing the laundry, cleaning and tailoring until Refet graduates from Darümuallimat (school for girls) and becomes a teacher. However, on the day she receives her diploma, Refet loses her mother.

In Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, the orphan Jane Eyre grows up with her aunt Mrs Reed and her children in insecurity, despair and sorrow. When Mrs. Reed sends Jane to the Lowood Institution, a charity school, Jane has to struggle with terrible conditions until she becomes a teacher. As the governess of young Adèle Varens, Jane meets Mr Rochester, the ward of Adèle. Mr Rochester soon proposes to Jane, but Jane is suspicious of the screams in the attic. On the wedding ceremony, Jane learns that Mr. Rochester is already married to Bertha, a lunatic poor woman who is kept in the attic. Jane refuses to be his mistress and leaves Mr Rochester. Meanwhile, Jane finds her distant family and learns about the inheritance. After she finds out that Bertha has died in fire and Rochester has lost his eyesight, Jane decides to return to her love. The novel ends as they marry, bring back Adèle from the boarding school, and have a son.

The first sociological indicator of the Victorian and the Tanzimat periods in *Refet* and *Jane Eyre* is female education and employment. Both Brontë and Fatma Aliye criticized gender segregation by underscoring the significance of education and economic independence for the liberty of young girls in *Refet* and *Jane Eyre*. During Brontë’s times, the Victorian families raised their daughters to become submissive wives and sacrificing mothers who would be confined to their private spheres. Since higher education was seen as unnecessary, the Victorian girls could only work as baby sitters or cleaners until the Elementary Education Act (1870), which provided compulsory elementary education for both sexes.

Although many English families did not want proper education for their daughters until 1890s, many young girls could receive basic education:

Of those superior schools, popularly known as Ladies' Colleges, the earliest in foundation, and in all respects the best known and most amply supported, is Queen's College, Harley Street, London, which was incorporated by royal charter in 1853 for the general education of ladies, and for granting certificates of knowledge (Parkes, 2010, p. 203).

However, the patriarchal codes of the Victorian period limited the education to only domestic duties: sewing, childcare and cooking. In other words, women were excluded from the universities because it was thought that education would spoil their innocence and prevent them from their main duties:

Women had been excluded from the universities by the Victorian assumptions that women were not suited by temperament or intellect either for the clergy or for public life and they were not capable of the sustained rigorous work required by the university studies... and many proper Victorians, men and women alike felt that advanced education would spoil women's cherished innocence and nurturing instincts (Tucker, 2014, p. 15).

It was not common for a woman to have an education in the nineteenth century, women were likewise discouraged from pursuing higher education. However, many Victorian women overcame the expectations of society and became governesses, which was accepted as the start of feminist efforts (Copelman, 1996, p. 17). Holcombe (1973) explained the changes during the second half of the 19th century Victorian society as:

Middle- class working women, once relegated to the field of 'governessing' were still restricted to certain occupations only, the traditionally feminine professions of teaching and nursing and a few new fields, such as shop and clerical work and the lower reaches of the civil service, where their cheapness compared with men encouraged their increasing employment (p. 198).

Towards the end of the 19th century, the Victorian women could have many other good and respectable jobs like teaching, nursing, or tutoring.

Brontë's *Jane Eyre* is an example of the Victorian girls who challenge the patriarchy psychologically, financially, and socially. Jane achieves to become independent and happy because "her creator desires her heroine's achievement of the utopian ideal of union in which men and women, rich and poor, are no longer categories separated by iron barriers" (Bell, 1996, p. 269). The novel, thus, is "the first, also the most powerful and popular novel to present the modern view of women's position in society... It was a representative work reflecting women's call for equality... The female consciousness of *Jane Eyre* challenges men's authority" (Gao, 2013, p. 926-927). Challenging the patriarchal system of society by standing up against the men at Gateshead, Lowood and Thornfield, Jane is a rebel who endeavours to gain self-assertion and equality despite all the obstacles in her life since childhood: "Jane is a feminist through four aspects, her pursuit of esteem, independence, equality and true love. In the guidance of feminist beliefs, through her persistence and brave rebel and pursuit, *Jane Eyre* finally gets esteem, independence, equality and true love she aspires after for a long time" (Gao, 2013, p. 926). As Jane graduates and becomes a governess, she starts to earn her living, which was uncommon among the Victorian society (Poovey, 1989, p. 142). Moreover, after Mr Rochester becomes blind, Jane takes control of the whole family and estate.

Just like the society's attitude towards the education of girls in the Victorian era, women's education was not considered essential until the Tanzimat years in the Ottoman Empire. With the new reforms, girls' education was carried out in two ways: formal and informal. Informal education was the set of habits observed at home (Demirel and Kaya, 2005, p. 8) so that young girls would become proper mothers and wives. They were allowed to learn sewing, cooking, playing the piano or French. The primary school, for the formal education of girls in the Ottoman Empire, was Cevra Kalfa İnas Rüştiyesi (Akyüz, 2013). For four years, girls were taught religious sciences, embroidery, Ottoman and Persian language, home economics, history, geography, literature, sewing and music (Akyüz, 2013).

Secondary education opportunities for girls were provided for the first time during the Tanzimat period in 1858, and the girls' secondary school opened in 1859. Midwifery School, Girls' Industrial School and Girls' Teacher Training School were opened for the first time in this period (Kurnaz, 2011, p. 24-53). Girls Teacher Training School or Dârümuallimat was a school for Ottoman women and the school trained girls to be teachers in 1869. Darümuallimat started to train female teachers and courses in tailoring, music, sewing and embroidery, religion, and the Ottoman Turkish (Okuducu, 2014).

Similar to the Victorian society, the Tanzimat period was also a patriarchal society and it was believed that girls' education was important only to be adequate mothers to raise the new generation and be a devoted wife (Karaca, 2011). Poor orphan Refet is the first female teacher in the Turkish literature and, like Jane Eyre, she struggled for education and economic liberty. In both novels, it is underscored that education is the only salvation for women to gain liberty and respect in society (Demirdirek, 2019, p. 53-54). The novel clarifies the essentiality of Darümuallimat, which paved way to girls to become teachers: "Ottoman girls come here to gain knowledge. If it created many teachers in this time, it also educated hundreds of knowledgeable Ottoman girls" [Osmanlı kızları bilgi sahibi olmak için buraya kouşuyorlar. Bu kadar sürede birçok öğretmen meydana getirmişse yüzlerce de bilgili Osmanlı kızı yetiştirmiştir] (R, p. 79).

Educated in Darümuallimat (Akşit, 2012, p. 97), Refet is an unconventional woman who never dreams of a rich husband, which challenges the patriarchal expectations of her period:

Her dreams were not like the dreams of other young girls that age. He will earn, he will manage his home, he will make his mother comfortable, he will educate many children and educate and educate the children of the country... Sometimes he takes his dreams further; to save money for a house, to get a place for themselves... (R, p. 26-27).

In the end, her dreams come true and Refet, as a teacher, settles down as a woman who could show everyone that she "earns her living" (R, p. 138). Hitherto, Refet is the voice of Fatma Aliye who asserted that women should be educated to have a profession (Karaçorlu, 2009, p. 11-12) for a prosperous and respectful life (R, p. 8).

Since economic independence is her priority, Refet ignores marriage. Although it is repeated in the novel that Refet, just like Jane Eyre, is not beautiful enough to attract a man, Refet declares that she avoids being a wife and desires to be independent:

"Yes! It is impossible not to think that I wish I were beautiful too! But if there is no wealth, I want to embrace work with both hands. If I don't have the beauty to find a home thanks to a husband, I want to compete with wealth and beauty by being able to manage a home with my effort. I want to show that to be loved and respected by everyone is not only about beauty, but also about working, earning, training and talent (R, p. 26-27).

Thus, Refet both refuses to obey the traditional status of women in society and sets an example for young female readers who could have respect through education. When she buys pastry and candies with her own money, Refet becomes the breadwinner: "When Refet entered their room, she saw her mother crying, smiling while watching the pastry and candies. Binnaz was crying with joy and pride. When she saw Refet, she opened her arms and said "My daughter, my child, the man of my house" (R, p. 58).

Refet becomes the "man of the house", the breadwinner because she is strong, brave, hardworking and determined for her only goal: having a diploma to become a teacher. Fatma Aliye, at this scene, conveys her message: "We will no longer be out of such helplessness and necessity, but hopefully we will be able to save our salaries to a degree that will ensure our future. After earning money, we could buy houses each" (R, p. 138). As is seen, Refet dreams of being an independent woman who could earn her own living both for herself and for the future generations of the nation: "If we do our duties well and educate the children of our country well, the money we earn will be halal and God Almighty will allow us to live comfortably" (R, p. 138). That's why, she refuses a marriage in which she would be the submissive one, which is another sociological concept in both *Refet* and *Jane Eyre*.

The idea that “Nature has given woman a weaker frame than man” (Wollstonecraft, 1792, p. 31) was mostly accepted in the 19th century Victorian society, which created the “angels in the house”. The patriarchal Victorian society created passive, charming, sacrificing, submissive and pious women and “If they hoped to maintain an image of themselves as ‘ladies,’ or even as ‘true’ women, they had to accept the sphere defined for them by the myth, and live within its prescriptive boundaries, no matter how high the price paid” (Jordan, 1999, p. 55-56). Thus, a married woman turned into “a hidden person, sunk into and merged with the personality of her husband” (Perkins, 1989, p. 2). As stated by Wollstonecraft (1792), “[...] the only way women can rise in the world, [is] by marriage. And this desire makes mere animals of them, when they marry they act as such children may be expected to act: —they dress: they paint, and nickname God’s creatures” (p. 10). In other words, to govern a family, the Victorian women were expected to be married and become mothers in life.

Both *Jane Eyre* and *Refet* are female characters that challenge the patriarchy and the strict codes of the 19th century Victorian and Ottoman-Turkish societies. Fatma Aliye’s *Refet*, which “provided a means for Fatma Aliye Hanım to discuss the problems of Ottoman women” (Gençtürk-Demircioğlu, 2010, p. 105), and Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* involve messages for the female readers about arranged marriages and expectations of patriarchy. Fatma Aliye, like many Ottoman female authors, believed that the disappointment of women in marriages stems from men’s lack of common sense, insensitivity and vulgarity (Günaydın, 2017, p. 95). Thus, in women’s fiction, the marriages end in sorrow as women are forced to marry men that are not equal to themselves.

Criticizing the arranged marriages, Fatma Aliye, through *Refet*, clarifies the significance of love and compassion in marriages: “I will not marry unless I earn enough money to ensure my future, unless I acquire a fortune suitable for my own means... I will want to be loved as I love very much. I will ask for loyalty and affection from the man who will be my husband” (R, p. 122). Thus, she has no intention of dating Mucit or any other men because she believes in the value of a mutual interest, friendship and attraction rather than a contract in an arranged marriage: “I will demand loyalty and affection from the man who will be my husband! Rather than committing injustice such as demanding things that are not fortified I decided to give up on procrastination” (R, p. 96).

Refet refuses Mucip stating that he is “illiterate” (R, p. 135), which could also be sociologically interpreted as Fatma Aliye giving freedom of choice to her protagonist, which was uncommon during the 19th century Turkish patriarchal culture. In other words, the author both criticizes the arranged marriages of her time and advocates that women could have the freedom to choose their own spouses. By stating that she cannot marry Mucip, *Refet* also implies that she has freewill in her life and decisions.

Similar to *Refet*, *Jane Eyre* confronts the strict Victorian society in regards to the marriage institution: “the Victorian Age was men-centered and men-controlled times. Women were discriminated against by men at that time. However, the ahead-of-age female consciousness of *Jane Eyre*, the main character challenges men’s authority” (Gao, 2013, p. 927). As she grows up, Jane’s ideas on marriage recalls *Refet*’s ideas. They both refuse the superiority of the husband and work a lot for economic independence for a respectful status in society. Jane’s belief in equal minds and souls in marriages is a denial of rigid preconceptions, and thus, is a denial of the Victorian status quo. In other words, for Jane, “psychological independence and financial success” (Michie, 2006, p. 17), liberty and self-improvement are more essential than having a husband. She also believes in the power of love rather than logic in marriages.

Jane has the same reaction with *Refet* about marriages which lack love: “No one would take me for love; and I will not be regarded in the light of a mere money speculation. And I do not want a stranger—unsympathizing, alien, different from me; I want my kindred; those with whom I have full fellow-feeling” (JE, p. 838). Her emphasis on romance in marriages is contradictory to her period which degraded women to slaves: “[...] the wife’s position under the common law of England is worse than that of slaves in the laws of many countries [...]” (Mill, 1869, p. 36). However, in *Thornfield*, where she meets her first love, Mr. Rochester, Jane has contradictory feelings: “A central paradox of *Jane Eyre* is its enlistment in two antithetical traditions, as progenitor of the modern romance and ringleader of the feminist revolt against its stifling conventions” (Mitchell and Osland, 2005, p. 175). However, Jane falls in love with Mr Rochester:

“Do you think I am an automaton? A machine without feelings? Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless? You think wrong-I have as much soul as you, -and full as much heart... I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities, nor even of mortal flesh; -it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God’s feet, equal, -as we are!” (JE, p. 223).

Jane’s refusal to a total submission to Rochester also “presents a passionate assertion on autonomy and at the same time a passionate commitment to romantic love” (Wyatt, 1985, p. 213). She believes in the power of love but she is also aware of her own desires in life.

The relationship between Jane and Mr Rochester is also exceptional in the Victorian society, and thus, Brontë breaks the traditional norms by presenting a new kind of marriage in which man and woman are equal: “an alternative to the hierarchy of a patriarchal household. . . husband and wife would be equally powerful and autonomous, equally masters of their own houses” (Wyatt, 1985, p. 210). While reflecting the ideas of the author, Jane explains an ideal marriage at the end:

I have now been married ten years. I know what it is to live entirely for and with what I love best on earth. I hold myself supremely blest—blest beyond what language can express; because I am my husband’s life as fully as he is mine. No woman was ever nearer to her mate than I am: ever more absolutely bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh (JE, p. 399).

In other words, Brontë depicts the story of a woman who wins a victory by refusing the patriarchal codes of “a highly class-conscious society” with her own wealth (Dunn, 2001, p. 471).

Similar to Refet, Jane sets goals for an independent life: “What do I want? A new place, in a new house, amongst new faces, under new circumstances: I want this because it is of no use wanting anything better” (JE, p. 74). Then she applies for a job, and she gets the approval to work as a governess at Thornfield: “Jane’s education, in the broadest sense, leads her to realize her place in the world” (Brennan, 2010, p. 29). Instead of accepting the rules, roles and codes of patriarchy, Jane achieves to write her own story: “I don’t think, sir that you [Mr Rochester] have a right to command me, merely because you are older than I, or because you have seen more of the world than I have; your claim to superiority depends on the use you have made of your time and experience” (JE, p. 117). Refusal of a male oppression and dominance is one of the leading motifs in both *Refet* and *Jane Eyre* who are the noteworthy feminist fictitious heroines in the British and the Turkish literatures.

The third sociological indicator of the Victorian and the Tanzimat periods in *Refet* and *Jane Eyre* is the inheritance rights of women. Before “The Married Women’s Property Act” (1870), the property of married women was governed and controlled by their husbands: “From the early thirteenth century until 1870, English Common law held that most of the property that a wife had owned as a feme sole came under the control of the husband at the time of the marriage” (Combs, 2005, p. 1032). By the law, women could control their own property: “These acts generally exempted married women’s property from attachments by creditors of their husbands” (Chused, 1984, p. 44).

Throughout the end of the novel, Jane Eyre learns that her uncle John Eyre died and she has become his heir for “the entire fortune”: “And then this money came only to me: not to me and a rejoicing family, but to my isolated self. It was a grand boon doubtless; and independence would be glorious—yes, I felt that—that thought swelled my heart” (JE, p. 338). Jane decides to share her inheritance with her female cousins who can also be economically independent in a male dominated society: “Twenty thousand pounds shared equally would be five thousand each, justice—enough and to spare: justice would be done,—mutual happiness secured” (JE, p. 341).

In the Ottoman Empire, due to religious law rules, girls’ inheritance rights were half of their brothers. Efforts to improve the situation of women in the legal field gained visible momentum in this new period. With the Will of the Lord (İrade-i Seniyye) in 1847, girls were given equal rights with boys to “own their father’s land without charge” (Kurnaz, 1997, p. 52; Okuducu, 2014, p. 96). After this regulation, in 1858, the Land Law was enacted and women’s inheritance rights were expanded and reinforced

(Altınbaş, 1989, p. 464). By the new law, after their fathers die, girls could receive the same inheritance with their brothers (Altındal, 1994, p. 181). These regulations on inheritance provided women the right to have their own property.

In *Refet*, after Hayati Efendi dies, Refet and her mother are forced to leave the estate and are deprived of inheritance. Refet struggles with poverty during her education period at a public school. However, similar to *Jane Eyre*, *Refet* ends as the heroine declares that she could have the right of her father's inheritance, regarding the Land Law:

After Ms. Mürüvvet heard from someone and recommended it to my mother, my mother submitted a petition every few years requesting some salary in return for my share of the inheritance. Even though at that time, the court decided to give me one hundred kuruş monthly, my brothers still did not send it. I will show them how Hz. Muhammad's laws protect a woman and a helpless person. And I would like to show those who are trying to destroy me by not giving me money even from my own property, how I became a man without any income and that I am able to earn my living today thanks to the protection and administration of the school and the state! (R, p. 138).

Both Refet and Jane challenge the difficulties in life as orphans and as women and they confront the patriarchal codes and societal expectations in the transformation periods of the British and the Turkish cultures. However, in the end, they are rewarded for their piety, ambition, devotion and intelligence as two young girls that could be role models for the young female readers.

Conclusion

Refet and *Jane Eyre* are the quintessential examples of the Victorian and the Tanzimat periods because they both involve the issues of female education, patriarchal marriages, and inheritance laws which all changed the women's status quo in the 19th century. Considering the traditional patriarchal structure of the period, Fatma Aliye and Charlotte Brontë created two heroines that confront the patriarchal codes both in public and private spheres for economic liberty and self-assertion. The protagonists of both novels are depicted as role models for the female readers of different cultures with common epithets: strong, brave, intelligent, dedicated and determined.

The narration in both novels portray the harsh realities of the transformation of the British and the Turkish cultures, and thus, the novels could also be accepted as historical documents of the periods. By challenging the strict patriarchal codes and male oppressions, *Refet* and *Jane Eyre* reveal the quest of all women for freedom and equality. Both Brontë and Aliye similarly aimed to show that woman could be realized whether she enhanced a struggle for her rights and work to achieve her goals for a prosperous and respectful status. To conclude, it would not be wrong to state that, although written in different cultures, *Jane Eyre* and *Refet* shed a light on the sociological interpretation of the British and the Turkish cultures regarding the women's movements in the 19th century.

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Çatışma Beyanı / Conflict Statement: Yazar bu çalışma ile ilgili taraf olabilecek herhangi bir kişi ya da finansal ilişkisinin bulunmadığını, herhangi bir çıkar çatışmasının olmadığını beyan etmiştir.

Etik Beyanı / Ethical Statement: Yazar bu makalede “Etik Kurul İzni”ne gerek olmadığını beyan etmiştir.

Destek ve Teşekkür / Support and Thanks: Yazar bu çalışmada herhangi bir kurum ya da kuruluştan destek alınmadığını beyan etmiştir.

Yayımlanan makalede araştırma ve yayın etiğine riayet edilmiş; COPE (Committee on Publication Ethics)’nin editör ve yazarlar için yayımlanmış olduğu uluslararası standartlar dikkate alınmıştır.