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Amplifying Voices, Shaping Experience: The Feminist Quests of Virginia Woolf and Şirin Tekeli

Dr. Arş. Gör., Yeliz KENDİR-GÖK

Çankırı Karatekin Üniversitesi, İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Fakültesi, Sosyoloji Bölümü, ÇANKIRI.

e-posta: yeliz.kendir@gmail.com, ORCID: 0000-0002-3500-8374



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AMPLIFYING VOICES, SHAPING EXPERIENCE: THE FEMINIST QUESTS OF VIRGINIA WOOLF AND ŞİRİN TEKELİ

Abstract

This article aims to address a gap in feminist literature by comparing the lives, contributions, and social contexts of Virginia Woolf and Şirin Tekeli. Through the analysis of their works within cultural frameworks, it seeks to provide new insights into feminist thought, women's rights, and gender roles. The study highlights parallels between the gender norms of their respective eras and the ongoing struggle for gender equality. By first providing an overview of Woolf and Tekeli, the analysis focuses on historical and cultural transformations in order to understand the complexities of gender dynamics. It applies Woolf's concept of a "room of one's own" as a metaphor for women's intellectual and creative liberation. The study then transitions to Istanbul, focusing on Tekeli and the Women's Library and Information Center Foundation's efforts to challenge traditional gender norms and uncover hidden aspects of women's lives. In summary, this article enhances the understanding of gender dynamics by highlighting the interrelated nature of Woolf's and Tekeli's feminist endeavors and their commitment to advancing women's narratives.

Keywords: Virginia Woolf, Şirin Tekeli, feminist literature, gender equality, feminist quests.

SESLERİ YÜKSELTMEK, DENEYİMİ ŞEKİLLENDİRMEK: VIRGINIA WOOLF VE ŞİRİN TEKELİ'NİN FEMİNİST ARAYIŞLARI

Öz

Bu makale, feminist literatürdeki boşluğu gidermeyi hedefleyerek Virginia Woolf ve Şirin Tekeli'nin yaşamlarını, katkılarını ve toplumsal bağlamlarını karşılaştırmaktadır. Eserlerinin kültürel çerçeveler içinde analiz edilmesi yoluyla feminist düşünce, kadın hakları ve toplumsal cinsiyet rolleri konularında yeni bir bakış açısı sunmayı amaçlar. Çalışma, her iki dönemdeki toplumsal cinsiyet normları ve süregelen toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği mücadelesi arasındaki benzerlikleri ortaya koyar. Woolf ve Tekeli'nin kısa biyografik özetleriyle başlayan analiz, toplumsal cinsiyet dinamiklerinin karmaşıklığını anlamak için tarihsel ve kültürel dönüşümleri vurgular. Woolf'un kadınların entelektüel ve yaratıcı özgürlüğüne dair bir metafor olarak kullandığı "kendine ait bir oda" kavramını derinlemesine inceler. Ardından, İstanbul'a odaklanarak, Tekeli ve Kadın Eserleri Kütüphanesi ve Bilgi Merkezi Vakfı'nın toplumsal normlara karşı çıkma ve kadınların yaşamlarının örtük yönlerini ortaya çıkarma çabalarını değerlendirir. Sonuç olarak, makale, Woolf ve Tekeli'nin feminist mücadelelerinin kesişim noktalarını ve kadın anlatılarını ilerletmeye yönelik ortak kararlılıklarını vurgulayarak toplumsal cinsiyet dinamiklerine ilişkin anlayışı derinleştirir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Virginia Woolf, Şirin Tekeli, feminist literatür, toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği, feminist arayışlar.

INTRODUCTION

Virginia Woolf (2019: 5) states:
“But, you may say, we asked you to speak
about woman and fiction -what, has that to do
with a room of one’s own? I will try to explain.”

The concept of gender has been a pervasive and intricate theme throughout history, intertwined into the fabric of cultures of all ages, continents, and civilizations (Wiesner-Hank, 2021). This theme is evident in narratives of individuals grappling with the implications of their gender identification in the social and historical contexts of their time. Comparative analyses within academic studies have examined and thoroughly assessed this pattern. Mehrpouyan and Zakeri (2023), for instance, delve into the authorial identity imagery in the works of Virginia Woolf, Simin Daneshvar, and Forough Farrokhzad, analysing themes of feminist literature and womanhood. By discussing women’s rights, oppression, and the dynamics of patriarchal system, these authors adopt a humanistic approach. Similarly, Chen (2016) underscores the significance of comparing Woolf and Beauvoir, drawing attention to shared elements and differences in specific concepts of liberation. This analytical framework plays a pivotal role in advancing the cause of contemporary women’s emancipation. Furthermore, Prinoty (2022) reflects on the portrayal of traditional societies shaped by patriarchal communities in the works of Virginia Woolf and Kate Chopin. As a whole, these studies demonstrate the potential of comparative analyses in shedding light on various facets of the examined literary works.

This study embarks on a journey through time and space, aiming to unveil the lives, contributions, and social environments of two remarkable women: Virginia Woolf and Şirin Tekeli. It seeks to provide fresh insights on feminist theory, women’s rights, and gender roles by analyzing the writings of both authors. The analysis seeks to provide a more nuanced understanding of how these authors’ works were shaped by their cultural contexts and how they engaged with feminist ideals. Ultimately, this study contributes to a broader perspective on this significant topic in literature. In addition to uncovering the specific challenges faced by these two extraordinary women, the exploration of their lives illuminates parallels between the gender norms of their respective eras. The ensuing discussion delves into the enduring struggle for gender parity and the substantial impact of personal choices on historical development through the testimonies of Woolf and Tekeli.

The study initiates with a concise overview of Woolf and Tekeli. In order to improve understanding of the complexities of gender dynamics in their lives, the following analysis focuses on changes in historical and cultural contexts. This analysis is contextualized, with a focus on exploring further how Virginia Woolf’s concept of a “room of one’s own” might transcend the physical realm and function as a potent metaphor for the intellectual and creative liberation of women. The journey then proceeds to İstanbul, where Tekeli and the Women’s Library and Information Center Foundation have forged an environment that defies conventional norms. Consequently, this study shows how Woolf and Tekeli’s stories intersect through their shared commitment to exposing the hidden facets of women’s lives and viewpoints as one navigates the complex web they have created.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The expression “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” (Beauvoir, 1972: 296), which refers to the cultural construction of gender rather than its biological implications, has been frequently used by feminists and remains an influential concept from past to present (Direk, 2009). From this perspective, examining the conceptualizations and sociological configuration of being a woman through the life trajectories and works of Virginia Woolf and Şirin Tekeli is crucial for understanding their contributions to challenge and transform traditional motifs. When focusing on these two figures, it is reasonable to keep Beauvoir’s argument in mind. Based on her own life experiences, Beauvoir describes the difficulties of being a woman in a male-dominated world as follows:

It was a revelation: this world was a masculine world, my childhood had been nourished by myths forged by men, and I hadn’t reacted to them in all the same way I should have done if I had been a boy. I was so interested in this discovery that I abandoned my project for a personal confession in order to give all my attention to finding out about the condition of women in its broadest terms. I went to the Bibliothèque Nationale to do some reading and what I studied were the myths of Femininity. (Beauvoir, 1963: 103; cited in Fallaize, 2007: 87).

This quote reveals Beauvoir’s awareness of how gender is constructed and how the experience of womanhood is socially shaped. Arguing that womanhood is not a biological destiny but a social and cultural

construction, she contends that traditional roles and positions must be questioned. In this context, the theoretical framework of this study will focus on the sociological meanings of being a woman, the concept of the other, and the secondary positions attributed to women.

2. FEMINIST VOICES ACROSS TIME AND CULTURE: A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF WOOLF AND TEKELİ

Virginia Woolf's temporal existence spanned from January 25, 1882, to March 28, 1941, positioning her at the confluence of the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Woolf, 2018). In contrast, Şirin Tekeli's chronology extended from February 28, 1944, to June 13, 2017, aligning her with the span of time transitioning from the twentieth to the twenty-first centuries (Çakır, 2022: 1284). This temporal distinction underscores the divergent epochs these two figures traversed, encapsulating significant societal transformations¹, and literary landscapes. Despite the varying contextual considerations of their separate time periods, both Woolf and Tekeli grappled with the pervasive existence of gender inequality.

Woolf, a notable member of the *Bloomsbury Group*, not only crafted literary works with internal monologues but also made pivotal contributions to feminist discourse and gender equality discussions (Lanser, 1992). Encompassing debates on 'realist' versus 'modernist' literature, the existence of a distinct female literary tradition, feminist 'anger,' 'androgyny' in feminism, gendered perspectives, and intersections of feminism with socialism, pacifism, and patriarchy, Woolf's extensive corpus serves as a cornerstone for major feminist dialogues (Marcus 2000: 142-143). Of particular significance to this research is Woolf's assertion: "we think of our mothers if we are women," emphasizing the imperative for contemporary feminists to actively explore and engage with the literary works of earlier women writers (2019: 105).

Woolf's notable literary works encompass *Night and Day* (1919), *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), *Orlando* (1928), and *The Waves* (1931). Her *A Room of One's Own* (1929) holds a preeminent status as a pioneering exemplar of contemporary feminist literary criticism (Goldman, 2007: 67). In light of Woolf's extensive and diverse literary oeuvre, this scholarship focuses on her work in the field of feminist scholarship, especially *A Room of One's Own*. This deliberate choice stems from the acknowledgment of the pivotal role that this specific work has played in shaping and molding feminist dialogue, positioning it as a central focal point for this research endeavor. While Woolf's intellectual and literary contributions span a wide spectrum, *A Room of One's Own* stands as an essential piece in the feminist literary canon, providing a profound exploration of women's autonomy, creativity, and societal limitations, establishing itself as a cornerstone text for feminist analysis (Marcus, 1987).

Compared to Woolf, Şirin Tekeli demonstrated a significant engagement with the women's movement through her roles as an academic, writer, translator, and feminist activist. Tekeli contributed to the field by translating important works authored by notable social scientists into the Turkish vernacular (Çakır, 2009: 115). Her efforts in translation highlight her role in facilitating intellectual exchange and ensuring access to critical discourses across various domains.

Concurrently, Tekeli's consistent dedication to feminist principles becomes evident in her determined response to criticism. Her commitment is further exemplified through her doctoral thesis on women, a scholarly project she diligently pursued despite external scrutiny. This occurred during a period when feminism was in its infancy, making her successful completion of the doctoral thesis a tangible demonstration of her scholarly rigor. While she occasionally referred to herself as an "embarrassed feminist," Tekeli's contributions significantly resonated within the feminist movement, leaving a profound impact. This academic research will emphasize the significance of Tekeli's contributions to the institutionalization of feminism and the process of women establishing a distinct space for themselves, examining how she made these contributions at an institutional level in great detail within the field of feminism. This assertion is grounded in the substantial influence of Tekeli's contributions on the feminist movement, particularly during a time when feminism was gradually taking shape within the Turkish sociopolitical landscape. Tekeli emerged as a steadfast advocate for transformative change, leaving an enduring legacy that extended beyond academia. Academic research, translation efforts, and written works, along with the Women's Library and Information Center Foundation, serve as concrete evidence of igniting the aspirations of the new generation of young women and inspiring them (Dijital Topuklar, 28 September 2018).

¹ The Victorian period in England and Türkiye's modernization process have both been significant periods of change for these nations; however, they occurred under different situations and with distinct goals. England's Victorian Era was notable for its industrial growth and expansion of its empire, whereas Türkiye's modernization journey included crucial elements like Westernization, rebuilding after conflicts, and the adoption of secularism. Both eras witnessed substantial shifts in societal, economic, and political aspects.

In conclusion, the inherent significance of this study resides in its comprehensive and scholarly examination of both Woolf and Tekeli. This academic endeavor is firmly grounded in the elaborate interplay of factors previously elucidated. The thorough scrutiny bestowed upon these two figures is underpinned by the intricate confluence of considerations delineated, thereby heightening the scholarly gravity of their analysis. The sustained integration of Woolf and Tekeli within the expansive purview of women's studies extends across centuries, thereby underscoring the enduring value ascribed to their respective contributions.

3. UNVEILING GENDER DYNAMICS: SHIFTS IN THE TIME AND CULTURES OF WOOLF AND TEKELİ

Woolf's exploration of society intricately intertwines with patriarchal structures, reinforcing entrenched traditional norms. As Shihada notes, before the mid-19th century, prevailing societal beliefs portrayed women as mentally and physically weak. The dichotomy between private and public spheres relegated women to domestic roles, such as sewing and nursing, with their duties primarily confined to household chores and childcare. Marriage emerged as the sole accepted role for women, leaving them constrained by fear and shame, unable to rebel. In contrast, perceived as mentally and physically strong, granted the privilege of work and education, particularly in fields such as mathematics and sciences, where they played a pivotal role in shaping society (2005: 121).

In societies characterized by assigned gender roles, such as the Victorian era in which Woolf grew up, traditional norms were perpetuated across generations. Daughters inherited maternal wisdom, while sons inherited paternal instruction, leading to women becoming skilled in culinary arts and men honing rhetorical skills (Fernald, 2006: 3). Women who pursued education or engaged in the public sphere were often disapproved of and viewed as behaving inappropriately. Conversely, a pervasive acknowledgment of male predominance was evident, particularly within the sphere of advanced scientific pursuits (see DeWitt, 2013).

This portrayal sheds light on gender roles and societal norms prevailing until the mid-19th century. The conceptualization of inherent disparities between the biological sexes played a central role in precipitating the extensive divergence of gender roles during this historical juncture. However, this demarcation's consolidation was intricately intertwined with multifaceted factors such as prevailing social norms, deeply ingrained religious tenets, intricate moral frameworks, and the educational system.

The analyzed social framework can be clearly identified as the patriarchal societal structure. Coming of age in a culturally enriched and relatively emancipated milieu within an upper-middle-class family endowed with particular privileges, Woolf was nurtured under the influence of a father who, despite these privileges, burdened his daughter solely through the force of her character. This dynamic drew Virginia into closer proximity with feminism (Urgan, 1995: 13). Woolf highlights the conspicuous shortfall and, in some cases, outright absence of opposition towards patriarchal structures of dominance. She articulates this with a tone of fervent discontent:

At the thought of all those women working year after year and finding it hard to get two thousand pounds together, and as much as they could do to get thirty thousand pounds, we burst out in scorn at the reprehensible poverty of our sex. What had our mothers been doing then that they had no wealth to leave us? Powdering their noses? Looking in at shop windows? Flaunting in the sun at Monte Carlo? There were some photographs on the mantel-piece. Mary's mother—if that was her picture—may have been a wastrel in her spare time (she had thirteen children by a minister of the church), but if so her gay and dissipated life had left too few traces of its pleasures on her face. She was a homely body; an old lady in a plaid shawl which was fastened by a large cameo; and she sat in a basket-chair, encouraging a spaniel to look at the camera, with the amused, yet strained expression of one who is sure that the dog will move directly the bulb is pressed. Now if she had gone into business; had become a manufacturer of artificial silk or a magnate on the Stock Exchange; if she had left two or three hundred thousand pounds to Fernham, we could have been sitting at our ease tonight and the subject of our talk might have been archaeology, botany, anthropology, physics, the nature of the atom, mathematics, astronomy, relativity, geography. (Woolf, 2019: 29-30).

Woolf highlights the limitations imposed on women and explores the possibilities that could emerge if they were afforded greater opportunities. This perspective provides a crucial context as the discussion transitions to Tekeli's account. Within a unique contextual framework, distinct from the one elucidated by Woolf concerning the disparate privileges women confronted within the educational system, Tekeli procured a state scholarship in the autumn of 1961. This marked the commencement of her sojourn to Paris, a hub of cultural prominence, wherein she inaugurated her trajectory of advanced academic pursuit (Çakır, 2022: 1287). The underlying basis

for this privilege can be traced to Kemalist modernization. This modernization process emphasized women's integration into public life through significant reforms such as compulsory education for girls, expanded access to professional opportunities, and legal changes promoting gender equality (Navaro-Yaşın, 2000: 52). These reforms collectively shaped the opportunities available to women like Tekeli, including access to state scholarships and higher education.

However, the process of nation-state building played an exceptionally effective role in ensuring the continuity of gender roles. Sancar (2009) draws attention to the consensus on family structure within society, the desire for familial and social modernization, and the emergence of a modern male dominance archetype. In this context, women were directed to home-centered roles, were not represented in state administration, yet were primary figures in raising youth and symbolizing future generations. As a result, Kandiyoti (1987: 324) describes women as "emancipated but unliberated". In this manner, it shows that while the Kemalist modernization of women represents a departure from the Ottoman legacy, it also exhibits a continuity based on patriarchal foundations (Yüksel, 2006: 781).

Nurtured within the frameworks of Kemalist modernization and state feminism -defined as "the state-led promotion of women's equality in the public sphere", which monopolized women's activism and positioned "it as a tool of the state's modernizing project" (White, 2003: 155)- Tekeli embarks on a rigorous examination of the system from an external standpoint. As an academic, the most suitable milieu for conducting these analyses is within the university setting. Tekeli, however, also bore witness to the tumultuous periods of the 1960s and 1980s, marked by substantial sociopolitical upheaval and transformations. Following the 1980 coup d'état, the authoritarian government introduced the Council of Higher Education, which aimed at restricting academic freedom and the independent functioning of universities (Çınar and de Haan, 2018: 134). This juncture emerged as a pivotal moment within Tekeli's academic journey in Türkiye. In this context, Tekeli chose to resign because she could not find space for her independent thought (Çakır, 2009: 114). She aimed to approach the system from a different perspective by positioning herself outside the existing structure. This event constituted one of her first concrete steps against the existing structure. Afterwards, she continued her academic studies and actively participated in the women's movement as an activist.

In summation, Woolf's observations reveal a societal fabric woven with patriarchal threads, confining women to prescribed roles while men enjoyed dominance and shaping authority. This stark gender divide persisted through generations, with women's education and participation in public spheres encountering resistance. Meanwhile, Tekeli's pursuit of education, catalyzed by Kemalist reforms², signifies a distinctive chapter in her academic journey. However, the persistence of gender roles within nation-state constructs showcased both advancements and limitations. These experiences, from different contexts, mirror the enduring struggle against traditional norms, emphasizing women's agency and resilience in navigating evolving educational landscapes.

4. GENDER AND SPACE MATTERS?

Can a physical space carry a gender identity? Is it capable of nurturing gender awareness, presenting various gender viewpoints, preserving the history of women and gender, and serving as a repository for scholarly resources effectively? These inquiries hold divergent connotations. Indubitably, the response to both inquiries is in the affirmative; it is indeed feasible. In pursuit of this objective, it is prudent to address the first question by scrutinizing the interplay between physical space and gender dynamics within Woolf's seminal work, *A Room of One's Own*. Subsequently, the second question will be elucidated through a comprehensive analysis of Tekeli's influential contributions to the institutionalization of feminism in Türkiye.

4.1. Through Woolf

Virginia Woolf addresses the capacity of space to reflect and shape gender identity in her work. At the beginning, she introduces an ordinary library structure. However, as the narrative progresses, we see that this space has dimensions that go beyond architectural form and symbolize complex gender dynamics. Woolf embarks on an intellectual discovery by creating this structure. This architectural structure becomes an obstacle to women and is inadequate in the face of their cognitive, creative, and imaginative abilities. This structure is the Oxbridge Library and carries a meaning beyond its bricks and mortar. Woolf's depiction reveals an architectural

² Several key reforms were implemented, including the introduction of educational equality, which led to the establishment of compulsory education for girls and the promotion of women's access to higher education, facilitating their enrollment in universities and the pursuit of academic careers. Furthermore, access to the professional domain was expanded through the provision of opportunities for women to engage in public service and other professional fields. Additionally, the representation of women in public life was emphasized, with a strong focus on the significance of women's participation in social, cultural, and political spheres. (see White, 2003).

framework that functions as an obstacle for women; although it is a complex formation and presents a strong facade, it loses its impenetrability when faced with women's abilities to think, create, and imagine. The Oxbridge Library contains the essence of the obstacles women face and symbolizes these obstacles within the walls that define it.

Woolf initiates her discourse from this pivotal juncture, embarking upon a rigorous examination of the nuanced standing of women entrenched within her contemporary social fabric. She explores the societal context in which women are regarded as outsiders and are often placed on the margins. What sets *A Room of One's Own* apart within Woolf's body of work is its scrutiny of the origins and characteristics of women's marginalized status within a patriarchal society.

Woolf acknowledges the impacts of conventional gender subjugation on the female population. The character strategically introduced by Woolf to serve as a narrative vehicle adeptly encapsulates the temporal milieu, furnishing an incisive delineation of the multifaceted experiences embodied by Judith Shakespeare. As the narrative unfolds to recount the various phases of Judith's life, it adroitly captures the subtle nuances that underscore her yearning for foundational education, thwarted by the constricting grasp of prevailing gender norms. The formidable constraints arising from the interplay of familial and societal pressures, which serve to delimit the contours of permissible gender comportment, crystallize as insurmountable barriers curbing her pursuit of intellectual enlightenment. The textual rendition deftly interweaves the dominance vied for by Judith's parents, steeped in the dictates of patriarchal paradigms, their endeavors at asserting control, the specter of violence, and the looming specter of coerced matrimony. Her act of defiance, manifested through her escape from the familial confines, emerges as a potent expression of resistance against these constrictive circumstances, constituting a rebellion tempered by a rational reckoning of the persistent grip of patriarchy.

Woolf orchestrates this narrative exposition by strategically enmeshing the art of theater, a cultural construct inherently entangled with societal norms and values, into the fabric of the story. Despite her gender, Judith is denied access to female roles within the theatrical realm, positions historically reserved for male actors. Regrettably, her brief sojourn within the theatrical sphere is cut short, as she becomes subsumed by the dominance exerted by a male protagonist, thus falling prey to the very hegemony she sought to transcend. The trajectory of her theatrical endeavor aligns with the sanctified domain of motherhood, a thematic trajectory she embarks upon even while carrying the mantle of pregnancy, culminating in a tragic end through suicide. Underpinning these myriad experiences lies Judith's intrinsic womanhood, an elemental impetus that propels her journey and becomes emblematic of the circumscribed opportunities that impede her capacity to sustain her own existence, culminating in an untimely demise.

Woolf's work prompts a reevaluation of male-authored texts about authority and gender, while also initiating discussions about the inclusion of women writers in the literary canon and the unique characteristics of literary works by and about women (Goldman, 2007: 68). Woolf's discourse is encapsulated in her statement: "It would be a thousand pities if women wrote like men, or lived like men, or looked like men, for if two sexes are quite inadequate, considering the vastness and variety of the world, how should we manage with one only?" (2019: 121). The sentiment aimed at recognizing diversity in experience is captured in this statement, asserting that such recognition enhances understanding of the world. Implicit within this sentiment is the acknowledgment that both genders offer distinct perspectives and attributes to the global narrative, underscoring the potential diminution were women to forsake their inherent distinctions. As such, the narrative asserts that considering women's experiences from women's viewpoints necessarily disentangles the discourse from the confines of a singular, dominant perspective that assumes universal applicability of male-centered norms.

The gendered nature of educational inequality highlights the symbolic power of Woolf's conceptualization of the "room of one's own." This concept brings to light that this space represents much more than a physical room. In line with Goldman (2007: 71)'s analysis, Woolf's use of the room metaphor not only establishes a segregated and public socio-political and cultural domain tailored for women, but also serves as a symbolic representation of women's ingress into domains that have historically been reserved for men. Moreover, the concept holistically embodies the distinct essence of womanhood, encompassing elements such as individualized identity, intrinsic traits, dynamic agency, self-determination, unrestricted autonomy, and a vocal expression that is both public and intimate in nature. Due to this very rationale, it symbolizes a woman's identity, personality, agency, freedom, and her unique voice.

4.2. Through Tekeli

The imperative integration of women into the public domain and fortifying this integration through political enfranchisement becomes discernible within the annals of the women's movement. Time has provided experiential insights that underscore the significance of contextualizing rights within the broader societal landscape, revealing patriarchy's dominance sustained through timely adaptations. Tekeli's confrontations and her catalytic role within the women's movement exemplify this phenomenon, unveiling the dynamic interplay between challenges, contributions, and influence as she navigates the shifting contours of her era. Tekeli articulates the following declarations:

The sanctioned narrative proclaiming that "owing to Atatürk, Turkish women have outpaced their Western counterparts" ultimately contributes to the subjugation of women into a muted and inconspicuous majority. Nevertheless, women in Türkiye manifest as the ardent proponents of secularism and the republican framework. Throughout this protracted epoch, a select minority of women, possessing the advantage of higher education and professional opportunities, emerged as the conspicuous "exemplars" of Türkiye's progress. However, this narrative veils the broader reality wherein a substantial demographic of women, bereft of such privileges, remains relegated to the ranks of unpaid familial laborers, predominantly within the agricultural sector. The inability to rupture the tenacious grip of patriarchal traditions has resulted in the curtailment of their entitlements to property, education, income, and social security. The dire consequence is the profound disenfranchisement of women, emblematic of the most marginalized stratum within the societal construct. (Bianet, 17 June, 2017).

Feminist inquiries oriented towards comprehending and elucidating the evolutionary trajectory denoted as 'Turkish modernization' have undertaken the imperative task of responding to a pivotal query: "In what capacities and by what mechanisms did women participate in this transformative course?" The investigative endeavors undertaken to grasp the contours of women's societal experiences within the backdrop of an array of policies, institutional conventions, and political maneuvers, all underpinned by the ethos of 'preserving the state' and 'establishing the Republic,' have laid bare a compelling revelation. Contrary to assertions advanced by several scholars operating within this scholarly domain, this line of inquiry has unveiled the conspicuous absence of an inherent 'foundational intent' that was committed to espousing gender equality (Sancar 2009: 122). The recognition of women within the framework of traditional gender roles, coupled with the lack of a social reflection of equality with men, underscores the necessity of organized feminism (Tekeli, 1981).

Tekeli critically reflects on her privileges while observing that societal dynamics do not align with narratives of gender equality (Çakır 2009: 115). This trend can be linked to the politicization associated with the influence of male dominance within the political sphere. In Tekeli's context, the same political environment restricted freedoms of "thought and research" within the social sciences and established a rigid hierarchical structure akin to a military framework. The focus shifted towards promoting the official ideology rather than encouraging academic inquiry, reflecting efforts to depoliticize both students and educators (Çakır 2009: 114-5).

It was precisely within this evolutionary trajectory that Tekeli embarked upon a journey resonating with Woolf's assertion: "Lock up your libraries if you like, but there is no door, no lock, no bolt that you can put on the freedom of my mind" (2019: 105). In parallel to Woolf's sentiment, Tekeli undertook the endeavor of challenging the conventional and authoritative Kemalist narrative. This narrative underscored the early republican government's ostensibly progressive measures, including the bestowal of suffrage and civil liberties upon women, while conspicuously sidestepping the intrinsic agency and the resolute struggles that women themselves had waged during the late Ottoman and early republican epochs (Çınar and de Haan, 2018: 135).

Tekeli initiated a sequence of activities encompassing gatherings, deliberations, international and domestic conferences, advocacy campaigns, and engagement in a multitude of actions. These actions encompassed the 1985 petition campaign advocating for the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), as well as the vigorous campaign for the reformation of the Civil Code. Notable milestones also include the inaugural protest march against domestic violence in 1987, the Kariye festival, the 'Purple Needle' campaign, and a comprehensive critique of the pervasive influence of patriarchy (Çakır, 2009: 116). What initially might have seemed like self-serving grievances emanating from a marginal faction of women eventually coalesced into a substantive social movement. This movement transcended its origins, gaining traction and galvanizing the active participation of diverse cohorts such as young women, women from rural provinces, and Kurdish women.

Together, these narratives form an intricate tapestry that reveals the inextricable link between space, defiance, and gender. Woolf and Tekeli, separated by time and context, emerge as kindred spirits who illuminated the intricate ways in which societal constructs define, limit, and can be transcended. Their stories, woven together, echo a resounding affirmation that even in the face of adversity, spaces can be reshaped, norms can be subverted, and equality can be pursued. Their legacies resonate as a testament to the enduring power of individuals to challenge the established order, embarking on journeys that traverse the boundaries of time, culture, and circumstance.

5. FORGING FEMINIST LEGACIES: UNVEILING WOMEN'S VOICES AND HISTORIES THROUGH WOMEN'S LIBRARY

In her 1992 study, Tekeli conducts an in-depth analysis comparing the evolution of women's rights in Türkiye with similar processes in Europe. Tekeli notes that following the 1980 military coup, Turkish feminists, inspired by their peers in Great Britain, began to boldly question patriarchal structures. The study also addresses the contradiction between the historical perception of Turkish women as political leaders in Europe and their actual underrepresentation in Turkish politics. It highlights how strategies from Western European feminist movements have led to the establishment of women-focused organizations, campaigns, and institutions in Türkiye. These institutions include women's shelters, crisis centers, Women's Studies centers, and women's libraries. Tekeli emphasizes the importance of networking and information exchange among feminists, pointing out the transformative impact of international feminist solidarity on local feminist movements. In this context, the study details how Turkish feminist movements have adopted and developed these structures to provide concrete solutions to the challenges women face.

One of these structures, emblematic of the transformative power of feminist movements, is the Women's Library and Information Center Foundation in Istanbul. Standing as a distinct edifice, it marks a remarkable departure from the world of Virginia Woolf (2019)'s imaginative constructs. Within its walls, the specter of condescending figures and restrictive guardian angels finds no place. This library becomes a haven where the narrative evolves, and women's presence breaks free from the confines of outdated conventions. It beckons a departure from the shadows of the past, unfurling a fresh chapter where comfort transcends the entrance—becoming a symbol of empowerment and metamorphosis. Amidst these walls, an intricate dance between space, identity, and liberation unfolds, weaving a story that goes beyond the limits of architecture, embracing the boundless potential of the human spirit. This exemplifies the practical realization of feminist aspirations, and the vibrant locus of cultural and social transformation ignited by the feminist movements highlighted in Tekeli's study.

At the forefront of this transformative initiative are the individuals who played a central role in establishing The Women's Library and Information Centre Foundation, with Şirin Tekeli and her colleagues providing significant leadership. This institution stands as a testament to unyielding determination and a collective purpose, embodying the true essence of women's empowerment. The very core of its charter resonates with a dedication that goes beyond mere words, encapsulating the imperative to delve into history's records and trace the intricate journey of women across eras (Kadın Eserleri Kütüphanesi ve Bilgi Merkezi Vakfı, n.d.).

The Foundation's mission extends far beyond the boundaries of a traditional library; it stands as a guardian of suppressed narratives and silenced voices. Within its walls, history converges with the present, as the Center preserves the written legacies of today for the generations to come. Functioning as both an archive and a site of scholarly inquiry, the Foundation underscores the significance of historical continuity in advancing gender equity and fostering a more inclusive understanding of the past.

With persistent dedication, the Women's Library and Information Center Foundation contributes to progress, bridges generational gaps, and promotes strength, unity, and enlightenment. It serves as a valuable resource for researchers, scholars, and those seeking knowledge, providing access to transformative insights that transcend barriers and defy time limitations.

Functioning as a pioneering and exclusive institution in the Turkish context, the Women's Library and Information Center Foundation emerges as a prominent edifice within the institutional landscape. Its significance lies in its role as a central archive for an extensive array of materials and documents, encapsulating the historical trajectory of women in Türkiye from the Ottoman Empire to the present. This archival assemblage is curated, orchestrated through the aggregation of an array of textual, audio-visual, visual, and multidimensional artifacts/documents. This process is underpinned by a nuanced understanding of the perpetual threat that existing materials confront, either through degradation or potential obliteration.

Of paramount importance is the Foundation's deliberate emphasis on the procurement of resources that chronicle the everyday and intimate dimensions of women's lives, thus capturing facets that often elude traditional historical narratives. This endeavor encompasses an extensive spectrum of elements encompassing women's personal archives, familial correspondences, diaries, records pertaining to women's activist campaigns and organizational initiatives, creative expressions, autobiographies, biographies, cinematographic works, videos, posters, ephemera, as well as the preservation of oral history testimonies and their transcription.

The cumulative outcome of these extensive endeavors coalesces into an invaluable repository of knowledge concerning women, a collection that attains an unparalleled depth and breadth within its scope. The Foundation's compilation comprises 16 distinct collections, systematically delineated into categories encompassing Private Archives, Women's Organizations and Institutions, Ephemera, Newspaper Clippings, Posters, Visuals, Rare Texts, Oral History, Books, Periodicals, Theses, Articles, Artistic Creations, Women Authors, Women Artists, and Audio materials. Beyond merely affording access to these archives and documents, the Foundation assumes the onus of fostering a broader cultural and academic awareness by venturing into the curation of women-centric materials held within other institutional repositories. This ambitious initiative extends to the preparation of bibliographies and archive catalogs, amplifying the accessibility and comprehension of these women-centric documents within the wider scholarly and cultural milieu (Kadın Eserleri Kütüphanesi ve Bilgi Merkezi Vakfı n.d.).

When Woolf's ruminations are scrutinized within this analytical framework, it becomes conspicuously evident that her focus gravitates towards the nuanced contours of women's experiences, particularly those aspects that have often remained concealed from conventional historical narratives. In her seminal work *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf articulates a resounding call for a comprehensive comprehension of women's historical and intellectual trajectories. This clarion call, emblematic of her feminist outlook, underscores the lacuna in historical documentation concerning women and accentuates the imperative of situating their narratives within broader sociocultural contexts.

Similarly, Tekeli traverses a divergent temporal landscape yet converges with Woolf's motivations by spearheading an initiative imbued with a comparable purpose. The Women's Library and Information Center Foundation, an endeavor in which Tekeli plays an instrumental role in its inception, encapsulates a comprehensive range of women's lived experiences while simultaneously offering a platform for the previously unseen, unheard, and marginalized voices of women to resound. The initiative aims to protect women's historical contributions and experiences for future generations.

The resonances between Woolf's intellectual pursuits and the very essence of the Foundation's establishment echo a collective urge to fortify women's historical and intellectual presence, while concurrently constituting a significant stride towards amplifying the social and cultural visibility of women. Woolf's and Tekeli's endeavors intersect in their shared focus on exploring aspects of women's existence and perspectives. These efforts align with feminist scholarship that examines historical narratives and the role of women in history.

As a result, the Women's Library and Information Center Foundation serves as an institution that preserves women's voices and stories over time. In line with Virginia Woolf's call for understanding women's experiences, the institution bridges the gap between the past and the present and provides a cultural space that foregrounds women's perspectives. Similar to Woolf's challenge to the norms of the period, the Foundation undertakes the mission of preserving and promoting women's lives under the guidance of figures such as Şirin Tekeli. Woolf's advocacy and the purposeful efforts of the Foundation come together to emphasize the themes of resilience, unity, and transformation. In this way, the Women's Library and Information Center Foundation contributes to the goal of recognizing and honoring the role of women in shaping history.

CONCLUSION: COLLECTIVE RESONANCE

Analyzing the feminist paths of Virginia Woolf and Şirin Tekeli highlights the deep connections between culture, time, and gender dynamics. Though their perspectives were shaped by the cultural contexts they lived in, both figures chose to challenge, and transform those very constructs. This ongoing effort aligns closely with Simone de Beauvoir's famous idea that "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman," demonstrating how Woolf and Tekeli questioned what it meant to be a woman and the social norms that shaped womanhood.

This study has shown how Woolf and Tekeli examined their own societies, historical contexts, and cultural assumptions through a critical, but definitely feminist lens, turning those reflections into tangible contributions. By closely looking at their experiences and insights on gender within their unique social and historical settings,

this research supports Beauvoir's idea that gender is not an inherent thing but a social construct. Woolf's literary advocacy for women's creative independence and Tekeli's efforts to institutionalize feminist thought and historical background related within the feminist knowledge and movement(s) as well are powerful examples of pushing back against being defined as "the other" and of advocating for the unheard voices of women and invisible agency. Both Woolf and Tekeli shed light on how societal expectations and cultural norms shape women's lived experiences. Their works resonate beyond their own time and place, demonstrating that feminist thought has lasting value in both Western and Eastern contexts. The influence of Woolf's and Tekeli's work in today's discussions on gender equality shows how powerful feminist ideas can be across different societies and time periods.

Within the scope of their writings, activism, and determination, Woolf and Tekeli have left a crucial impact on the history of feminist thought. By embodying Beauvoir's theoretical views, they deepened our understanding of women's empowerment and encouraged future generations to question entrenched norms and imagine a more inclusive world. This research situates Woolf and Tekeli as role models within gender and women's studies, showing how theory and practice can work together. Their legacies remind all of the transformational power of feminist inquiry, and they serve as a beacon for those seeking to destroy gender stereotypes and create a more equitable future.

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