

LOCAL FEMINISMS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF FEMINIST LITERARY
THEORY AND PRACTICE IN THE 1970s IN BRITAIN, AMERICA, AND TURKEY

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ABSTRACT

LOCAL FEMINISMS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF FEMINIST LITERARY THEORY AND PRACTICE IN THE 1970s IN BRITAIN, AMERICA, AND TURKEY

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Feminism in literary theory and practice has a long and complicated history and the 1970s were critical to that history because it was in that period that feminist criticism showed itself as an influential force, particularly in Western literary works. The decade observed not only enthusiastic feminist protests against a socio-political background but also a ramification of feminism into different branches such as liberalism, Marxism, and psychoanalysis which, in a way, shaped today's understanding and discussion of feminism. When the dominating feminist agenda following this decade is analysed, it is recognized that many resources refer to 1970s' feminist literary theory and practice as a single, unified notion, ignoring local differences. While there is no doubting the commonality of the main issues underlying feminism, and in that respect it is a truly international movement, the focus of feminist concern and action changes with its socio-political contexts, and this is also reflected in differences between the discourse and practice of what we might call local or, perhaps, national feminisms. The aim of this dissertation is to explore the feminist literary theories and practices of different localities, namely those of Britain, America and Turkey, in the 1970s and to lay bare where they coincide and where they show individual features; perhaps even where they contradict each other. Within this frame, Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve*, Fay Weldon's *Praxis*, Joanna

Russ' *The Female Man*, Marilyn French's *The Women's Room*, Adalet Ağaoğlu's *Lying Down to Die* and Leylâ Erbil's *A Strange Woman*, and the key feminist literary theories and discussions produced in each culture will be studied in this dissertation.

Keywords: Feminism, Feminist Literary Theory, Comparative Literature, Feminist Fiction, Women's Writing

ÖZ

YEREL FEMİNİZM YAKLAŞIMLARI: 1970’li YILLARDA İNGİLTERE, AMERİKA VE TÜRKİYE’DEKİ FEMİNİST EDEBİ KURAM VE YAZINININ KARŞILAŞTIRMALI ANALİZİ

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Edebiyat kuramı ve yazını içerisinde feminizmin uzun ve karmaşık bir tarihi vardır ve bu bağlamda 1970’li yıllar çok önemli bir yere sahiptir çünkü feminist eleştiri kuramı bu dönemde özellikle de Batı edebiyatında belirgin bir şekilde kendini göstermiştir. Bu dönem sadece sosyo-politik alanda yapılan feminist protestolara değil aynı zamanda feminizmin liberalizm, Marksizm ve psikanaliz gibi alanlara kaymasına da sahne olmuştur ve bu durum günümüzdeki feminizm anlayışını ve tartışmasını şekillendirmiştir. 1970’li yılları takip eden dönemdeki feminist gündem incelendiğinde, birçok kaynağın 1970’li yıllardaki feminist edebiyat kuramı ve yazınına yerel farklılıkları göz ardı ederek tek, birleştirilmiş bir olgu olarak yaklaştıkları fark edilir. Feminizmin altında yatan konular evrensel olup ve bu bağlamda tamamen uluslararası bir harekettir. Fakat feminist düşünce ve hareketin odak noktası sosyo-politik ortama göre değişiklik göstermektedir ve bu olgu yerel belki de ulusal feminizm olarak adlandırabileceğimiz söylem ve uygulamalardaki farklılıklarla yansıtılmıştır. Bundan dolayı, bu tez 1970’li yıllardaki farklı yerel yaklaşımları; daha açık ifade etmek gerekirse İngiliz, Amerikan ve Türk kültürüne ait feminist edebiyat kuramı ve yazınına karşılaştırmayı ve bunların farklılıklarını ve benzerliklerini ortaya çıkarmayı hedefler. Bu bağlamda, bu tez Angela Carter’ın *Yeni Havva’nın Çilesi*, Fay Weldon’ın *Praxis*, Joanna Russ’ın *Dişi Adam*, Marilyn French’in

Kadınlara Mahsus, Adalet Ağaođlu'nun *Ölmeye Yatmak* ve Leyla Erbil'in *Tuhaf Bir Kadın* romanlarını ve bu üç kültürde oluşturulmuş olan temel feminist edebi kuramları ve tartışmaları inceler.

Anahtar kelimeler: Feminizm, Feminist Edebi Kuram, Karşılaştırmalı Edebiyat, Feminist Yazın, Kadın Yazını

To
my mother
and
all women who dreamed and fought for a better world

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“[A]s a woman I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman, my country is the whole world,” wrote Virginia Woolf in *Three Guineas* in 1938 (n. pag.); these words became a famous feminist slogan of the 1960s and 1970s, used to collect women under a shared identity crossing the boundaries of geographical locations and creating a transnational category of “woman.” Robin Morgan’s “sisterhood is global”¹ reflected the same desire to undermine the differences between women and to underpin the commonality of women from diverse backgrounds in order to incite a politically infused sexual consciousness so that women could eliminate their underprivileged and silenced positioning in culture. This actually had a conspicuous influence on feminist issues of the time, as it inspired the production of an extensive amount of studies in the era that found political and feminist agendas of the period to be nested within each other. The inspirational spirit of these statements somewhat lost its influence later, when it received negative responses by critics, theoreticians and writers, and especially when feminism turned into feminisms through interactions with postmodernism, poststructuralism and postcolonialism; “universalizing,” “essentialist” and “unsophisticated” are not infrequent terms attributed to the Western feminism of the earlier decade. Nevertheless, a close scrutiny of the ground-breaking works of the 1970s acknowledges a discernibly diverse body of theoretical works. That is, as Mary Eagleton also notes, the decade was “more complex and more nuanced than later accounts have suggested” (“Literary Representations of Women” 111). In this respect, the sense of plurality noted in the feminist debates of the following decades can be traced back to the 1970s when feminist literary theory thrived and

¹ The notion of “global sisterhood” became popular in the 1970s in anthologies such as *Sisterhood is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women’s Liberation Movement* edited by Morgan. She revitalized the discourse of female sorority in *Sisterhood Is Global: The International Women’s Movement Anthology* in 1984.

developed into the different branches that shaped today's understanding of feminism, both in theory and in literary practice. Therefore, this dissertation takes its inspiration from the 1970s and its trailblazing feminist discussions which contributed not only to the fight against women's subordination but also to the creation of resistance to oppression caused by any kind of hegemonic forces in society.

In 1971², referring to the awakening interest in women's writing and history, Adrienne Rich wrote that: "Re-vision—the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction—is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival" ("When We Dead Awaken" 18). Such a "critical direction" is also the main strategy and the ultimate aspiration driving this dissertation. Both admiring and finding them limiting, this study attempts to look back on those 1970s texts with fresh eyes, to delve into their outlooks and into existing discussions about them and, also, to bring forward new visions and ask new questions about them by comparatively studying British, American and Turkish feminist literary theories and practices of the period. Consequently, this study will also contribute to an envisioning of the feminist context of the 1970s with a reassessment not only of pioneering texts with mainstream tendencies and universal influences but also of formerly ignored and underrepresented standpoints and localities. As a matter of fact, this dissertation took its initiation from several questions which could only be answered after a comprehensive and comparative analysis of works from the three cultures: Was there a specific British, American or Turkish feminism? Was there, in fact, anything like a single, unified feminism that could be called a universal feminism? What are the dangers of categorizing all feminisms under a single unified feminism? What is the notion of local feminisms and was there any such concept available in the 1970s? How did the 1970s' feminism come to be associated with hegemony given its diversity of aims and concerns? What is the

² "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision" was written in 1971 for a conference and later published in 1972.

importance of raising awareness of local feminisms in literature? Were feminisms in the 1970s adequately localized or to what extent was the feminism of that period universalized? What is the importance of local feminisms for the notion of feminism in general? Within this context, the aim of this dissertation is to make a comparative analysis of British, American and Turkish feminist literary theories and practices in the 1970s. Therefore, this study treats the six novels chosen for examination, which are Carter's *The Passion of New Eve*, Weldon's *Praxis*, Russ' *The Female Man*, French's *The Women's Room*, Ađaođlu's *Lying Down to Die* and Erbil's *A Strange Woman*, as test cases in order to construct a wide understanding of the literary feminisms of the three different localities and to see whether they coincide with or contradict each other. To this purpose, Angela Carter and Fay Weldon from British literature, Joanna Russ and Marilyn French from American literature, and Adalet Ađaođlu and Leylâ Erbil from Turkish literature are chosen because of their active engagement in the socio-political and literary debates of the era. Moreover, these novelists wrote critical texts in relation to the concerns presented in their novels, which will contribute to the findings of this study.

This dissertation is organized in six chapters: the first chapter introduces the aims and the scope of the study and briefly explains the organization of the whole dissertation. Also, the rationale behind this study, the methodology I use while preparing this study and limitations of the study are mentioned here. Further, a theoretical background in which what critics say about 1970s' feminist concerns and feminist literary theory is provided. A point to be mentioned is that feminism in the Turkish context did not constitute a salient forum of national or international discussions in the 1970s. Thus, no 1970s Turkish feminist literary theory critique is included here since the period did not abound with the production of key texts nor is there any significant commentary about 1970s Turkish feminism from later (e.g. present-day) critics. However, by looking at commentaries on fictional texts, studies on the development of feminism in Turkey and other socio-political works, an overview of the feminism of Turkey in

the 1970s is integrated into this part, as well. Lastly, since this study will examine the works of six writers from three different localities, a brief introduction to them is provided in order to highlight the prominent places they occupy in their own cultures.

In Chapter Two, a critical assessment and comparison of British, American and Turkish feminist theories of the 1970s is provided; each locality's feminist literary theory is studied separately within this chapter, ending with a list of characteristics that the work of this chapter will have revealed. For British and American contexts, key theoretical writings of the period, that were influential in definitions of the second-wave feminism and understanding of feminism in the following decades, are included. The part focusing on Turkish feminist theory will include resources written both before and after the 1970s since there is no Turkish feminist literary theory published in the 1970s. That is, in this chapter, each locality's distinct feminist concerns and its various priorities as well as the shared and putatively universal (or at least, international) interests will be highlighted.

Based on the common engagements of the feminisms of these three localities, the following three chapters analyse the literature of the time and of these places to see the extent to which writers were using localized feminist ideas. In this way, Chapter Three looks at the female body and sexuality, Chapter Four investigates the politics of relationships, and Chapter Five turns to women's writing and feminist narrative strategies. In these chapters, first of all, the selected texts are scrutinized to show how these concerns are treated in them; even texts belonging to the same locality are analysed separately, in order not to undermine each writer's unique ways of exploring the issues. Then the main differences related to each locality obtained from these readings are explained in a section titled "Results". Chapter Six is the Conclusion, which briefly mentions the ideas given in the previous chapters and tries to draw a comparison between feminist literary theories and practices in 1970s in these three cultures. Also, further questions arising from this study are discussed here.

This dissertation treats the framework of second-wave feminism, particularly that of the 1970s, as a collection of views building up a general feminist outlook since they portray concerns common to all women; on the other hand, the novels selected for discussion show that the way these concerns are experienced is inevitably not universal. For this purpose, during the analysis of the novels, following a certain, single, theoretical background is avoided; instead, the theoretical frame is constructed during the textual analyses. The local cultural context of these texts and stated authorial intentions are referred to where relevant. Reconciliations and clashes between texts and the developing theoretical frame are remarked upon when necessary. In this respect, the study adopts an eclectic method of analysis rather than limiting itself to one particular theoretical frame. Various theoretical frames will be included in the textual analyses since the diversity of the books included inevitably requires a diversity of critical approaches. Although these novels are products of their times, they are not stable constructs as they anticipate future influences and theoretical discussions yet to be more clearly articulated in the following decades. Therefore, in different parts of the dissertation, theoretical perspectives not developed in the 1970s are used as powerful tools to provide insights into divergences between feminist contexts of the time. Nevertheless, an in-depth discussion of these later theories surpasses the scope of this study. Also, while some of the theories encountered in our analyses are used self-consciously and deliberately by the writers, some of them are not. Thus, it is impossible to indicate their full implications in the texts; instead they are only referred to in order to underline how the writers often go beyond the discussions of their era.

A Theoretical and Historical Overview of Feminism in the 1970s

Within the history of feminist criticism, feminist work of the 1970s—which corresponds to the latter half of second-wave feminism in the formulations of works such as those of Maggie Humm (*The Dictionary of Feminist Theory*) and Rebecca Walker—manifests itself as a source of inspiration and a contentious issue with various pitfalls and temptations. Though fraught with limitations and

the contradictory responses of the subsequent feminist approaches, the decade propagated a serious attention to feminist scholarship which also prompted further and more comprehensive undertakings within the upcoming waves of feminism. Therefore, this part of the Introduction provides a brief historical and theoretical overview of feminism in the 1970s to introduce the background against which this study is located. In particular, the importance of the decade for the following theoretical discussions, the context which paved the way for the emergence of an immense body of works, and the challenges it enticed and received are sketched out in the following pages.

To begin with, the point often accentuated for the decade is that other political and the feminist agendas of the period were nested within each other. Owing to the widespread interaction between feminism and other socio-political agendas of the time in Britain and America, the 1970s comes into sight as a decade of cross-fertilization of intriguing perspectives. Critics such as Helen Carr, Mary Eagleton, Karen Offen, Gill Plain and Susan Sellers mention how other political movements of the time paved the way for feminism's growing interest in how women's oppression existed or lay hidden in various modes of representation including the literary arena. As Carr points out, "[s]econd-wave feminism came . . . out of a period of social protests, and the women's movement was modeled on and aligned with other campaigning groups of the sixties" (121). Particularly political contexts (in the 60s) witnessing the Civil Rights Movements in America and anti-imperialist protests in Britain conducted to an increasing awareness of sexual oppression which led to feminist activism. Thus, protesting against the oppressions present in social life became an indispensable condition of the women's movement. As Zeitz also notes, the importance of feminism during the 1970s is closely linked to its being a "mass-based grassroots movement" which included, in America, widespread events such as the 1970 Women's Strike for Equality—"an event sponsored by the National Organization for Women and its 35 state chapters that saw over half a million women participate in a day of protest

and political advocacy” (677).³ The following quotation which Zeitz took from California’s *Daily Review* further shows how feminism then became an active political movement with protests calling for society to value women’s concerns beyond existing rights such as voting:

[Those participating in the strike are] confronting the paramount issues of women’s rights as they see them: Job and pay equality, day-care centers for children, so mothers may work, abortion reform, the image of women as presented in the media, admittance to ‘men's only’ restaurants and organizations, etc. (677)

Consequently, a tenacious querying of women’s positions in every aspect of life showed itself as a powerful part of feminist politics. The ensuing lines from Offen’s historical analysis of the definition of feminism also provide a brief glimpse of the political agenda of the 1970s feminist movement, which relates that feminist discussions went beyond arguing equality and difference:

By attacking gender roles, denying the significance of physiological difference, condemning existing familial institutions as hopelessly patriarchal, and contesting motherhood, individualist feminists [Anglo-American feminists] of the 1970s formulated claims for personal autonomy, choice, and self-realization for women (155)

By the same token, Tom Moylan refers to movements including civil rights, feminism, radical ecology, and racial and ethnic liberation as the “oppositional bloc” which constantly attacked patriarchal ideological institutions such as “post-industrial production” and capitalism (11). In this respect, it was the ardent political atmosphere of the decade that generated a concern in the political nature of private experience which is best illustrated through Carol Hanisch’s famous coinage: “the personal is political.” A change in the direction of feminism thus became apparent; that is, while the first-wave feminism was mainly concerned with women’s rights and liberal equality, the 1970s expanded its focus to include various issues from work-place equality to seemingly private domestic concerns such as equality in marriage and sexual liberation, and to “overtly political

³ Similar widespread events related to women’s movement appear in Turkey later in the 1980s (Sirman 1989; Karataş 2009; Tekeli 2010); information related to women’s organizations, their events and feminist protests in Turkey in the 1980s will be mentioned later in Chapter 2.

agendas like electing more women to public office” (Zeitiz 677). As in the Western context, in the 1970s social and political movements gained visibility in Turkey, as well. Particularly, employment of liberal economic strategies and more conservative cultural and political policies prepared the background where new social movements such as Marxism and ultra-nationalism entered the Turkish scene (Şimşek 112). Nevertheless, this oppositional views created a political distress resulting from the polarization of the rightist and leftist views and social unrest emerged out of it. As the social protests of these groups increased, a sense of chaos imbued the nation as it was also accompanied by acts of violence from both groups, which eventually brought with it the 1980 military coup. That is, while in Britain and America, dynamism and activism in other political spheres reinforced the feminist discourse, in Turkey it hindered the emergence of feminist organizations (Şimşek 2004; Tekeli 2010). However, as Bora explored, the rise of feminism of the 1980s can be traced back to those women (particularly those working as administrative staff) who participated in the democratic mass organizations and leftist movements (17). Also, Tekeli mentioned that in the political atmosphere of the 1970s where issues such as inequality and exploitation were frequently voiced, women inevitably became aware of their oppression as a sex class (“1980’ler Türkiye’sinde Kadınlar” 30).

Avidity in feminist political consciousness of the decade brought about a compelling enthusiasm towards literary studies which appeared as an enormously productive area where diverse and contradictory standpoints could be incorporated. Important to realize here is that the 1970s is considered as the key decade in the history of feminist criticism, as can be observed in the ramifications of these concerns which can be noted in Betty Friedan’s liberal feminism, Sheila Rowbotham’s Marxist-socialist feminism, Kate Millett’s radical feminism, Adrienne Rich’s lesbian feminism, Elaine Showalter’s gynocriticism and Juliet Mitchell’s psychoanalytic feminism. According to Humm, what characterized the decade is “the break with the fathers” that dates from early in the 1970s with critics such as Greer, Millett and Ellmann aiming to lay bare male writers’ sexist

attitudes towards women (“Into the Millennium” 47). This tendency to examine misogynist representations of women by all means was followed by an enthusiasm to centralize women’s writing since feminist critics foregrounded the previously ignored exclusion of many women’s writing from literary history; Eagleton describes this situation as “the desire to rediscover the lost work of women writers, while providing a context that would be supportive of contemporary women writers, and the wish to manifest ‘what it is to be female’, to declare the experience and perceptions that have been unheard” (“Finding a Female Tradition: Introduction” 1). Thus, a diligent effort to look for “herstory” and a female sub-culture that could evoke an unvoiced past became the prime purpose of the gynocriticism which dominated feminist criticism until the 1980s. Kolodny’s following lines recap the significance of the decade: “by attempting to delineate the connections and interrelations that make for a female literary tradition, they [“feminist re-readings of women writers”] provide us [*sic.*] invaluable aids for recognizing and understanding the unique literary traditions and sex-related contexts out of which women write” (13). Such views undoubtedly illustrate the praise the decade received in the following years and indicate its contribution to the evolving feminist agenda in literary studies. In Turkey in the 1970s, such gynocritical works did not emerge; however, as the number of women writers and the novels they wrote increased, concepts such as “woman writer” and “women’s writing” were frequently discussed in critical debates (Argunşah 2000). Especially, looking at what women writers themselves told, it can be deduced that a meticulous interest in women’s writing, the problems they came across within publishing process and their reception by the reading public appeared in the 1970s (Kür 1979; “70’ler Edebiyatında Kadın Yazarlar ve Füruzan” 2004; Karataş 2009). That is, in the 1970s, the gynocritic tendency to focus on women writers and female characters was observed in the Turkish context, as well.⁴ Gülten Akın—a famous Turkish poet—, in her 1977 essay, “No to “The Female Sensibility” and Yes to “Human Sensibility” (“Kadın Yaraticılığında, Kadınca Duyarlılığa Hayır, İnsanca Duyarlılığa Evet”) analysed

⁴ Influence of women writers in Turkey in the 1970s will be further mentioned in Chapter 2.

several women poets of the earlier decades and argued that as the state, with Kemalist reforms, worked to improve women's underprivileged status, women became more interested in writing.

Additionally, the establishment of feminist presses and publishing houses and women writers' acceptance of feminism were of undeniable significance to feminist criticism of the decade since they opened up a space for feminist discussions at a time when literary studies were still dominated by antagonistic attitudes towards women (Eagleton, "Literary Representations of Women" 108-15; Humm, "Into the Millennium" 47-48). For instance, The Feminist Press in New York and Virago in the UK had crucial roles in promoting women-centred publications (Eagleton, "Literary Representations of Women" 108). Likewise, the appearance of one of Showalter's reviews of literary criticism in the opening issue of *Signs* encouraged attempts to examine women's language (Humm 48). Furthermore, popular feminist magazines played an important role in "consciousness-raising" through which groups of women were able to share ideas about "the sexual politics of their lives with the aim of producing new knowledge and political strategies based on women's experience" (Eagleton, "Literary Representations of Women" 115). *Spare Rib*, the UK feminist magazine, and *Ms.*, its American counterpart brought together a variety of discourses around women in an effective way which "now seems quite startling," says Eagleton. *Spare Rib*, in its early issues, contained not only items common to women's magazines in this period like recipes and knitting patterns, but also political issues, articles on women writers like Jean Rhys, Ursula K. Le Guin, Buchi Emecheta, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Erica Jong, and short stories from Margaret Drabble, Fay Weldon and Edna O'Brien. *Ms.* in spring 1972 had an advert for mink coats and many adverts for cigarettes and alcohol; and alongside these were Cynthia Ozick's account of sexism in education and literature, and Sylvia Plath's poem 'Three Women'. Later, it covered "poetry from Alice Walker, June Jordan and Adrienne Rich, review essays on contemporary fiction, a regular poetry and fiction section, an excerpt from Doris Lessing's 1973 novel *The Summer Before*

the Dark, articles on Aphra Behn and Charlotte Perkins Gilman and extracts from Woolf's unpublished letters" (Eagleton, "Literary Representations of Women" 115). In Turkey, towards the end of the decade, it can be noted that *Kadınca*—a woman's magazine edited by Duygu Asena⁵—had similar purposes as those of *Spare Rib* and *Ms.* Beside recipes, tips for dressmaking, knitting and decoration, and magazine news, it addressed issues such as female sexuality, violence, sexual education and interviews with women novelists (such as Pınar Kür) and businesswomen.⁶

As these publications indicate, another point not to be overlooked is that women writers as well as women critics aligned with feminist discussions of the time, as a result of which literary studies turned into an influential space to scrutinize women's oppression. In this sense it is not incorrect to say that it was the 1970s that opened the way for what Humm calls a marriage of feminist criticism and feminist creative writing ("Into the Millennium" 49). Likewise, Greer's "Lib and Literature"—a 1971 review of Millett's *Sexual Politics*—anticipates the intimate connection between feminist discussions and tools of representation and how their corporation would contribute to women's liberation. Significantly, Greer's title indicates that during the 1970s "distinctions between the analytical and the creative, the political and the aesthetic were constantly blurred" (Eagleton, "Literary Representations of Women" 115). Thus, literature provided a forum for feminism's goal to change the consciousness of women in order to terminate the unjust treatment women received in the private and political realms.

⁵ Asena was the chief-editor of *Kadınca* between 1978 and 1992. Her 1987 novel *The Woman Has no Name* (*Kadının Adı Yok*), which became very popular in Turkey, contributed much to feminist debates in Turkey as it sharply criticised gender inequality and addressed marriage problems. Tekeli describes the novel as "the manifesto of Turkish feminism" ("Şirin Tekeliden Duygu İçin" n. pag.).

⁶ Such early efforts to create feminist consciousness were later strengthened in the 1980s, especially after 1984 when the press called Kadın Çevresi (Women's Circle) was established. *Somut* and *Feminist* were published by this press and contributed much to the development of feminism in Turkey.

With this in mind, the same awareness in activism and criticism was also reflected in an increase in the amount of feminist fiction that presented a feminist consciousness seeking to address female reading public. That is, not only women as writers but also women as readers were moved to the centre of these arguments. As feminist writers moved toward finding new ways to express women's experience, they aimed to generate a feminist reading community in order to get rid of patriarchal attitudes that invaded not only women's real-life experiences but also the way they were represented. Moi, referring to readers living in the 1970s, says that they needed "the representation of female-role models in literature" as they not only wanted to see their own experiences in literature but also sought to identify with "strong, impressive female characters" (47). That is, it was also a time which observed the appearance of a great number of literary works which particularly focused on women and encouraged protests against patriarchal oppression and stereotypically produced passive and inferior images of women. In point of fact, some of the recurrent concerns pervading the decade can be enumerated as "the politics of reproduction," "women's experience," and "sexual difference and sexuality" which were regarded as both "a form of oppression" and (when seen from a different perspective) "something to celebrate" (Selden et al 120). Also, certain dominant themes invaded the feminist writings of the period, such as "the omnipresence of patriarchy; the inadequacy for women of the existing political organization; and the celebration of women's difference as central to the cultural politics of liberation" (122). The list of frequent and shared subject matters will be extended through in-depth analysis of key texts of the decade in Chapter Two.

While the decade's contributions to the future of feminist criticism cannot be underrated, it does not escape certain limitations. To enumerate, it is attacked for its universalizing tendency and indifference to other identity markers such as race, religion and class which are sometimes given not even the slightest notice. It is claimed that women from different localities and with different concerns were

claimed to be discounted which eventually promoted a monolithic and totalizing view of woman (Eagleton, “Literary Representation of Women” 105).⁷ Moi also denounces such women-centred criticisms as being “simplistic” and “undiscriminating” (50). Besides, bell hooks remarks that since 1970s feminism was predominantly white and middle-class it either suppressed or misrepresented black women. Furthermore, Humm notes how the gynocritical mode of feminist criticism, that was based on sexual difference, marginalizes women’s writing in that “[its] description of difference seems implicitly binary and is caught up in the notion that women’s literature is in one category, the “Other” in relation to the masculine tradition” (“Into the Millennium” 48). In this respect, Eagleton’s analysis of the ambiguity and discontinuities related to the feminist criticism of the 1970s is significant and should be mentioned here. She relates that, for instance, Juliet Mitchell is critical of her contemporary feminists and their works (such as Greer’s *The Female Eunuch*, Millett’s *Sexual Politics* and Figs’ *Patriarchal Attitudes*); she regards them as “‘totalizing’ studies of the oppression of women” (“Literary Representation of Women” 112). More particularly, Mitchell is highly critical of Millett’s social realism and its inability to represent such issues as “desire, fantasy and the unconscious.” Nevertheless, Eagleton notes that another critic, Kaplan, illustrates a close resemblance between Millett and Mitchell since they both ignore “class and sexual division of labour.” Eagleton herself accepts that the position of gynocriticism is contradictory in the sense that while seeking a “commonality among women,” it was also “wary of imposing uniformity;” “it wanted to speak for all women yet invested in a particular raced and classed group, at a particular historical moment” (110-1). That is, the decade itself was full of various theoretical debates that are both in dialogue and in contradiction, which eventually called forth an immense body of feminist works.

⁷ Though not specially towards feminist literary criticism in the 1970s, Kandiyoti in “Emancipated but Unliberated?,” Lazreg in “Feminism and Difference” and Bora in *Feminizm Kendi Arasında* reflect on how universalizing tendencies of Western feminism are limited in attempting to represent women from other localities such as Turkey, Egypt and Algeria. In this respect, *Towards a Local Feminism (Yerli Bir Feminizme Doğru)*, which was published in 2001, drew attention to the influence of concepts such as diversity and difference and limitations of monolithic views of woman. It brought together academicians writing on what kind of problems women had in Turkey in different fields of life to reflect the importance of socio-political context.

Thinking that they prepared the ground for what Plain and Sellers define as “an initial revolt against the androcentrism that had dominated literary studies” (102), all these critics were brave enough to act against the grain of convention and their alleged flaws elicited a frame of multi-faceted discussions that has continued to be influential through to the present day.

A Brief Introduction to Selected Writers

Taking its inspiration from the 1970s’ distinctly pronounced focus on women writers, this study only includes women writers who produced fiction in the 1970s. Equally important is that all of them are culturally and theoretically aware writers who are in frequent contact with feminist debates, though this is not an all-embracing relationship free from contradictions. More precisely, Carter, Weldon, Russ and French explicitly align themselves with feminist debates while Ağaoğlu and Erbil have a more dubious attitude towards them. The following paragraphs offer a brief insight to our selected writers in order to provide a background for the dissertation’s comparative analysis and to make the reader familiar with writers of different localities. Rather than a biographical frame, what is provided here functions as a rationale for the selection of these writers in an attempt to create a cross-cultural communication between them while centring on their individual standpoints. Thus, an important point is that this study does not aspire to create an inflexibly uniform tradition of women’s writing but to explore their interactions with and through feminist and literary debates.

Carter is one of the writers who contributed much to the feminist discussions of her time through her subversive and playful style with colourings of magical, fantastical and gothic modes. In “Notes from the Front Line,” she declared: “I’m a feminist in everything and one cannot compartmentalize these things in one’s life” (37). Despite her dissemination of her positioning as a feminist, in the 1970s (and later) her writing frequently received polemical responses from both feminist and anti-feminist literary critics. For instance,

Bristow and Broughton accentuate Carter's marginalization due to her experiments with genre which signal her dissent from realist literary traditions (4). Her deployment of anti-realist magical and fantastic modes received antagonistic recognition from feminist directions which valued realistic representations that unambiguously pointed to the political and material causes of women's problems. Peach, to exemplify, detects "a discernible scepticism in feminist criticism toward Carter's monstrous, female 'figures of subversion and excess' that can be traced to the end of the 1990s" (7). Easton, in this respect, argues that although it is feminists who intensely read Carter's works, they were at the same time "her most uneasy and baffled" readers (3). With this in mind, Carter's reception of diverse reactions from the literary arena corresponds to her sceptical attitude towards all kinds of ideologies including the socialism and feminism to which she adhered. In this respect, although Carter is engaged with diverse narrative styles and political views, she is the captive of none. For example, she employs "anti-realist" techniques yet does not favour "naïve utopianism" (Bristow and Broughton 13). In this way, her involvement with the gothic, magic realism, and fairy tales and her constant playing with literary themes and modes can be best described with a line that came out of her own mouth: "I'm in the demythologizing business. I am interested in myths . . . just because they *are* extraordinary lies designed to make people unfree" ("Notes from the Front Line" 38). That is, Carter raises a scrutiny against "social fictions" that are taken for granted and regulate people's lives in a way to restrict their freedom.

Like Carter, Weldon is also considered one of those prolific British women writers whose works are instilled with political and feminist insights (Krouse 6; Ellis 349). Her engagement with women's liberation and her scrutiny of patriarchy are exposed through a use of wit and humour which Barreca justly describes as "Weldonesque" ("Introduction" 3). Weldon describes her direct communication with feminism in the 1970s in a passage which provides an insight into the diversification of the feminism in the decade, as well:

we must change not ourselves but the world! It was not we who were at fault, with our mopes and sulks and hysteria and murderous premenstrual rages, it was the world. The world was male. It was only natural, living as we did in a patriarchal society, that we would behave in such a way. So we stopped placating (that is to say smiling) and set out, scowling, to change the world. We worked upon that, not upon ourselves. We became radical separatist, lesbian feminists, or subsections of such, and weren't really nice at all. We stamped hard on male toes, and we liked each other but it was a rare man who liked us. And if he did we despised him for his softness—I remember the fate of the New Man who looked after the crèche while the women had their meetings—how he would be spurned by the booted foot of passing feminists. (“The Changing Face of Fiction” 193-94)

A bitter criticism towards male culture underlies her use of sarcasm, which is not limited to patriarchal ideology since she is not uncritical of feminism and women themselves, as well. For Weldon, female culture is equally responsible for the unchanging situation of women's oppression; therefore, women should learn to closely evaluate themselves and their feminist strategies as much as they try to change the world and men. For her, it is necessary for women “to distinguish between rightful anger and paranoia and so forth” (195). As Reisman also argues, Weldon's relationship with feminism is both an “enduring” and a “discontented” one, abounding with conflicts (646). For Weldon, no ideology is sacred and idealized and hence feminism (as well as any other standpoints such as psychoanalysis and Marxism) is flawed and open to criticism.

Joanna Russ is one of the important American writers who was intensely engaged with the feminist discourses and activism that had developed since the 1960s. Her active engagement in feminist politics actually reifies itself in the abundant material—in creative and non-fictional works—she produced in the 1970s. Her relentless critique of patriarchal culture and the tools of oppression is best illustrated through her concern with speculative modes, mainly fantasy and science fiction, which is also a source of appreciation for critics such as Samuel Delany, Sarah Lefanu, Lisa Yaszek and Tatiana Teslenko. Importantly, Jeanne Cortiel asserts that Russ, Monique Wittig, Marge Piercy and Ursula Le Guin are

involved in the recasting of the science fiction genre so that it changed from “a bastion of masculinism to one of the richest spaces for feminist utopian thinking and cultural criticism” (1). Thus, with several important critical works such as “The Wearing Out of Genre Materials,” “What Can a Heroine Do? Or, Why Women Can’t Write” and “Towards an Aesthetic of Science Fiction,” Russ notably subsidized the development of feminist science fiction with which she astutely reshaped conventions of genre to challenge misogynist attitudes. In this respect, Lefanu and Mendlesohn are entirely right to underscore her significance in the science fiction field not only as a writer but also an academic and a feminist.

Marilyn French marked her concern with feminist discussions with *The Women’s Room*, soon after which she was amongst the most popular of women writers in the United States. She promptly became a best-seller author as the novel sold 20 million copies and was translated into 20 languages (Sulzberger and Mitgang n. pag.). Susanna Radstone attributes this popularity to her writing in the context of the 1970s when there was a keen demand for “women’s novels” whose plots pivoted on the changes a female protagonist goes through, which foregrounded the importance of female reading public (“Women and the Confessional Mode” 1). In this respect, French was quite conscious of her use of literary conventions to actualize her feminist goals which revolved around revealing women’s subjugation in a patriarchal world. After this work she continued to write women-centred novels, actively engaging in feminist politics and creating commentary on these issues in non-fictional works such as *Beyond Power: On Women, Man and Morals* and *From Eve to Dawn: A History of Women in the World*. She persistently claimed that her goal was “to change the entire social and economic structure of Western civilisation, to make it a feminist world” (Sulzberger and Mitgang n. pag.). Despite her informed and enthusiastic commitment to feminism, her reception was not free of antagonistic responses which were mainly due to her works being categorized as popular woman-centred novels. For instance, Rosalind Coward dismisses *The Women’s Room’s* feminist

implications, claiming that its popularity threatens the influence of subversive nature of feminist ideas (223). Also, French was accused of being a man-hater, upon which she boldly responded that: “They said I was a man hater, and I never defended myself against that, because I do believe that men are to blame for the condition of women” (Krum n. pag.). That is, although replete with controversial reactions, French conspicuously hailed herself as a feminist women writer.

Ağaoğlu is a distinguished writer who garnered attention due to her essays, novels, short stories and drama which are frequently embedded in her profound interest in the socio-political context of Turkey. Particularly, her interest in gender prejudice and her employment of memorable female protagonists promote her name as one to be included in feminist debates. Yet in her interviews Ağaoğlu frequently rejects to be categorization as a feminist and (especially) a woman writer, since she finds these terms or labels redundant. Instead, she reveals that she writes “for the sake of the human” in order “to understand and describe the human” (“Writing to Unite People” n. pag.). For her, analysis of both sexes is more important than focusing on only women:

We have to understand men as well as women. We see mostly a one-sided view for the sake of defending women’s rights: the woman is mostly portrayed as the good one, good mother, good wife, while the man is evil. But this is not about being good or bad. Two sexes live together in a society and there are conditions that shape them, making a person what he or she is. We have to understand these conditions to understand why they are the way they are. If a woman is repressed, why is that? (“Writing to Unite People” n. pag.)

Though she accepts that “women authors,” are different from men in issues such as experiences and menstrual pain, her writing does not promote such differences; rather she accents the use of writing to unite people. She argues that she is dissatisfied with feminist politics mainly because they do not give enough attention to men’s problems and patriarchal institutions while they advocate and pivot femaleness; instead she believes in the direct struggle and interaction with men in order to alter them. In this respect, while she dismisses affinities with

feminist theories, she foregrounds her engagement with politics in defending women's rights ("Feminizm/Feministler" 66). She accepts that she is a "potential feminist" which, as she emphasizes, is not related to her being a woman and a woman writer but is deeply embedded in her belief in the fight against any oppression subjugating women.

Like Ağaoğlu, Erbil is also considered one of the most eminent women writers of Turkey whose essays, short stories and novels contributed much to Turkish literary studies. She was in 2002 the first women nominee for the Nobel Prize in Literature for "her mastery in Turkish language and literature, her unique world that she creates in her works through her creative language and the universality of this world, her contribution to arts and also her sensitive intellectual manners for ordinary people, life and world" ("Leyla Erbil" n. pag.) Moreover, an interest in Freudian theories, Marxism and feminism can be traced in her literary works where she constantly plays with conventions. Her works have gained particular attention in feminist studies since they foreground female experience against the background of a socio-political and cultural context. Actually, Akatlı argues that in Erbil's literary life, a sense of challenge towards language structures, rigid cultural norms and political attitudes and stereotyped perspectives is frequently observed (253-54). Also, unlike Ağaoğlu, Erbil is more sympathetic to feminism which she described as "women's point of view;" explaining that "feminism was among my themes even before it became a trend in Turkey, only with plain observations since I realized the masculine bigotry, the hatred in gender discrimination⁸" ("Leyla Erbil Röportajı" n. pag.). Thus, through her literary works that focus on women characters, she foresaw the upcoming feminist debates in Turkey.

⁸ All translations are mine.

CHAPTER 2

FEMINIST LITERARY THEORIES IN BRITAIN, AMERICA AND TURKEY IN THE 1970s

The discussions in following pages will focus on two areas in feminist critical writings of the 1970s: mentions of anything specific to each culture and the common points argued in these critical writings. Also, a brief discussion of the similarities and differences between these cultures will be included so that they can later give insights to a meaningful comparison between the feminism(s) performed in different cultures. Actually, in the texts considered in this chapter there are very few references overtly analysing or referring to specifically British, American and Turkish feminisms. However, there are many common points obtained from these sources which for the time being can only provisionally be grouped under specific local feminisms. Labelling them under such a category may be possible only after other critical writings written in the cultures under investigation are analysed. It is important not to overlook the fact that this study does not try to generate a fixed definition of feminism in each locality (since even in each locality there was also diversity), rather, it aspires to lay bare what is distinctive about each culture and what kind of national differences can be detected in the feminist scholarship developed in each culture. It should also be highlighted that this part includes only some of the key texts since there have been many important works within feminist movements in each culture and including all of them here is not possible; therefore it will be limited to several pioneering works and more will be integrated into later chapters.

2.1. British Feminist Literary Theory in the 1970s

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the 1970s observed the emergence of many founding texts of the second-wave of feminism and some of these texts published in Britain are Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* (1970), Eva Figs'

Patriarchal Attitudes: Women in Society (1970), Sheila Rowbotham's *Women's Consciousness, Man's World* (1973), Juliet Mitchell's *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (1974), and Angela Carter's *The Sadeian Woman: An Exercise in Cultural History* (1979). These texts had discernible impacts on the women's movement and feminist thought in Britain. Nevertheless, their discussions surpassed national boundaries and, in fact, use of words such as British, Britishness or specific data on British feminism in these works was very limited. The data cannot be named as part of conspicuously British feminist claims; nevertheless, they provide descriptive materials and reflections related to women's lives in Britain in the 1970s. The introduction of the Equal Pay Act in 1970 was, for example, one of the developments within the British women's movement and accordingly how political organizations were active in demanding equality in every aspect of life was one of the common local concerns often referred to in Greer, Rowbotham, Figs and Mitchell. They supported equal job and educational opportunities, and helped to voice demands for free contraception and abortion and concerns over women's work at home and outside it. For example, in *The Female Eunuch* Greer talks about British women's jobs and how much they earn and how they spend this money, mostly drawing attention to the issue of unequal pay for women's labour. She quotes documents and gives statistics obtained from data in this area; to illustrate, she shows that sixteen million British women were housewives who were not paid for their domestic work at all (136). Most of the professional women did not continue to work after marriage, she noted, commenting that: "most of the working wives of Britain would sneer at their assumption that home help is necessary to their continued contribution to their profession, although obviously a teacher or a doctor cannot afford the inefficiency that fatigue would entail" (139). She shows that, in fact, working conditions both at home and outside held disadvantages for women.

Likewise, Rowbotham in *Women's Consciousness* is also concerned about unequal payment and the treatment women receive at home and work. Within this analysis, she highlights her Marxist stance as she examines women's situation in

relation with race, class and capitalist society and thus incorporates Marxism's goals with those of feminism. She anticipates that if the legislation for equal pay is put in place, the outcome would not be fulfilling since it would not be reflected in real life. She briefly mentions the likely outcomes of the equal pay legislation that was scheduled to take effect in 1975:

In Britain equal pay is scheduled for 1975. The original impetus behind the bill was the militancy of women on the shop floor. The Labour Government tried to forestall pressure from women building up in industry in order to satisfy equal pay demands in legislation. However, the terms on which equal pay will be granted- if at all- are vague. Certain experiences from other countries, the custom of simply defining jobs differently, the fact that so many women's jobs are not comparable to men's, the exclusion of women from jobs after they've got equal pay, indicates that equal pay is far from being a panacea. (Rowbotham 98)

For Rowbotham, what is to be altered is women's consciousness since "many aspects of female consciousness will continue to reflect the features inherent in female production in the family" (100). Figes' 1977 introduction to *Patriarchal Attitudes* is relevant here, as well. She discusses that the 1975 Labour Government's Sex Discrimination Act, which concerned discrimination related to employment, education and legislation. As Rowbotham foresaw, in real life sex discrimination was not eradicated, which Figes illustrates as such: "In 1970 women's earnings as a proportion of men's earnings were 54.8 per cent, and by 1976 the gap had narrowed by less than ten per cent to only 64.3 percent" (9). Also, progress in solving problems related to child-care, single parenting, abortion and job opportunities was really slow. For Figes, the real change took place in "awareness and social attitude" (8). The movement was no longer a middle-class educated women's movement but one that reached to working class women. Mitchell also draws attention to the change of women's consciousness and suggests that in understanding the oppression of women new interest in women's psychology should be brought about. Pointing to the popularization of "[t]he political reconstruction of the family in post-war," she argues that British psychoanalysis ignored the 1930s' concerns over feminine psychology. Instead, it

currently focused on “the primary mother-child relationship” (231). In this context, common points discussed in these texts that focus, overtly or not, on British feminism are the family unit, the exploration of female sexuality, and an alternative to current patriarchal oppression. The relation between these topics was really close and most of the time they were intermingled.

To begin with, these texts, agreed that in a nuclear family, women are in a disadvantaged position and their discussions of the family were mostly accompanied by considerations of such topics as division of labour, demand for pay and the oppressive nature of the family unit. That is, though with different focal points, they were all guided by a concern over women’s material problems and how they conduce to a silencing of women. Greer’s criticism towards the nuclear family, to illustrate, is mostly a radical one as she sees that it is a microcosm of patriarchal society that reinforces male power and women’s inferior status. In a section entitled “Family,” she attacks this hierarchy and how it has been internalized by whole society with the following statement: “Mother duck, father duck and all the little baby ducks. The family, ruled over and provided for by the father, suckled and nurtured by mother seems to us inherent in the natural order” (246). Mythology and religion empowered this order and thus the patrilineal family became a space where women left “the right of paternity” to men (247). Greer also gives a brief outline of the development of the contemporary nuclear family where domestic values are idealized for a woman; henceforth, “while her house is ideally a base which her tired warrior-hunter can withdraw to and express his worst manners, his least amusing conversation, while he licks his wounds and is prepared by laundry and toilet and lunch-box for another sortie” (261). Marriage is set on “this filial relationship of a wife who takes her husband’s name, has her tax declared on his return, lives in a house owned by him and goes about in public as his companion wearing his ring on her finger at all times” (262). Greer claims that although some of these details may change, such as the man wearing a ring or the couple having a joint bank account, there has been no real change in the power structure within families. Thereupon,

she suggests that the structure of the family should be radically changed so that the authority of patriarchy is abolished.

Like Greer, Figs also draws attention to the oppression of women in a capitalist society and the role of family structure within it, and her stance is also a radical one that sees the abolition of marriage as a must for a revolution. She claims that “[o]ld ideas and attitudes die hard, they are perpetuated through the very structure of family life, and one of the main hindrances to a really fundamental change of attitude is the institution of marriage itself” (175). She notes that the source of oppression is not nature but nurture and social environment and the social expectations that shape one’s concept of femininity and masculinity:

Our feelings on the love between men and women, on marriage and parenthood, on the family and on ourselves as fathers, wives and mothers, are largely conditioned by the society which produced us, more so than we realize. The types of women that our society has produced in the past, the roles they have played or failed to play, sprang from the dictates and expectations of men. (15)

What she stresses is that womanhood is a “man-made” thing, its concepts and values having been shaped by men. She also adds that the power man holds increases as the property he holds increases. In this sense, “[t]he rise of capitalism” is the main reason for “the modern social and economic discrimination against women” (67):

It was in the prosperous middle classes that the problems of the dependent women were felt most accurately in the nineteenth century, and it was this *bourgeoisie* that developed with capitalism in the seventeenth century. In the working class, meanwhile, women became the cheapest form of labour.

Along with this came the problem of unequal pay; that is, women’s work was undervalued and abused. On the other hand, the capitalist’s wife became “a domesticated and idle plaything” who was to reflect her husband’s social status with “fine clothes and jewels” (73). Within this context, marriage became a “civil

contract, which, for those who had it, protected private property and inheritance” (75). Furthermore, wives with enough leisure time became the main consumers in a capitalist society; women were preoccupied with the purchase of goods for the domestic space:

If an economy is booming enough for a significant number of families to afford these things at all, it is necessary for the woman of the household to have a good deal of leisure, not just to have the time to go out and choose all these articles, but to want them in the first place. There is nothing like boredom to make one want to buy things, as anyone with an hour to spare in the centre of town must know, and nothing like being at home all day for making one notice that the curtains look drab and the carpet is fraying. (89)

Capitalism, especially as it was reflected in magazine advertisements for goods needed at home, enhanced the “image of the domesticated woman” (89). Figs thus argues that economic independence is essential for a feminist revolution and this is possible only through a social change that will erase previously learnt patriarchal attitudes.

Rowbotham also attacks the traditional family unit and her analysis is mainly a Marxist one, seeing the operations of patriarchy and capitalism in the oppression of women. She maintains that in contemporary capitalist society there is a tendency to idealize family, motherhood and feminine culture as safe retreats from the difficulties of a male world. This, she claims, creates a utopianism that distorts the reality and reproduces the capitalist system and women’s inferior positioning in it; therefore, she says “[w]e have to make ourselves not as a projected abstract ideal, but out of the shapes of here and now” (xii). She accentuates that, for a woman, domestic space and the outer world are not independent because women belong to both “the world of commodity production, and production and reproduction in the home” (xv):

In their own lives the two coexist painfully. Traditionally, the interior, private world of the home is feminine and thus the integration of women into the public world of work and industry is only partial. The contradiction which appears clearly in capitalism between family and

industry, private and public, personal and impersonal, is the fissure in women's consciousness through which revolt erupts.

Thus, for Rowbotham, the family unit not only maintains capitalist ideology but reproduces it through reinforcing the sexual division of labour:

Men and women are brought up for a different position in the labour force: the man for the world of work, the woman for the family. This difference in the sexual division of labour in society means that the relationship of men as a group to production is different from that of women. For a man the social relations and values of commodity production predominate and home is a retreat into intimacy. For the woman the public world of work belongs to and is owned by men. She is dependent on what the man earns but is responsible for the private sphere, the family. In the family she does a different kind of work from the man. . . . the woman's production is for immediate use. (61)

These differences actually shape "the consciousness of men and women" that maintain the idea that women as the ones responsible for the private realm of family are dependent on men who earn money at work. If a woman works outside home, the home remains her major concern and her work is doubled, which eventually made woman cheap labourers:

It is apparent that the expansion in women's opportunities at work has not been a matter of linear progress but has come with changes in the structure of capitalist production. As new types of work have developed women have been employed where they were useful to employers. The fact that women in our society still have to keep the family going and are brought up to see themselves as sexual attachments to men, or as wives and mothers, has proved profitable to employers in certain trades. It has also given them an excuse to keep women amongst the unskilled and low-paid workers. (93-94)

Therefore, Rowbotham notes, for a revolution creating a socialist feminist consciousness, it is seminal to overthrow capitalism and patriarchal thinking, which will be possible through alteration of not only material conditions but also cultural structures such as language.

Like Rowbotham, Mitchell (who is famous for her blend of Marxism and Freudian psychology) also correlates material oppression with psychological inferiority and thinks that women's oppression is rooted within psychic structures. She takes the family as an institution where children are socialized into gender roles and thus it is of great significance for feminist discussions. Remarkably, her *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* reassesses the Freudian psychology which had been rejected by most of the feminists of the time. According to Mitchell, Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex is a description of how male dominance becomes institutionalized; it thus maintains the continuation of the family structure and the different positioning of men and woman in this structure. In this book, Mitchell discusses the workings of family ideology, referring to kinship structures through her readings of Levi-Strauss, and she focuses on patriarchy seen as a kinship system where women are exchanged to prevent the incest taboo (370). Regardless of patriarchy or matriarchy, it was always men who exchange women. Thus, "the legally controlled exchange of women" is specific to mankind and "the systematic exchange of women is definitional of human society" (372). As she relates, this exogamy is the thing that changes "'natural' families into a cultural kinship system." Accordingly, this system has created the symbolic power which fathers hold. Thus, she explains, the Oedipus complex, which is "[a] man's entry into culture itself," represents "the original incest taboo, the role of the father, the exchange of women and the consequent difference between the sexes" (378). The nuclear family is the place where the child assumes the codes of patriarchy and acquires the basic assumptions about femininity and masculinity; thus it is the place where women's "inferiorized psychology" and "contentment[s] with serving and servicing men and children" are produced (299). Mitchell therefore, concludes her arguments with a Marx-Freud synthesis: "When the potentialities of the complexities of capitalism -both economic and ideological- are released by its overthrow, new structures will gradually come to be represented in the Unconscious. It is the task of feminism to insist on their birth" (415).

Carter's *The Sadeian Woman*, which pivots on the social construction of sexuality, also explores the status of women in contemporary society with reference to the economic dependence of women on men. For Carter, this economic dependency is "a believed fiction and is assumed to imply an emotional dependence that is taken for granted as a condition inherent in the natural order of things and so used to console working women for their low wages" (7). Therefore, the idea of sexual intercourse in marriage as a sacred union between partners is only an illusion because sexual intercourse, like all social behaviour, is a reflection of the forces operating in the outside world:

If one sexual partner is economically dependent on the other, then the question of sexual coercion, of contractual obligation, raises its ugly head in the very abode of love and inevitably colours the nature of the sexual expression of affection. The marriage bed is a particularly delusive refuge from the world because all wives of necessity fuck by contract. (10)

Carter, then, draws on images of women in pornography since they confuse "the historical fact of the dependence of women upon men" (7). Elsewhere in this text she explores how concepts of reproductivity and sexuality are dissociated within pornography, which she relates to Sade's "misanthropy" which actually "bred a hatred of the mothering function that led him to demystify the most sanctified aspects of women and if he invented women who suffered, he also invented women who caused suffering" (41). Accordingly, Carter centres *The Sadeian Woman* around young female heroines who are actively and freely engaged in their sexual acts. Thus, she argues, the concept of motherhood which has been privileged through the centuries is destroyed and female sexuality is treated outside the borders of family structure in the writings of Sade.⁹

⁹ American critic Andrea Dworkin criticizes Carter and calls *The Sadeian Woman* a "pseudofeminist literary essay" (*Pornography: Men Possessing Women* 84). She argues that the use of money "licences any crime against women" (85). Calling Sade "a sexual terrorist, a sexual tyrant," she says that in Sade's work "the authentic equation is revealed: the power of the pornographer is the power of the rapist/batterer is the power of the man" (100). These oppositional views are observed in the analyses of the British and American novels, which will be mentioned in the following chapters.

Markedly seen in these discussions, the exploration of female sexuality was also notable in these texts. Greer's main argument in *The Female Eunuch*, for instance, is that patriarchy and its institutions, mainly through the nuclear capitalist family, repress women's sexuality and effectively make them eunuchs. Here, both the body and its reassessment by women are of great significance as they can show that things could be different. She discusses how "the female is considered as a sexual object for the use and appreciation of other sexual beings, men" and how female sexuality "is both denied and misrepresented by being identified as passivity" (17). Thus, she says, a woman has to come see how things could be "otherwise" and she should react against stereotypification. For example, Greer says, women should reject the idea of a femininity without libido that is the imposed idea of a "female eunuch." According to Greer, psychological theory reinforces the patriarchal status quo in that Freud represents women as lacking "a sexual organ," and she proposes that: "In order to understand how a female is castrated and becomes feminine we must consider the pressures to which she is subjected from the cradle" (79). She warns women, saying that "psychiatry is an extraordinary confidence trick" because it persuades women that they are the cause of their problems (103). She notes that "Freud is the father of psychoanalysis" and he spread the view that woman is a castrated man and she can compensate for this lack only through a male child (104). Thus, he reinforced the passivity of women which eventually contributed to women's dissociation from their sexual instincts and pleasure. Sentences in the following lines show how women's sexuality came to be rejected, even within feminist movements:

It is often falsely assumed, even by feminists, that sexuality is the enemy of the female who really wants to develop these aspects of her personality [terms such as resource, application, initiative, ambition, desire and motive that "have a masculine ring"], and this is perhaps the most misleading aspect of movements like the National Organization of Women. It was not the insistence upon her sex that weakened the American woman student's desire to make something of her education, but the insistence upon a *passive sexual role*. (76-77)

Greer further refers to frigidity as a phenomenon resulting from sexual intercourse without pleasure and joy. Sex, she says, is now a “sorry business, a mechanical release involving neither discovery nor triumph, stressing human isolation more dishearteningly than ever before” (50). Thus, according to Greer, the desexualisation of women is a social phenomenon and widely accepted in a capitalist patriarchal culture.

Rowbotham, like Greer, also analyses how women have become dissociated from their bodies and how they associate female sexuality with passivity. Women, throughout the history, have acquired the stereotype of “suffering womanhood” which is also encouraged by male stereotypes (42). Accordingly, the outcome is woman’s masochism in sexuality where she enjoys being made to submit to a man and she calls for the recognition of this masochism. Rowbotham’s Marxist stance is again noticed as she further comments that capitalism added to the degradation of sexual pleasure:

Love and orgasmic explosion have no proper place in a society in which the end of life is the production of goods, in which work discipline as a thing in itself becomes the guardian of morality. Consequently sexual sensation is packaged, and delivered confined and synthesized in prevailing notions of sexuality- sugar sweet or black leather and net. Sex roles of dominator and dominated are part of the sexual sell. Such notions determine the structure of human fantasy- they are the symbol of everything which is not possible in everyday life. (111-12)

For Rowbotham, such masochism and power relations where women are oppressed can be altered only through a political collaboration with other oppressed groups; therefore, awareness of this oppression is the initial step for liberation. Figs also treats sexuality as a product of society in the contemporary capitalist world. Womanhood is standardized by men and thus a woman is “either an absolute woman or nothing at all” (17); the images of womanhood therefore exist in opposite terms: “Virgin Mary and Scarlet Woman, angel of mercy and prostitute, gentle companion and intolerable bluestocking” (17-18). Elaborating on these binary constructions, she explains that:

the good woman is associated with motherhood and purity, the bad with uncontrollable sexuality and, since she is the opposite of the good mother, the death of infants. By creating two wives for Adam ... we see the dissociation of wickedness and sexuality from motherhood, which reached its peak in the image of the Virgin Mary. Eve was to be the mother of mankind, whilst Lilith merely gave birth to demons and wickedness. Obviously the ultimate in the image of the good mother was one who had never known or roused sexual lust. (44)

Female sexuality, then, exists within these boundaries that man set for her, within which any possibility of women's sexual appetite is eliminated or ignored. Thus, like other critics, she argues that the sex act in a patriarchal society becomes another tool for male dominance where the woman should be controlled; man is the active one deciding "the moment of climax" and woman in this act is enforced to be passive (50). She notes that the sex act is especially important in patriarchal society as it is "so basic and animal" that it is thought of as "natural," which leads to the idea that "male domination is also part of the natural order" (51). Figs also refers to Freud and his theory that in a female infant the child's sexual pleasure is focused on clitoris and later transferred to the vagina to fulfil the function of "childbearing" (142). Transferring her sensual desires from clitoris to vagina, a woman accepts the passive feminine role of having sex solely in order to produce babies (142). If a woman rejects this transfer, she is considered to have an abnormal sexuality or (if her lack of pleasure in the sexual act under these circumstances is noted) she comes to be called frigid, which actually notes an oft-quoted problem within the decade. Though many analysts rejected the Freudian idea of female inferiority, Freudian practices were still very popular and common and many women had already internalized them:

Any woman who fails to achieve orgasm on occasion, who discovers that she does not love her husband as much as she feels she ought, or who finds that she does not want to start a family or is not as involved with her children as society tells her she should be, is liable to worry about whether she is in some way rejecting her own femininity. (148)

Carter also emphasises how sexual relationships are infused with power dynamics. In sexual intercourse, she says, a woman generally plays a passive role:

Women do not normally fuck in the active sense. They are fucked in the passive tense and hence automatically fucked-up, done over, undone. Whatever else he says or does not say, Sade declares himself unequivocally for the right of women to fuck— as if the period in which women fuck aggressively, tyrannously and cruelly will be a necessary stage in the development of a general human consciousness of the nature of fucking; that if it is not egalitarian, it is unjust. (31)

Therefore, Sadeian women such as Juliette overthrow this hierarchy by unsettling the generalized and sacralised assumptions about women whose sexuality is reduced to her reproduction and motherhood. Sadeian women, through enacting their “hitherto untapped sexual energy,” can obtain power and thus change their history (31).

All things considered, suggesting an alternative or a proposal to erase the oppression of woman is of significance for these critics. For Greer, to start with, female liberation is impossible without an awareness of “the degree of inferiority or natural dependence which is unalterably female” (16). The revolution that women or the feminists await, she says, may seem difficult and even impossible, but at least she [the woman] can start “reassessing herself” (16). Thus, the last part of the book, called “Revolution,” includes the “correction” of certain depictions of womanhood, sex, love and society (20). What she suggests is:

The revolutionary woman must know her enemies, the doctors, psychiatrists, health visitors, priests, marriage counselors, all the authoritarians and dogmatists who flock about her with warnings and advice. She must know her friends, her sisters, and seek in their lineaments her own. With them she can discover cooperation, sympathy and love. (23)

For Rowbotham, not selective solidarity but socialism is the key to women’s liberation and thus a socialist consciousness is to be raised among women. It is to this end that women workers need to redefine their womanhood. As she maintains, for such a redefinition the private world of home should be analysed together with that of the public world. In her introduction, she makes it clear that

she considers “the solution to exploitation and oppression to be communism, despite the hollow resonance the word has acquired” (xvi). As she adds, women’s liberation (both cultural and economic) is possible only with the creation of a society where “all people no longer have their lives stolen from them, and in which the conditions of their production and reproduction will no longer be distorted or held back by the subordination of sex, race, and class” (xvi). Figs also maintains that women’s problems can be solved only with social change which is welcomed not only by women but also by men “because female neurosis and dependence does not make the lives of men any happier either. Now and in the future patriarchal attitudes will benefit no one, least of all the men” (185).

Mitchell’s book also centres on the idea of consciousness. What she suggests is that Freudian psychology is a reflection of contemporary society and thus psychoanalysis is indispensable to understand and challenge women’s oppression. This is because it is a key to decipher “the order of human society;” namely, “the unconscious mind *is* the way in which we acquire these laws [of human society]” and how we socialize in a patriarchal world (xvi). Though it is still inadequate, it can assist women in uncovering the operations of patriarchy and its regulation of the psychological attributions to women and the differentiation of gender roles. In this sense, how children learn the concepts of masculinity and femininity in the family is of great significance as they serve to maintain women’s oppressed positions in society. Thus, “where Marxist theory explains the historical and economic situation, psychoanalysis, in conjunction with the notions of ideology already gained by dialectical materialism, is the way into understanding ideology and sexuality” (xxii). Carter also makes it clear that women have to learn to re-evaluate the society they live in and the roles attained by them. To emancipate herself from her oppressors, a woman should learn to challenge any prejudices, traditions, and customs that have imposed on her mythic or stereotypical qualities such as to being a good mother, a virgin or a whore since these notions subordinate her to males and gives her a slave-like existence. Significantly, Carter’s postmodernist stance comes to the fore here as she suggests

that true emancipation of woman will take place only if they renounce “the absurd notion of the dualism of the sexes, or that man and woman represent two antagonistic worlds” (177).

2.2. American Feminist Literary Theory in the 1970s

As in Britain, in the States also, feminist criticism gained a significant impetus from the 1960s. Undoubtedly, Betty Freidan’s *Feminine Mystique* (1963) had become a seminal work in that it ardently put forward how middle-class white American women became trapped in domestic space. Following this major text, in the 1970s a large number of influential works emerged among of which are the following important books: Shulamith Firestone’s *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (1970), Kate Millett’s *Sexual Politics* (1970), Elaine Showalter’s *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing* (1977), Judith Fetterley’s *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction* (1978) and Nancy Chodorow’s *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (1978).

Firestone’s *The Dialectic of Sex* has a chapter called “On American Feminism” in which she analyses second-wave feminism not only as “the revival of a serious political movement for social equality” but also as “the most important revolution in history” whose aim is to remove “the oldest, most rigid class/caste system in existence” that confirmed and solidified “the archetypal male and female roles” (16). According to Firestone, when the second wave of feminism appeared, the first wave efforts had already been countered and humiliated by “oppressive power structures.” By the 1970s, the old feminist movement (mostly under the Women’s Rights Movement) had lost its popularity and new feminists came across “contradictions in their roles” (34). Although they had obtained most of the legal rights and freedoms they had earlier fought for, in empirical life they had no power to realize this power and freedom. Moreover, “sex role traditions” became more apparent through the increasing power of the media: “Women, everywhere bombarded with hateful or erotic images of

themselves, were at first bewildered by such distortion (could that be Me?), and, finally, angered” (34). Feminist anger, which once more recognized the oppressed situation of women, grew aware of the analogy between women’s oppression and that of the blacks, and, fed by the period’s “spirit of dissent” at last found its “proper outlet,” which eventually established an influential women’s liberation movement (35). As Millett also explained, the Abolitionist Movement is recognized to have prompted the American feminist movement since it guided American women into political grounds:

In the United States, where the Woman’s Movement began and from whence it spread to other Western countries and beyond the Western world, it was the cause of eradicating slavery which provided the impetus for the emancipation of women. (80)

Involving themselves in the issues of slavery, American women gained experience that they later used in feminist campaigns and, more importantly, for the first time they had the courage to break the “taboo of decorum” which had exerted more controlling power over women than any kind of legal, educational or financial disadvantages. As Millett emphasizes, the early feminists were “active and dedicated abolitionists” (80). She wrote that in America the new women’s movement (that of the late 1960s and 70s) sympathized with generally oppressed groups such as students, blacks and the poor; their fight was not only for a sexual revolution but also for “freedom from rank or prescriptive role” (363). In this sense, the fact that several important issues such as race, class, and gender are intermingled, since they had the very same concern to fight against inequality, distinguishes the decade from the previous ones. The logical implications of this are expressed in an important statement of the feminist discourse of the 1970s which is “the personal is political.” As Firestone states:

The feminist movement is the first to combine effectively the “personal” with the “political.” It is developing a new way of relating, a new political style, one that will eventually reconcile the personal—always the feminine prerogative—with the public, with the “world outside,” to restore that world to its emotions, and literally to its senses. (43)

Therefore, most of the texts of the decade try to create a consciousness of the personal experience in order to lay bare that what is personal should be carried to the public stage so that it can be challenged and changed. The items to be mentioned in the following pages have this aim as their starting point.

To begin with, in the American writings as in the British ones, the family unit is scrutinized by all feminist texts; the writers put a specific emphasis on the family structure and how it actually functions to strengthen woman's oppressed status in the society. According to Millett, the family is patriarchy's "chief institution" which serves "as an agent of the larger society" (33). Family structure should be scrutinized because, she says, "[t]raditionally, patriarchy granted the father nearly total ownership over wife and children, including the powers of physical abuse and even those of murder and sale" (33). Firestone also sees the family as an oppressive structure for women and notes that its power is quite strong because "it penetrates the individual more deeply than any other social organization we have" (257). Referring to communal experimental approaches to childrearing such as one conducted in the north of England, Firestone discusses that these social experiments are not satisfactory from a radical feminist perspective because they were not able to eradicate the inferior status of women: old norms concerning the division of labour are not wiped out because "woman's role in (child) bed or kitchen has not been questioned, nor the role of man as provider" (249). Therefore, as women's reproducing and mothering functions remain unchallenged, women's oppression is not defied. For a feminist revolution, women should be freed from their maternal roles and the belief in a special mother/child relationship should be broken. What Firestone suggests is the replacement of family by a "household" which refers to a group of people that live together without any kind of interpersonal relations (262). In this unit, issues such as childrearing and housework which are normally assumed to be woman's work are allocated to members of the household. Moreover, Firestone refers to benefits of technology and the possibility of different means of reproduction which may liberate women from pregnancy which she sees as a burden on the female sex.

Furthermore, economic independence of women, men and also children should be achieved so that their political autonomy can be ensured. That is, she suggests that only in such a cybernetic socialist society will women's frustration with their oppressed roles be eradicated and women's liberation be realized.

Thus, the concept of motherhood is very relevant to these discussions since these critics often recognize a close connection between women's oppression and their naturalized roles as mothers and caretakers. According to Millett, for example, patriarchy manipulates women's capacity to give birth in order to enforce the orthodoxy of "the sex role stereotype" (225). In that sense, even culturally learnt roles such as childcare are assumed to be a woman's natural role. Likewise, towards the end of the decade, Chodorow also argued that "women's mothering has been taken for granted" since women's biological capacity to give birth and lactate has automatically made her responsible for childcare and even for domestic chores (3). Here, she refers to the inadequacy of studies on women's mothering, which is of great significance since it deeply influences the reproduction of gender roles and its outcome is sexual inequality both in the family and outside it. Actually, the institutions of society function together to reinforce the oppression of women. As Chodorow goes on:

In Western society, the separation of domestic and public spheres—of domestic reproduction and personal life on the one hand and social production and the state on the other—has been sharpened through the course of industrial capitalist development, producing a family form reduced to its fundamentals, to women's mothering and maternal qualities and heterosexual marriage, and continuing to reproduce male dominance. (10)

In that context, along with these topics, heterosexual love is another issue that is critically approached due to its influence on the oppression of women. As Firestone claims: "A book on radical feminism that did not deal with love would be a political failure. For love, perhaps even more than childbearing, is the pivot of women's oppression today" (142). Love, feeding on the emotions of women, becomes corrupted by "an unequal distribution of power" (146). It is mainly "the

process of alteration of male vision—though idealization, mystification, glorification—that renders void the woman’s class inferiority” (148). According to Millett, the idea of romantic love functions through “emotional manipulation which the male is free to exploit” because “love is the only circumstance in which the female is (ideologically) pardoned for sexual activity” (37). Moreover, love hides “the realities of female status and the burden of economic dependency.” Thus, it becomes one of the tools that disguise the mechanisms of patriarchy and make women more dependent on men. Actually, Simone de Beauvoir’s view that love means different things to men and women, which creates “serious misunderstandings which divide them” is highly influential in these works (608). Some of these misunderstandings, which eventually create a double standard, are elaborated by Firestone and some of the differences between men and women in love are enumerated as in the following lines:

That women are monogamous, better at loving, possessive, “clinging,” more interested in (highly involved) “relationships” than in sex per se, and they confuse affection with sexual desire. That men are interested in nothing but screw . . . or else romanticize the woman ridiculously; that once sure of her; they become notorious philanderers, that they mistake sex for emotion. (152)

She explores that “the difference in the psychosexual organizations of the two sexes” are “determined by the first relationship to the mother.” In the chapter titled “The Culture of Romance,” Firestone further lists some components of romanticism that ensure the continuation of gender roles; these are eroticism, the sex privatization of women (reduction of a woman’s individuality to her sexuality), and the beauty ideal. These components function in such a way as to present women as objects that are defined only through their relations with men and then to stereotype them by stripping women of their individuality.

Within this context of American feminist criticism, how male culture also dominated the representation of female experience was given prominence, as well. The idea of representation is not a simple matter, as what is to be represented is itself problematic: “[t]he sex role system divides human experience; men and

women live in these different halves of reality; and culture reflects this” (Firestone 187). In this decade, the position of women artists and how they represent culture thus gained particular attention from both literary theorists and women writers. As Firestone explains, since women were able to participate in “the making of culture” only on “male terms,” their vision had already become “inauthentic” and “they were denied the use of the cultural mirror” (187). Thus, in an effort to create consciousness-raising, women writers paid special attention to writing about women. In this sense, the female audience also became quite important:

if it has not yet created great women artists, women’s new literacy has certainly created a female audience. Just as male audiences have always demanded, and received, male art to reinforce their particular view of reality, so a female audience demands a “female” art to reinforce the female reality. (Firestone 188)

In her introduction to *Sexual Politics*, Millett also explains the importance of literary criticism since it carries “the larger insights which literature affords into the life it describes, or interprets, or even distorts” (xii). Many works of the literary criticism in the 1970s try to address female readers in order to make them aware of what they are reading and be critical of what is represented. They highlight that literary works and their criticisms are mostly the products of male culture and they represent women from a male perspective; accordingly, the image of woman in these works serves to reinforce the oppressed situation of women. Therefore, feminist literary criticisms of the 1970s draw attention to the use of language and representation of female characters in certain novels. In this sense, *Sexual Politics* can be regarded as the pioneer of the critical works which put an emphasis on literature as a powerful tool that contributes to male power. In this book Millett explores what sexual politics is, its historical background and how it is reflected in literary works. Analysing the relationship between sexual relations and patriarchy, and pointing out how the oppression of women is powered through the sexual act, Millett declares that sex is a political act, where “politics” refers to “power-structured relationships, arrangements whereby one group of persons is controlled by another” (23). According to Millett, within the

male and female relationship this system of dominance and subordination has formed an “interior colonization,” because women themselves cannot recognize their subordination to the male power as they have taken it for granted due to cultural assumptions. Consequently, she claims that “[s]exual dominion is perhaps the most pervasive ideology of our culture and provides its most fundamental concept of power” (25). This is because, in a patriarchal society, “every avenue of power” including the military, industry, technology, universities, science, political office, and finance is in control of the male; since “[t]he essence of politics is power,” sexual politics is also in male hands and keeps the woman subservient to the man (25).

Female art thus became an important tool to represent the underlying mechanism of male culture and how it confirms the double standard which eventually reinforces female oppression. According to Firestone, “exploration of the strictly female reality is a necessary step to correct the warp in a sexually biased culture” and “[i]t is only after we have integrated the dark side of the moon into our world view that we can begin to talk seriously of universal culture” (189). Fetterley thus introduced the notion of resistant reading into the feminist literary discussion, reflecting the focus of the 1970s with her call for “literary representations of women, by women and for women” (Eagleton, “Literary Representations of Women” 107). In her *Resisting Reader* she suggested that American literature was dominated by male writers and critics, which eventually left no space for women writers. She presented her book “as a self-defense survival manual for the woman reader lost in ‘the masculine wilderness of the American novel’” (viii). She further discussed the idea that the female reader is forced to “identify against herself” being required to read as a man and to have a male point of view, with a language manipulated and dominated by males (xii). Fetterley, unlike Showalter, conducts her discussion specifically on American literature and explores how it is infused with misogynist representations of women. What a female resistant reader should do, then, is to scrutinize the representation of women in these literary works and beware of their contribution

to women's oppression. Analysing American fictions by paying attention to "how attitudes toward women shape their form and content" has the purpose of bringing what has been unconscious to consciousness, and thereby of altering "our understanding of these fictions, our relation to them, and their effect on us"(xi-ii).

Notably, the feminist movement of the 1970s looks for alternatives to its contemporary male-dominated society. Towards the end of her book, Firestone mentions that the feminist revolution has neither precedents nor a literary image of a utopian future society (256). She thinks that fighting against the traditional biological family may be regarded as the initial step for revolution (274). Millett also refers to a sexual revolution which would react against patriarchy; she explains this revolution as follows:

A sexual revolution would require, perhaps first of all, an end of traditional sexual inhibitions and taboos, particularly those that most threaten patriarchal monogamous marriage: homosexuality, "illegitimacy," adolescent, pre- and extra-marital sexuality. The negative aura with which sexual activity has generally been surrounded would necessarily be eliminated, together with the double standard and prostitution. The goal of revolution would be a permissive single standard of sexual freedom and one uncorrupted by the crass and exploitative economic bases of traditional sexual alliances. (62)

Through this revolution, she says, categories of masculinity and femininity would be reassessed, and thus the negative connotations attributed to the female sex would disappear. Such a revolution would undoubtedly change the family structure, as well, since sex roles would be erased and women would no longer be financially dependent on men. What Millett suggests here is the replacement of marriage by a "voluntary association" (62). For such a revolution to come true the most important step is to change human consciousness, which is in a way more important than to change institutions (63). She also refers to the dictionary meaning of feminism where it is defined as "a system of political, economic, and social equality between the sexes," which is in fact the ultimate aim of a feminist revolution (74). For a sexual revolution to be realized, rather than small reforms, a

“radical social transformation—the alteration of marriage and the family as they had been known throughout the history” is necessary (157).

Feminist literary criticism is of great importance to the wider feminist movement because it provides the new visions necessary to subvert old taken-for-granted categories of womanhood. According to Fetterley, “[i]n making available to women this power of naming reality, feminist criticism is revolutionary” and this power is quite important “if one considers the strength of the taboo against it” (xxiii). Reading literature with a resistance to the dominant ideology of gender undoubtedly creates a new consciousness.

2.3. Feminism in Turkey in the 1970s

In Turkey during the 1970s there was among the general population the start of a growth of awareness of feminist issues but this was not a deliberate act of feminists to allow more women to join their movement as in Britain and the States and almost no feminist literary theory was produced. Therefore, unlike previous subchapters, this part explores a general frame of feminism in Turkey in the 1970s. According to Karataş, the 1970s in Turkey were noted as the starting point for women’s movements that would question and attack social institutions, and these movements were actually observed to flourish later in the 1980s. As Sirman also notes, “feminism has erupted onto the Turkish political scene in the latter half of the 1980’s” and more specifically it was in 1987 that “feminists literally took to the streets” (1). In May 1987, 3000 women marched in İstanbul protesting against the physical abuse of women. In June of the same year, a feminist group in Ankara took sides with environmentalist groups to protest against the Ankara municipality planning to convert a park area in the city centre to a multi-storey car-park. In October, a festival was organized in İstanbul to give financial support to battered women. It was also in the 1980s that different kinds of feminist activities, the publications of magazines and novels, became available. For example, in 1981 Şirin Tekeli with other academics started a ‘women’s group’ which produced writings and discussions on the problems of women in

Turkey (Koçak n. pag.). These women had also been engaged in the leftist movement of the 1970s and, accordingly, they had political and theoretical discussions. In 1983, in the weekly *Somut (Concrete)* they printed discussions written by women. Later, the same group expanded and set up the ‘Kadın Çevresi’ (Women’s Circle), aiming to create a feminist discourse which they achieved via the ‘Kitap Kulübü’ (Book Club) in 1984. With this club they translated the works of Mitchell and interviews with Beauvoir and thus they had access to international feminisms (Gülendam n. pag.).

Thus, in the 1980s the feminist movement in Turkey became more organizational and included different women from different backgrounds. Also, women writers, who started to become more visible in the literary arena from the 1960s onwards, became more assertive in their expressions of sexuality and of anger towards social oppression (Durakbaşa, *Halide Edip* 14). Actually, women writers together with feminists showed great efforts to reformulate the concept of womanhood and remove negative attributions associated with the very word “woman” itself (16-17). In this respect, Paker is right to suggest that although women writers were still restricted by societal constructions that privilege men over women, they were able to find new ways to express themselves (277). That is, feminist discussions and other concerns of the 1970’s in the West were becoming notable in Turkey in the 1980s. As Sirman explores, in the 1980s there were conferences and discussion groups criticizing the abuse of women in the home, in media images and in legal stature, all of which actions were, in fact, directly influenced by Western feminist politics. Yet in Turkey these activities were limited to the intellectuals of İstanbul and Ankara who were already engaged in politics. Furthermore, as Sirman accentuated: “In a country where the vast majority of the population does not have the habit of reading as a leisure activity, feminist publications had a limited impact even in the big cities” (1). Therefore, even in the 1980s, Turkish feminism did not generate the immense body of works observed in Britain and America in the 1970s, and as Durakbaşa argues, although

there were significant developments in writing women's history, the quality and quantity of theoretical works were inadequate (*Halide Edip* 14).

During the earlier decade, there were three ideologies in particular that shaped the women's movement and consciousness in Turkey: Islam, Kemalism and socialism¹⁰. Among these three, socialism became influential and widespread in Turkey in the early 1970s and it brought new roles for Turkish women such as the image of women struggling against the dominant ideology side by side with men. However, Karataş notes, the 1970s were also problematic because women began to feel deep conflicts between these three dominant ideologies and even the most liberal movement was hindering them from expressing their authentic experiences as individual women (1659). The following pages will explore the reasons behind the absence of an autonomous feminist discourse not only in literary criticism but also in other areas of 1970s Turkey. To this purpose, the three dominant ideologies in Turkey of the time, Islam, Kemalism and socialism, will be introduced in order to create a frame within which Turkish feminism, such as it was, can be discussed.

Among these ideologies, Kemalism is of particular significance in the discussion of feminism in Turkey in the 1970s. According to Kandiyoti, among other Middle Eastern countries, Turkey can be regarded as the first republic to deal with women's emancipation early and extensively ("Emancipated but Unliberated?" 320). The early emancipation of women started after the 1918-23 period of the war of independence and with the establishment of the secular republic by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Mainly, certain legal reforms were set up in order to achieve women's emancipation. This is also referred to as "state feminism," meaning "the state-led promotion of women's equality in the public sphere" which "monopolized women's activism and shaped it as a tool of the state's modernizing project" (White 155). These reforms included granting of equal divorce and custody rights in 1926 through the Turkish Civil code, and the

¹⁰ These ideologies would be more influential in the 1990s where feminism in Turkey became more diverse as concepts such as Kemalist feminists, Islamic feminists and Kurdish feminists were frequently used.

right to vote at local elections in 1930 and at national elections in 1934. Although they were influential in changing women's oppressed and underprivileged images in society, they were not internalized by the whole nation and women's equal treatment in society was not realized in practical life (Tekeli 1986; Sirman 1989; Y. Arat 1989; Durakbaşa 2000; N. Arat 2010).¹¹ Thus, although they had political rights, women still held a disadvantaged status in society. As Browning's analysis illustrates, although issues such as marriage, divorce and education were regulated by legislation, and problems including bride-price, polygamy, marriages formalized only by religious ceremonies, the low quality of education provided for women and the low literacy rate among women continued (109-10).

It is important to note that how women from different localities within Turkey could benefit from and embrace these reforms to different extents. Notably, while Kemalist reforms were not influential in rural areas, women from an urban bourgeoisie background could benefit from them (Kandiyoti, "Emancipated but Unliberated?" 322). These urban women, generally referred to as republican women, internalized the Kemalist way of modernization that promoted the model of an intellectual woman who was supportive of secularism (N. Arat 80). Therefore, Kemalism functioned as feminism and women were dependent on the state's protection and paternalism (Tekeli 1986; Sirman 1989; Y. Arat 1989; Durakbaşa 2000; N. Arat 2010). This representative urbane woman who embraced social progress and modernisation project of the state was still expected to be a dutiful wife and mother at home (Tekeli 1986; Sirman 1989; White 2003). Actually, marriage and childcare became the national duties for women: "Marriage was to be companionate, rather than contractual and segregated, and children were to be raised "scientifically" by mothers educated in

¹¹ It should be highlighted that Kemalist reforms were particularly significant in changing women's underprivileged status through the changes adopted in education. Emine Öztürk's historical analysis of Turkish women reflects that from the establishment of the Republic to 1945, textbooks were designed to enhance gender equality where both women and men are educated, have professions, are thus economically independent and share housework. Nevertheless, this image of woman whose contribution to the national ideology was also foregrounded lost its prominence after 1945 and women's relation to domestic space became more central in textbooks (171-72). The importance of education for women is one of the focal points of the novels discussed in this dissertation, as well.

the latest childrearing and household techniques from the West” (White 146). This modern woman was also expected to be chaste and to suppress her sexual requirements in order to collaborate with men to improve the nation. This Republican ideal of woman was later referred to as “a self-sacrificing ‘comrade-woman’ who shares in the struggles of her male peers,” “an asexual sister-in-arms” (Kandiyoti, “Women and the Turkish State” 143) and these women were expected to be ““asexual” female citizens and workers” (Z. Arat 71). Thus, women’s public emancipation was the main aim of state feminism while issues such as child rearing, domestic works and the relations between family members- and especially between men and women-were ignored. In the private domestic lives of men and women, traditional gender and responsibilities attributed to women conservative sexual morality were not eradicated (Sirman 4; White 154). It is important to note that family problems such as abuse and violence from husbands were not discussed in public until the 1980s when “a new, liberal feminist movement reclaimed this territory by speaking openly about women’s sexuality and desires outside of family duty, opening battered women’s shelters and a women’s library” (White 154).

Referring to a lack of significant political activity by women to fight against these problems that still exist in their lives Kandiyoti describes Turkish women as “emancipated but unliberated” (“Emancipated but Unliberated?” 324). Actually, in spite of the promising nature of these reforms that aimed to liberate women, it has been suggested that the fact that these rights were granted relatively easily and without any significant fight actually slowed down the development of women’s movements in Turkey (Browning 109). Tekeli, mentioning the importance of Kemalist reforms for women, for instance, makes a criticism of this ideology, as well. Namely, this new state now became “a centralised, authoritarian, single-party regime with a leadership” which showed no tolerance to the presence of civil-organisations (“The Turkish Women’s Movement” 120). More importantly, it closed down the Turkish Woman’s Union (TWU) in 1935, claiming that, since woman had the equal status with men, there was no need for

such an organisation. As Tekeli writes, this meant “the end of the women’s movement for 40 years to come” (120). She explains that it was only in 1975 that the question of gender inequality was again raised. It is true that in the 1970s there was ‘Progressive Women’s Organisation’ [PWO] that criticized the state ideology and its claim to achieve full equality. They were concerned with the problems of working-class women, however, the members of this organization were not feminists. In fact, as Tekeli discusses, they could from one perspective be regarded as “anti-feminists.” As Emel Akal, the writer of *Red Feminists* and a member of PWO, explains PWO did not consider itself a feminist group at that time since its members considered “feminism as a bourgeois ideology,” but now looking back on those times she accepts that it was so. She says that their organization was “the first Marxist-feminist organization that was not under the dominancy of elite women,” and it “was the first mass women’s movement” in Turkey (Eğrikavuk n. pag.). Promotion of equality in education and the workplace was their main aim and, like their Western counterparts, they accepted that motherhood is “a social function.” Furthermore, they published a newspaper called *Women’s Voice* that had a circulation of 35,000 at the time. The PWO was an activist organization which held protest marches, as well, particularly in 1977 when 20,000 women walked to protest against the growing fascism in the country. Akal further explains, they were progressive and took side with “all of the oppressed: the workers, women and the Kurds.” In that respect, although Turkey lacked theoretical feminist discussion in the 1970s, Kemalist women (through their struggle for the protection and maintenance of Kemalist reforms) and socialist women (through their efforts to raise consciousness of oppression) and collective organizations contributed much to Turkish women’s movement and to the improvement of the situation of women.

The developing awareness of women about their oppression and exploitation to these leftist movements within which terms like “inequality” and “exploitation” were frequently used in political debates (Tekeli, “1980’ler Türkiye’si’nde Kadınlar” 30; Gülendam n. pag.; “70’ler Edebiyatında Kadın

Yazarlar ve Füzûzan” n. pag.). Namely, “the women question,” which had been in danger of dying out in the 1950s and 1960s, was voiced again; yet, “it never grew out of its infant-state to develop into an independent, influential and democratic women’s movement” (Gülendam n. pag.). The main reason for this was the anticapitalist propaganda of the left which focused on the female worker while ignoring the female farmer or female intellectual. Another reason can be stated as the socialist ideology according to which capitalism is the main cause of “class difference, oppression and exploitation” thus relegating women’s oppression to the position of a mere “side effect of capitalism” (Gülendam n. pag.). Furthermore, the 1970s in Turkey experienced a political opposition between rightist and leftist groups which showed itself in extreme political activism and violence of the both groups. This ideological confrontation and the violence accompanying it eventually caused the military’s intervention in politics in 1980, which strictly suppressed all political expression. Nevertheless, this political atmosphere eventually paved the way for a discussion of diverse feminist issues in the following decades (Şimşek 124; Diner and Toktaş 45). As Şimşek notes “[t]he repression of all movements, ideologies, and organizations by the military regime severed the feminists’ connections with them” (124). It was this background, observing different influential ideologies and the intriguing relations between them that prompted the emergence of future feminist debates in Turkey.

Apart from these political issues, as in the Western context, women’s magazines and women’s writing were influential in preparing the context for the rise of a feminist consciousness. To take one example, Duygu Asena started the monthly magazine *Kadınca* in 1978 and it became a valuable source for the Turkish feminist movement. As Güler explains *Kadınca* was the first of its kind as it illustrated how representations of women moved away from traditional roles and it adopted a critical stance towards the status of women in society (n. pag.). It gave place to articles discussing issues such as abortion, unwanted pregnancy, birth control, problems of housewives and professional women, violence against women, women’s sexuality from a woman’s perspective, and marriage problems.

For instance, in the second issue of the magazine, Asena wrote on day-care centres and thus drew attention to problems of working mothers (“İstanbul’daki Kreş ve Ana Okullarının Listesi ve Ana Okulu Sorunu” 74-76). In the same issue, Canan Barlas’ interview with Çetin Altan reflected how women’s oppression was reinforced through the moral conducts of society, religious norms, and low literacy rate among women (“Interview” 80-81). Also, Barlas’ interviews with business women who inherited their husbands’ or fathers’ companies gave insights related to problems of educated and privileged women came across in business world (“Türk Divinyaları” 83-85). Again in the same issue, frigidity which was one of the focal points of Western feminist theories and discourses, was given place to note that women’s lack of appetite for sex results from wrong sexual education and men (“Kadında Cinsel Soğukluk” 83). In the third issue, one of the entries asked whether abortion should be legal or not and it included views from people with different socio-political backgrounds, which raised awareness of the issue in society (“Kürtaj Serbest Bırakılmalı mıdır?” 67-69). Actually, Asena’s epilogue to the issue reflected that *Kadınca* already became an influential tool to create awareness among women of their problems as women readers began to share ideas with the help of the letters they sent to the magazine (98). In its later issues, the magazine continued to address topics such as masturbation, female orgasm, menstruation and sexual abuse which were generally accepted as private and taboo. In an interview, referring to the early years of *Kadınca*, Asena claimed that this magazine was “the first criticism of marriage” in Turkey (qtd. in Güler n. pag.). It was followed by magazines such as *Elele* (1976) and *Vizon* (1977). For instance, *Elele* started an article series titled “What is Sex, What is not Sex? What Should Sex be Like?” (“Seks nedir, ne değildir, ne olmalıdır?”) which guided women’s attention to sexual issues. As Kırca relates: “These magazines offered their readers information about ‘new’ female goals, such as employment, education, health, female sexual pleasure and equal rights, alongside fashion, home and childcare” (460). In this sense, they were influential in creating the imprints of radical feminism associated with Asena and her staff. What these

magazines reflected was later discussed more in detail and with feminist affiliations in the articles published in *Somut* and *Feminist*.¹²

As seen, although there was a feminist consciousness in the Turkey of the 1970s there was no significant autonomous feminist discourse. Accordingly, there was no feminist literary theory studying the relationship between feminism and literature. However, some of the important novels of the 1970s written by women show an awareness that can be called feminist although these women writers do not accept to be called so. In their writings, we can see a critique of the dominant patriarchal ideologies and an outline of issues prominent in that decade. Therefore, in 1970s Turkey, literature by women writers was seminal in the creation of a feminist discourse. Adalet Ağaoğlu, Leylâ Erbil, Tezer Özlü, Pınar Kür, Sevim Burak, Sevgi Soysal, Tomris Uyar, and Füzûzan produced significant works that meticulously explored women's role in society. Although these women writers would not be called feminists by more rigorous criteria, and especially since they themselves problematize and sometimes reject the label, their texts nevertheless generate concerns discussed within feminist discourses. As Felski has noted, feminist writing does not merely aim to “reveal an already given female identity” but it is interested in “the construction of this self a cultural reality” (78). Güleendam mentions that most of the “insurgent female” Turkish authors of the 1970s to the 1990s were born between the early 1930s and the late 1940s; and they were brought up in the early years of the Turkish Republic (n. pag.). In their writing, problems of an educated republican woman were frequently emphasised. These authors were brought up within a period when Kemalist reforms were influential. Eventually, having equal professional status to men and being considered modern, they became the “new women” and the devoted daughters of the Republic; yet they were still under the “patronage” of their “[f]athers and Atatürk—the symbolic father of the entire nation—especially

¹² These magazines and journals are valuable sources for the discussion of feminism in Turkey; nevertheless, reaching sources can be quite difficult. 1970s issues, although some are missing, of *Kadınca* and *Elele* are available at the National Library of Turkey located in Ankara. Also, articles published in *Somut* and *Feminist* were re-published as a collection, which made the access to these sources easier.

of Turkish women” (Durakbaşa, “Kemalism as Identity Politics in Turkey” 152). They were still exposed to Islamic values such as female sexual purity, marital fidelity, properly dressing in public, which actually made women central to the honour-based culture of Turkish society. Furthermore, spending most of their childhood at small Anatolian towns, they intensely felt the contradiction between a “progressive Kemalist home” and traditionalist Islamic culture (Cindoğlu); they reflected this conflict in their writings especially through their treatment of female identity and sexuality. Engagement with left-wing politics and particularly socialism also increased “their awareness of their own political and personal identity through which many of them realised that the leftist milieu was too rigid and orthodox a system as to provide a long term solution on both, macro and micro-level” (Gülendam n. pag.). In this sense, in their writings we see a kind of protest against three dominant ideologies—Islam, Kemalism and socialism—which tried to constrain them within certain pre-existing and non-feminist categories. While Islam proposes a female identity bound up with being wives and mothers, Kemalism foregrounds the emancipated woman who is educated and keeps her family well, and socialism presents females as comrades, sisters and fighters who are merely female fellows to men. The complicated and intriguing political context of the 1970s was reflected in women’s writing, which thus constituted the early imprints of feminist discourse in Turkey. Consequently, common concerns voiced in Western feminist context such as family, marriage and female sexuality attracted attention in the Turkish context, as well.

2.4. Similarities and Differences

In the previous pages the kinds of topics that 1970s’ feminist literary theories explored were studied and hints of local feminisms were traced in these critical writings. Although clear-cut distinctions indicating specific local feminisms were not made, certain comments can be deduced to highlight the differences among their shared similarities. As seen thus far, in these three cultures during the 1970s there were similar feminist themes such as female sexuality, family structure, consciousness-raising and representation of female

experience; yet how they were handled showed some differences, which will be indicated in this section. In the following pages, British and American feminist theories of the 1970s will firstly be compared, since feminisms of that decade in these two cultures are generally referred to as Anglo-American feminism. Then, how feminism in the Turkish context differs from these cultures will be indicated.

The family unit as a power structure that reinforces women's oppressed status in society is indicated in both British and American feminist literary theories of the time. In the traditional family structures of these societies, that is in the families discussed by feminist theorists of the time, due to her maternal roles a woman is associated with passivity and her economic dependence on men is encouraged. That such a structure is to be treated with a critical distance is a recurring topic of the theoretical works of the decade. In a British context, the oppressive nature of the family unit is attributed to capitalist society where the family becomes a tool that doubles women's work load or makes women cheap, even unpaid labourers. Thus, criticisms of the family unit are made mostly from a more-or-less Marxist viewpoint; yet again as in Greer and Figs radical feminist politics were also influential in unveiling the oppressiveness of family as an institution. On the other hand, in the States Marxist feminism was not used much because of the political climate being so violently anti-socialist and so keen on free market forces. Rather, radical feminism through its critique of patriarchy as a system of male domination over women was more influential. Hence, in American texts, the family unit is regarded as an institution to be abolished or replaced by alternative settlements such as Millett's "voluntary association" or Chodorow's "shared parenting." Particularly US feminist literary theories of the 1970s insist that the mothering function of women should also be scrutinized, as it had previously always been taken for granted; again the theorists seek an alternative to replace the bond between mother and child but do not find one at this stage.

What comes to the fore in discussions of family in the Turkish context is that although new reforms brought many improvements for women, women's role

in domestic space did not change mainly because family was still at the centre of the national ideology and Islamic religion. Furthermore, Kandiyoti's 1977 analysis of women in different social settings such as "the nomadic tribe, the traditional peasant village, the changing rural environment, the small town, and the large urban center" ("Sex Roles and Social Change" 57) show the way sex roles change and how women adopt diverse roles. She shows how, in different settings, the tasks a woman perform change and, accordingly, configurations of womanhood and femininity change as well. Yet what determines the female status (as defined by their roles) does not change; women are identified by "child-bearing" and "advancing age" ("Sex Roles and Social Change" 72). In this sense, even after the Kemalist reforms, family as unit rewriting women's role as chaste wives and devoted mothers was not eradicated since it was at the heart of even conflicting ideologies. Among these social settings Kandiyoti included, urban centres will be relevant to this study as the Turkish novels included here take place in urban settings and they represent the conflicts among different sex-role behaviours created by the social conditions in these settings.

Female sexuality is a recurrent theme of both the British and the American critical texts. In the British works studied in this study, debates over female sexuality are mostly analysed from a psychoanalytic perspective. British literary theories, particularly feminist ones towards the end of the decade, were open to different theories such as psychology and psychoanalysis. As Elizabeth Weed mentions, *m/f* (1975-85) was a very influential British journal where literary critics met philosophers, sociologists, film theorists and psychoanalysts in order to "theorize the intersection of representation, social theory, and psychoanalysis from a Marxist-feminist perspective" (270). Therefore, along with material conditions, psychological factors were also scrutinized. Particularly, female sexuality was treated as separate phenomenon from the mothering function; instead, how women came to be dissociated from their own bodies gains importance as a topic of discussion. Freudian discourse is sometimes criticized, as in Greer, or re-analysed, as in Mitchell; and how it influences the way women

construct their roles in a patriarchal society is discussed. In the American context, Freud's theories were also frequently referred to, and these theories and their social implications are analysed by feminists in a socio-historical context. Media as a powerful tool of representation is given scrutiny and stereotypical images of womanhood are discussed. As mentioned above, the mother-daughter relationship and how this influences the continuation of stereotypical images of womanhood are main focuses in feminism in the States. On the other hand, critics such as Rich and Daly¹³ celebrated maternal function of women. Rich, for instance, argued that while motherhood is a patriarchal institution and thus is oppressive, the experience of mothering is a source of power for women. Nevertheless, their focus was always on the radical transformation of patriarchal society since it positions women as weak and inferior compared to men.

In the Turkish context, Islam and Kemalism will be relevant to the discussion of female sexuality and obviously these are two major concerns that are not—in the 1970s—shared by British and American feminists. Kandiyoti, putting emphasis on the Islamic context, lays bare how Turkish feminism differs from Western feminisms and their approaches to the female. She discusses that “putting down the failure of the development of autonomous women's movements and feminist consciousness in the Western sense to women's “Islamically” mystified consciousnesses or their reticence to identify with “foreign” values would be a gross oversimplification” (“Emancipated but Unliberated?” 324). As she relates, “different cultural modes of control of female sexuality create different subjective experiences of feminine sexuality” (324). She also refers to the “corporate control over female sexuality” in the Turkish context which shows itself in “the large number of different individuals who see themselves as immediately responsible for ensuring women's appropriate sexual conduct.” These may be “parents, siblings, near and distant relatives, and even neighbors” who watch over “the postpubescent girl”, which actually imposes the configuration that “her sexuality is not hers to give or withhold” (325). In such a context, female

¹³ Although Rich and Daly are not included in this chapter, they are outstandingly influential within the decade and they are referred within this dissertation in the following chapters, as well.

sexuality is at the centre of the link between female sexual purity and family honour. Moreover, women are exposed to different constraints such as veiling and restrictions of their entry into public places (326). As shown in the previous pages, these constraints actually aggravate women's use of the very liberal rights such as equal education. Plus the fact that, in Turkish society any personal contact between men and women before marriage is strictly regulated by cultural norms. Here Kandiyoti refers to the psychoanalytic feminism's concern of man's "radical separation from the feminine" in order to form his ego. What she suggests is that "cultural constructions of the masculine and feminine play a significant role in exacerbating the need for a constant reaffirmation of this psychological separation" (327). This psychological separation is frequently controlled by aforementioned corporate mechanism that regulates the segregation of gendered spaces and roles. Thus, affirmation of masculinity and strict controls over female sexuality are closely related in the Turkish context.

Elaborating on Fatna Sabbah's argument on "Muslim patriarchal discourse which sets itself the urgent task of ""neutralizing women" and their sexuality," Kandiyoti problematizes this act of "neutralizing," saying that "[w]hether it reduces women to the rank of the "animals," as in erotic discourse stressing female sexual potency at the expense of their humanity, or weakens her physically and morally, as in the sacred discourses" it causes "a distortion and crippling of women's essential humanity" ("Emancipated but Unliberated?" 327). Roles such as sister, wife and mother undeniably points up women's humanity while repressing her femaleness and femininity. Despite the political project of the state and its reforms in relation to women's emancipation, women's sexuality was in fact never questioned (324). Analysis of the selected novels of Ađaođlu and Erbil within this background will provide information that is very useful in the exploration of the treatment of female sexuality in a Turkish context.

In both British and American literary theories of the time, discussions of alternatives to patriarchal discourse and proposals to end patriarchal oppression were quite popular. In British writings, most of the time the proposed solution is a

socialist revolution that could end any kind of oppression in society; a Marxist community with consciousness-raising activities is regarded as a good start for social change. American critics, adopting a socio-historical approach, put more emphasis on sexual difference, male power in history and how tools of representation empower patriarchal discourse. Gynrocriticism thus emerged as an influential area to serve this purpose. As Showalter claimed, feminist criticism in the States in the 1970s “concentrated on exposing the misogyny of literary practice: the stereotyped images of women in literature as angels or monsters, the literary abuse or ‘textual harassment’ of women in classic and popular fiction, and the exclusion of women from literary history” (“Introduction” 5). Processes of consciousness-raising noting woman as a unified category and frequent mentions of anti-male stance were given prominence to remark the political nature of private experiences. In a Turkish context, suggestions for alternatives were not encountered in the 1970s; nevertheless, literary works present alternative forms of representation and give importance to the depiction of female experience by women within the socio-economic reality of society.

As seen so far, both the theories in the UK and those in the US have remarkably similar concerns; however, the way they treat them hints at certain differences. Remarkably, British feminist literary theories of the 1970s were more open to theories such as Marxism, psychology, psychoanalysis and the influence of French feminists. Undeniably, as Watkins also highlights, Marxist and socialist feminisms were more influential in the UK than in the States due to “the British Labour movement” and “socialist intellectual traditions” (55). Also, the fact that Marxist-Feminist Literature Collective came together in London in the second half of the seventies was also influential in increasing Marxist feminist tendencies as they presented the earliest examples of academic feminist literary criticism in that location (Moi 93; Carr 132). Carr’s following remarks the essence of how British feminism interacted with Marxism and psychoanalysis:

The majority of British feminists identified themselves as socialist feminists, or later as materialist feminists, terms which covered both members of the Communist and the Labour Parties; in addition, the

Marxist-Feminist Literature Collective, which included many who would later become well-known critics, such as Cora Kaplan, Jean Radford, Maud Ellmann, Mary Jacobus, Helen Taylor and Michèle Barratt, were also interested in Lacanian psychoanalysis and French theorists such as Louis Althusser and Pierre Machery. (Lacan's¹⁴ work was originally introduced to Britain through an article by Althusser in the *New Left Review* in 1969, and had been brought into the feminist debate by Juliet Mitchell's groundbreaking *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* in 1974.) (132-33)

American theoretical texts were more involved in socio-historical criticisms and analysing the representations of women in literature and media; they mainly aimed to create an awareness among women by pivoting sexual difference. As Eagleton relates, feminist literary criticism never fully embraced “cool formalism,” thus, particularly the feminist critics in the US were trying to prove that “what they were doing was not merely special pleading or social engineering or sociology in disguise – all accusations that were repeatedly levelled against feminist criticism – but a legitimate form of criticism that asked fundamental questions about literary history and literary production” (“Literary Representations of Women” 107). Arguing that “second-wave feminist thought had rather different locations in America and Britain,” Carr explains that:

In the States, feminist theory found a much earlier place in academic institutions; after all, *Sexual Politics* had been the book of Kate Millet's PhD thesis. In Britain, where higher education remained more conservative, feminism took longer to enter the institutions, and in the seventies mainly flourished outside them, in women's groups which were closely associated with left and involved in direct social and political action. (124)

¹⁴ Especially, Lacan's ideas on language as a patriarchal system, which was also adopted by French feminists such as Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva seems influential in British feminist thought (particularly on Carter's works). In Lacanian terminology, one's entry into language means her/his entry into the symbolic order that is governed by the Phallus—“the Primordial Law” of the father (*Écrits* 229). Reminding Beauvoir's argument in *The Second Sex*, Morris relates that in this order “‘Man’ is always the positive term (the norm) and ‘woman’ the ‘other’” (115). This view of language as a phallogocentric system privileging male over the female and marginalizing women, made French feminists to look for alternatives. In this sense, *écriture féminine* developed by these feminists celebrates woman's language as belonging to a pre-symbolic realm (semiotic realm) where the child is still united with the maternal body since the Law of the Father does not function there. They render that through such a non-linguistic mode of expression, patriarchal language and order can be disrupted and deconstructed.

Furthermore, British and American feminism had become interested in some of their marginalised women at different times; this involved awareness of class or colour divides in their societies. Carr relates that “British feminists had realised increasingly in the seventies that it was not possible to consider gender in isolation from issues of class, but American feminists had perhaps become aware earlier that it was essential not to isolate issues of gender from race” (134). Watkins also reminds us that in the UK the initial struggles to abolish slavery took place earlier than the fights for women’s rights; however, the subsequent suffrage campaigns by white women centred around the voting rights of black men and white women (165). Exploring the traces of multiracial feminism in the US, Thompson discusses the feminism of colour in the history of second-wave feminism. She relates that there were feminist organizations of women of colour such as Women of All Red Nations (WARN) (1974), National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO) and the Chicago Women’s Liberation Union- the 1970s’ socialist feminist organization which gave place to racism not foregrounding sexism among other forms of oppression. However, these organisations and issues of race were mostly ignored because socialist feminist organizations were generally white led and limited to academic and middle class communities (352). Actually, for radical feminists who constituted the majority in American feminisms, in women’s oppression sexual difference was far more important than issues as race. Millett, for instance, argued that although sexism and racism are similar as they both involve “the general control of one collectivity, defined by birth, over another collectivity, also defined by birth” (24), sexism is more important than the latter since “the birthright priority whereby males rule females” is “largely unexamined, often even unacknowledged” (25). Therefore, sexual relationships and how they are formed by power dynamics solidifying male dominance are centralized in the American context.

As seen thus far, feminism in the 1970s in the British and American literary theoretical works had similar concerns while exhibiting lesser differences; namely, “they were attacking patriarchal attitudes, cultural misogyny and the

ingrained belittlement of women” (Carr 120); it is in their treatment of these themes that certain differences are shown. Yet later the universalizing efforts of feminisms in this decade were criticized for ignoring diversity among women. Moi, argues that, Anglo-American criticism articulate humanist essentialism in their search for unity and thus they consolidate patriarchal ideology (8). In spite of this, it was successful since it created a “feminist political consciousness” (Carr 132). Turkish feminism experienced the feminist concerns of the 1970s’ Britain and the States at least a decade later and it was influenced by the mainstream Western feminism and its universalist approach, which was duly criticized by Kandiyoti as being “either inadequate or incomplete” (“Emancipated but Unliberated?” 335). As a matter of fact, although local concerns did not show a decisive presence in many key works of the decade, each culture with a distinct socio-political contexts brought up different centres of attention.

CHAPTER 3

FEMALE BODY AND SEXUALITY

The female body and sexuality were focal points of the critical works of the 1970s and the reassessment of these issues within patriarchal society—particularly by women—was considered as imperative for the feminist revolution. Exploring the female body and sexuality within a socio-political frame while also paying attention to culture and ideology gained visibility in that decade. In this sense, the sex and gender dichotomy which had first been identified in print in the writings of Beauvoir became central to “feminist theorising in the 1970’s” and understanding the body as a cultural and social phenomenon apart from being a biological entity attracted specific attention from feminist theorists of the time (Lennon n. pag.). Acknowledging the female body as a site of patriarchal oppression and a call for a reconsideration of settled assumptions that had previously been taken as natural became essential within the feminist discourse of the decade.

Most of the time feminist theories of the 1970s paid attention to discussions of sexual difference either in radical feminist terms or in affiliation with the psychoanalytic feminisms influenced by the theories of Freud and Lacan. Here, attitudes towards the female difference were varied; it was sometimes resented, as in Firestone’s call for releasing the female body from its ties to reproductivity, and sometimes it was taken as something to be valorised, as Rich did. Drawing attention to how these approaches all exercised the fallacy of “homogenising what are very variable experiences both of sexuality and maternity,” Lennon reminds us that such claims should also consider Beauvoir’s argument that “the experience of embodiment is a product of situation” (n. pag.). She, nevertheless, agrees with Susan Bordo, who suggests a different reading of these texts that is to read them as “life enhancing fictions,” which leads to

“visions of utopian change” (230). Likewise, this chapter explores the concerns related to female corporeality within the light of these arguments reflecting the playful interaction between different standpoints.

Within this frame, this chapter will focus on the female body and sexuality in the novels selected from three cultures, in order to trace the similarities and differences between them. More specifically, it will study how these texts represent female corporeality, sexual objectification, female sexual pleasure, sexual freedom, and sexual violence since these were the prevailing arguments included within the feminist activism and theorising of the 1970s. As seen thus far, the novels are concerned with these issues and they can be regarded as a praxis of these ideas. This chapter will also lay bare the differences that exist among these cultures, however.

3.1. The Female Corporeality: Delving into Anatomy, Biology and Nature

In the frame of 1970s, common negative assumptions related to female corporeality such as passivity, inferiority and dependency were critically approached. This is in fact the touchstone of many 1970s feminist texts, most prominently including *Sexual Politics*, *The Female Eunuch* and *The Dialectics of Sex*. On the whole, whether it is seen as a source celebration or oppression, the female body was considered “to be produced through specific social, economic and political conditions” (Howson 50). In this sense, the novels studied here share an awareness of the influence of cultural discourses on biological identity, an awareness which originated with Beauvoir’s sex/gender discussion. As Morrison remarks: “In thinking about gender and the body, . . . contemporary women’s writing has been crucial in the development of new and radical perspectives” (43) Actually, “[t]his interest in the complex relation between the body and culture has been a common feature of both theoretical and literary writing, as well as work which blurs the boundary between them” (43). Thus, both in theory and fiction, discussions on biological and sexual difference are highly influential in

scrutinizing the cultural devaluation women experience in society. Yet, within that area, each culture (in fact each writer) had different focal points.

Unnameable Bodies

The body politics of the 1970s which scrutinize the malestream¹⁵ constructions of the female body as passive, inferior and obedient to male desire¹⁶ is explored in *The Passion of the New Eve*. In this novel normative representations of the body are replaced by fetishized or grotesque bodies that have either anomalies or excesses, all of which are represented in such a manner that hegemonic cultural meanings revolving around the body are shattered. As Margaret Atwood revealed, Carter is “born subversive, in the sense of the original root: *to overturn*” and the use of female corporeality helps Carter to destabilize any kind of myth written about it (qtd. in Bristow and Broughton 1). The female body is foregrounded from the beginning of the novel when Evelyn meets Leilah, an African American woman who earns her living by dancing in night clubs and working as a naked model. Through the Evelyn-Leilah relationship, Carter depicts a patriarchal view of the female body and how it is constructed as either erotic or maternal which are both strictly segregated not to allow personal choices. Leilah plays the roles—from that of a seducer to that of a victim—that Evelyn assigns her in order to feed his sexual fantasies; however, she loses her sexual appeal once she gets pregnant. Vomit, urine, and blood take over from her fetishized image in Evelyn’s mind and “any remaining desire for her vanished” (28). According to Kristeva, things that violate the “clean and proper” body such as urine, blood, sperm are manifestations of the abject that threatens the borders of the body and integrity of the self (*Powers of Horror* 53). Likewise, Evelyn is disrupted by Leilah’s abject materiality. When she tries to attack him for rejecting the baby, Evelyn uses his physical power to subdue her until she becomes as “limp, passive and obedient” (30). She has a backstreet abortion and catches an infection, during

¹⁵ It is a word frequently used in feminist discourse to note how culture is regulated by patriarchy and organized centring the male values.

¹⁶ Greer 1970; Millett 1970; Koedt 1970; Firestone 1970; Brownmiller 1976

which Evelyn avoids seeing her. Nonetheless, she suffers “a massive haemorrhage,” Evelyn has to accompany her to a clinic; while she suffers there, Evelyn blames her in his mind for making him uncomfortable, because “[t]he sickness of the ghetto and the slow delirious sickness of femininity, its passivity, its narcissism, have infected [him] because of her” (31, 33). The fetishized, eroticized female body becomes then the abject threatening Evelyn’s existence; Leilah’s black skin is a fearful place fused with “darkness and confusion” feeding the “sickness” in him (33). Evelyn thinks of Leilah as “doubly degraded, through her race and through her sex” and is repelled by this (33), which again consolidates Evelyn as a misogynist man considering himself superior to Leilah.

The abject maternal body which Evelyn was horrified by and wanted to escape from will soon disavow his norms of the female body. Abandoning Leilah after her abortion and subsequent illness, Evelyn starts a new journey, and is soon captured by a group of female militants who live in a separatist society governed by a Mother goddess. The female body, which was only an object to satisfy his sexual desires, meets Evelyn in Beulah as a “warm, red place” and is embodied as Mother’s operating theatre which is “a simulacrum of the womb” (49). He thinks that this “humid viscera” is “an alien cosmology” which is a source of “metaphysical dread” that shakes, worries and destroys him (49-50). When he first encounters the Mother, he describes her as the “great, black, self-appointed prophetess,” “a desolating strangeness overwhelmed” him (55). The Mother’s body is beyond the descriptions of a normal body; it is deviant, abnormal and thereby shocking. According to Heather Johnson, Carter employs the Mother figure in order to disturb “patriarchal conceptions of the female body, as the grotesque body irrupts into the conventional presentation of that body” (“Textualizing the Double-Gendered Body” 128). Likewise, seeing that she has a “false beard of the crisp, black curls” and she is breasted like a sow with two tiers of nipples, Evelyn feels nothing but a “squeamish horror” (56). He expresses his confrontation with the abject maternal body as follows:

Although her arms were the paradigm of mothering, they offered me no refuge; that women are consolation is a man's dream. Her refuge of breasts allowed me no place where I could lay my head- they were not meant for comfort, only for nourishment, and was I not a full-grown man? (57)

Here, a criticism of Evelyn towards the patriarchal repulsion of the maternal fertile body is clearly detected. Nevertheless, the novel does not celebrate the female materiality as a sign of fertility and through a utopian vision of matriarchy as in the works of cultural feminists such as Rich, Firestone, Daly, Brownmiller and Morgan. In *The Passion of the New Eve* these powerful images of femininity are not valorised but rather problematized for their tendency to rewrite patriarchal definitions of the female body. That is, a matriarch can also be oppressive and sexist as a patriarchal abuser; the grotesque is then not only a criticism of patriarchal machismo but also of a radical feminist stance which rewrites the gender asymmetry. The Mother puts Evelyn through plastic surgery, transforming his male body into that of a female one. His genitals are cut off with a knife and replaced with a vagina that Evelyn describes as a “wound that would, in future, bleed once a month” and the last thing he sees before the surgery is a “serrated fringe of breasts” and Mother's bearded face (67). With his brand new artificial female parts, Eve/lyn¹⁷ himself becomes a grotesque figure. Mary Russo explores that:

The grotesque body is the open, protruding, extended, secreting body, the body of becoming, process and change. The grotesque body is opposed to the Classical body, which is monumental, static, closed and sleek, corresponding to the aspirations of bourgeois individualism; the grotesque body is connected to the rest of the world. (62-63)

Likewise, Evelyn's new body does not confirm to the normative representations of a body; it resists definitions as he is now a woman in appearance but a man in mind since he escapes from Beulah before the psycho-sexual programming is completed. His red nipples are “unexpectedly elastic” and they do not hurt when

¹⁷ When the Mother transforms Evelyn into a woman, she calls him Eve. However, Evelyn does not totally feel like Eve—a woman. Therefore, when referring to Evelyn after the Mother's surgery, I will use Eve/lyn to point out the ambiguous identity s/he has from that moment onwards.

he tugs them (71). Looking at his new body for the first time in the mirror, he sees a completely different physical figure:

I saw Eve; I did not see myself. I saw a young woman who, though she was I, I could in no way acknowledge as myself, for this one was only a lyrical abstraction of femininity to me, a tinted arrangement of curved lines. I touched the breasts and the mound that were not mine; I saw white hands in the mirror move, it was as though they were white gloves I had put on to conduct the unfamiliar orchestra of myself. (71)

According to Kristeva, the abject is something “in-between” and “ambiguous,” which “disturbs identity, system, order” (*Powers of Horror* 4). Looking at the reflection, Eve/lyn, who is now a woman, feels the same disturbance he (as she then was) had felt on seeing the Mother for the first time and s/he (as she now is) reveals her/his judgement: “Now I am a being as mythic and monstrous as Mother herself” (87). With the discrepancy between Eve/lyn’s body and mind, Carter problematizes the very link between sex and gender, which comes to the fore once more through the character Tristessa. When Evelyn becomes Eve, s/he is still attracted to Tristessa, a silent movie star Evelyn had kept thinking about when s/he was a man. Later, when Eve/lyn is made to have sex with Tristessa, s/he sees that Tristessa’s perfectly feminine body is actually hiding a penis between her thighs (125). At this point it becomes impossible to decide who is a man or who a woman because the sexual orientations of characters are not connected to their biological sexes. Her gothic transvestite body cannot be categorized, as Eve/lyn discovers, recognizing that Tristessa “did not exist at all in any medium of sensible actuality” (126). The line between femininity and masculinity becomes ambiguous and they lose their semiotic meanings in Tristessa’s transgendered body, and this is also reflected by Eve/lyn who performs multiple sexualities:

Masculine and feminine are correlatives which involve one another. I am sure of that – the quality and its negation are locked in necessity. But what the nature of masculine and the nature of feminine might be, whether they involve male and female, if they have anything to do with Tristessa’s so long neglected apparatus or my own factory fresh incision and engine turned breasts that I do not know. Though I have been both man and

woman, still I do not know the answer to these questions. Still they bewilder me. (146)

Like Eve/lyn's transsexual body, Triestessa's transgendered one is beyond classification and therefore cannot be categorized.

At the beginning of the novel, Evelyn described Leilah as "some in-between thing" (17), the Mother was a multi-breasted technician, Eve/lyn was given elastic breasts, and Tristessa was a drag queen and master of disguises. These uncanny, grotesque, and fantastic elements are employed to break the link between binary gender categories; thus the text calls for reconsideration of sex-roles. In this sense, as Gamble argues, *The Passion of New Eve* calls for "the hope of escape from the dream factory, in which performance is the condition for existence, and where 'male' and 'female' are not so much biological categories as roles people play" (Angela Carter 128). The corporeal body becomes a site for resistance and the novel becomes invaded by bizarre and excessive figures, as a result of which any gendered subject becomes destabilized. A mythological realm where these figures are mystified is not celebrated as a solution to end patriarchal oppression; instead the problem of gendered mind-sets, which devalue female bodies, is shown to exist in socio-political contexts which Carter proposes in *The Sadeian Woman* as saying, "our flesh arrives to us out of history" (9).

"Nature does not know best"

Female corporeality is a major theme in *Praxis*, as well. In this novel there is an on-going debate about how a woman's body comes to be seen as a natural source of inferiority and passivity. It is in discussions of this sort that, as Head discusses, Weldon is the writer who "perhaps best catches the mood of second-wave feminism" (96). Throughout *Praxis*, stereotypes affiliated with female embodiment are put into question through the inclusion of the corporeal female body. On the one hand, women are exposed to the norms and expectations of a society that tries to define them into strict categories as beautiful woman, athletic woman, feminists, movie stars, secretaries, etc.; on the other hand, there is the

female body with experiences of menstruation, pregnancy, giving birth, abortion, cancer and aging. As Kenyon argues, Weldon's style is transformed "by direct, rueful mention of women's bodily experiences" (105). For example, older Praxis who has already spent two years in prison reflects that "[n]ature does not know best, or if it does, it is on the man's side. Nature gives us painful periods, leucorrhoea, polyps, thrush, placenta praevia, headaches, cancer and in the end death" (133). In this sense, Weldon uses such biological processes experienced by the female body to scrutinize what is taken as "nature," as Greer and Mitchell do. Yet she also highlights the "influence of biology" and claims acknowledgement that hormonal changes and physical facts can sometimes limit women's lives as in the case of menstrual period decreasing "the efficiency of women at workplace" (Waal 56). According to Weldon, rejecting any difference at all including differences of religion, class division and biology, is a fundamental mistake for a society since "the denial of difference" is only a temporary solution to the problems related to these categories (Waal 55-59). On the other hand, Weldon never prioritizes the female materiality as some radical feminists such as Rich and Daly did in the 1970s; instead, she criticizes biological determinism and any discourse that uses anatomy to devalue women. Correspondingly, in this novel, she brings together different accounts of female corporeality to undermine so-called natural essences attributed to it.

To begin with, *Praxis* draws attention to women's negative attitudes and feelings towards their bodies, which is frequently discussed in feminist scholarship. According to Beauvoir, for instance, women's first experience of menstruation is dramatic since it causes shame, disgust and fear:

the menses inspire horror in the adolescent girl because they throw her into an inferior and defective category. This sense of being declassed will weigh heavily upon her. She would retain her pride in her bleeding body if she did not lose her pride in being human. (315)

Thus, the body becomes a source for anxiety of womanhood since these negative connotations of the female body and essence are maintained in "sexual initiation,

marriage, and motherhood” (Lennon n. pag.). The very same idea inspired 1970s feminists such as Greer and Firestone, as well and became prominent in the discussion of sexual difference. These negative descriptions of the female body were influential in Praxis’ understanding of womanhood. First of all, her early experiences of her body were negative in the sense that she was never told about the specifically female experiences. When she experienced menstruation for the first time, she was terrified since she could not figure out what happened:

Patricia¹⁸ started to bleed, one day. Crimson drops appeared on her legs. A scratch, a nick? No, it came from between her legs, where she never looked, or felt: from some hidden dreadful, internal wound. Patricia ran to her sister, crying. (39)

Not knowing what it was, her elder sister told her that it seemed a “messy” thing, which is reminiscent of Greer’s *The Female Eunuch*, as well. She warns women against anti-feminist discourse which makes them associate menstruation and accordingly womanhood with instability, inferiority and weakness; she says that “[m]enstruation does not turn us into raving maniacs or complete invalids; it is just that we would rather do without it” (59). Likewise, the novel also draws attention to such views on female nature and how they are influential in Praxis’ understanding of womanhood. Praxis cried all night upon which the narrator comments that: “Five-twenty-eights of her life [had] gone, stolen, and for no other reason than that she was a woman” (39). As she grew older, she was unable to make a “connection between her body and her feelings” (52). In fact, her knowledge of female anatomy was very limited:

Irma dressed and undressed in front of Praxis, who was relieved to find that other girls too had a triangle of hair where their legs started. Praxis’ body seemed as much of mystery to her as ever. She bled once a month, regularly, but barely knew why, and had ceased to wonder. She neither felt nor investigated the area between her legs, and certainly never took up a mirror to look, imagining that an area so soft, private and forbidden was better left alone. Irma seemed to have no such inhibitions. (82)

¹⁸ In the novel, Praxis is called Patricia from time to time.

The narrator lays emphasis on how not only men but also women associate the female body with inferiority. Hilda insults Praxis as follows: “You’re hysterical. I expect you’re premenstrual. I’m afraid women are hopelessly handicapped by their biological natures” (191). First and foremost, *Praxis* challenges these “biological natures” that situate women into a secondary position in society. Praxis tries to figure out why “some natural process is being abused.”

I cannot believe it is a punishment: to have a certain nature is not a sin, and in any case who is there to punish us? Unless—as many do—we predicate some natural law of male dominance and female subservience, and call that God. Then what we feel is the pain of the female Lucifer, tumbling down from heaven, having dared to defy the male deity, cast out forever, but likewise never able to forget, tormented always by the memory of what she threw away. (17)

Thus, in this novel the female body becomes a site for a discussion about “male dominance” and “female subservience” and how these cultural constructions are fed by assumptions about biology. Women are assumed not to have control over their own bodies; men and patriarchal institutions impose their own authority over the female body. Men satisfy their sexual needs without expecting a female response, they abuse and rape women whereas women do not have the right even to decide when to have a baby as their bodies are suppressed by men¹⁹. Women nevertheless are shown to exert what control they can: for instance, Mrs Allbright puts “a piece of sponge soaked in vinegar up her vagina, for fear of conceiving a fifth child” (30). The novel also shows how laws take side with men; women cannot have abortions, thus having to give birth against their wishes. Miss Leonard wants an abortion after getting pregnant through rape, but the (male) doctor tells her: “Not even in cases of rape is abortion anything other than a criminal act” (71). In such a context, Weldon brings up the discussion of prostitution to the novel. In the 1970s, most feminists regarded prostitution as a site of oppression where the female body was controlled and women’s sex work was manipulated (Rubin 1975, Barry 1979). As Kempadoo explores:

¹⁹ Specific examples will be provided in the following subchapters.

In the 1970s, prostitution, along with marriage and the family, was defined by Western feminism as an expression of patriarchy and violence to women, illustrating the way in which female sexuality and the female body were controlled, subordinated, and exploited by male and masculine interests. (35)

Nevertheless, *Praxis*' attitude towards prostitution is different. With her friend Elaine, Praxis contemplates the girls with whom they work at the same lunch time drinking club as waitresses and barmaids. They observe that some of these girls accompany men with whom they sometimes have sexual congress; they do not make any charges but when offered, they accept money as gifts:

A gift was tendered: not a charge made—Elaine and Praxis were definite about that. They were not prostitutes; just a couple of girls living life to the full, working their way out of difficulties, in a world which made any other solution impossible. (123)

They see this informal prostitution as a practical way of improving their lives financially in a world where they have no other solution. Actually, they consider their marital sex lives as “sexual service” they are obliged to give for free. In prostitution, at least, they will have some recompense for the act. This discussion echoes Beauvoir's view of prostitution as empowering for women, she says that “[t]he man may perhaps think he ‘has’ her, but his sexual possession is an illusion; it is she who has *him* . . . she will not be ‘taken,’ since she is being paid” (541). What Praxis feels about her prostitution in terms of pleasure and satisfaction is in fact not very different from how she feels about sexual intercourse with her husband in which she passively responds to his needs. Nevertheless, in these encounters outside of marriage, she is more active since she is expected to do things wives do not do:

she would . . . undress, display herself, watch her partner's mounting excitement, or if it did not mount, assist him as best she could, and do whatever was required of her: things she had never thought of, which Brighton wives were not required to do. To masturbate openly, suck and be sucked, spank and be spanked, be tied, tie up, bugger with dildo, be buggered herself; but mostly just to lie there, in a fume of alcohol, her face wet with a stranger's tears, while he inexpertly plunged, lunged, failed,

gave up, tried again, spoke his griefs and unburdened himself, via his ejaculation, of his troubles. (124)

Before long, Praxis uses prostitution to subvert the so-called submissive feminine role attributed to female biology and she turns prostitution into a space where she has control over her own body. Although she follows men's instructions in sexual acts, she is free to accept or decline these offers whereas Willie—the man she lives with—never gives her the option to choose whether or not to have sex with him. In prostitution, she has the right to choose to engage in sexual activity and to sell her sex. She admits even becoming orgasmic in some instances but she does not like this idea since she associates orgasm with self-abandonment:

She told Elaine that it [becoming orgasmic] interfered with business, but what she meant was that it drew more from herself than she was prepared to give. She could offer her body as an instrument of relief, her sympathy as salvation; she could stretch out her hand and receive money in anticipation of these blessings, but she could not give her own abandonment. (125)

Moreover, she wants payment in advance and does not proceed if the man seems reluctant to pay. Actually, prostitution is her only tool to make money and from it she saves one hundred and thirty pounds which allows her to run away and start a new life. That is, prostitution enables her to be economically independent and thus to be released from her onerous relationship.

Apart from prostitution, incest—one of the taboos of society—becomes another space in which she gains control of her body. As Rubin puts it, Lévi-Strauss put forward that “the incest taboo and the exchange of women are the content of the original contract” (192). Based on this, Mitchell argues that patriarchy functions through the exchange of women by men, as a result of which the incest taboo is universalized. Like Mitchell, feminists such as Greer, Firestone and Butler in different ways argued (from different standpoints) that the incest taboo regulated heterosexual and subversive relations to maintain the continuation of the nuclear family and the patriarchy. Therefore, transgressing the boundaries of the incest taboo in *Praxis*, is associated with confronting the patriarchal norms

of womanhood. One of the men she takes from the pub turns out to be her father, who had left her when she was a child. Without knowing the man's identity, Praxis has a "genuine orgasm" with him (129). Once she figures out who he is, the idea of incest astounds her at first, but then she decides to have sex with him again:

To commit incest knowingly, Pattie²⁰ supposed, was a great deal worse than to do so unknowingly and that was bad enough. Oedipus had put out his eyes, and been pursued by furies, forever after, for such a sin. But she was committing nothing: she was lying there, while her progenitor plunged and frayed in the body of his own creating. She was glad he liked it. She would say nothing. She would take his guilt upon herself. (130)

When he cries "Christ," Praxis feels that she has demystified him, turning him "from saint to client, from father to man, from someone who must be pleased to someone who could pleasure her" (131). When his erection wilts, she urges him to become erect again and uses "it for her own purposes" and feels that "[s]he had become, at his expense, autonomous" (131). In this case, she leads the entire sexual act and this empowers her with a sense of self-government. Besides, acting against the norms of her society in which the incest taboo regulates sexual relations, she feels exempt from the control of cultural rules. Immediately after this incident, Praxis leaves her husband and her informally adopted child Mary, and starts a new life. Through their roles in enabling her to use her own will and perform an identity not determined by her sex, prostitution and incest take on new meanings as liberators. Contemplating her acts of incest, Praxis reflects that not only sexually defined identities but also any other category used to express derision need not be a reason for others' assumed superiority. She contemplates the label of a "whore," saying that:

titles were absurd, definitions were absurd; she'd always known that: words used to simplify relationships between one person and another: granting one privilege, the other disadvantage. Bastard, Jew, student, wife, mother, prostitute, murderer: all made assumptions that reduced the individuals, rather than defined them. (129)

²⁰ Patty is another name used for Praxis.

Through her subversive actions, Praxis reconceptualises stereotypical womanhood as she “repudiates the inheritance of nature and is transformed from passive object to active subject” (Dowling 80).

One Genotype, Four Js

The Female Man's use of the female body mainly creates a discussion that counters the patriarchal claim that anatomy is destiny. In this novel, Russ presents four alternative worlds through the lives of four different women—Joanne, Jeannine, Janet and Jael—who get into each other's worlds by coincidence and come across a different kind of womanhood from what they had previously experienced. Joanna lives in 1970s America; although she has a career, she is still exposed to the stereotypical female images that society tries to impose on her as on all women. She is the one who wants to become a “female man” so that she can fulfil her potential as an individual. Quite differently, Jeannine's world never recovered from the Great Depression and she submissively follows the deprived gender roles given to her. Even further from these is Janet's Whileaway world. As an all-female society, it is the utopian setting aspired to by the feminist revolution in this novel. In this world men do not exist because of a plague which erased them all from the world. For Joanna, Janet is a woman “whom we don't believe in and whom we deride but who is in secret our savior from utter despair” (212-13). In Jael's dystopian world, female and male societies (Womanlanders and Manlanders) have been involved in a battle for over forty years and she reacts against patriarchy with violence. According to Teslenko, the real development that the novel brought to feminist literature is the fact that although these four protagonists have identical genes, their subjectivities become quite different due to the socio-political contexts of their worlds (21). Through these four Js²¹, assumptions about the female body are put into question as its meanings and attributed qualities are seen to be different in different worlds.

²¹ I will refer to Joanna, Jeannine, Janet, and Jael as Js.

Second-wave feminism, mainly radical standpoints, closely examined and rebutted the essentialist patriarchal discourse which promoted the idea of femininity—“as both the concept and also the associated practices of a “feminine” personality of passivity, domesticity and duty to the male of the species” (Edwards 68)—as inherent in the female body. Particularly, femininity as appearance (which included the debates such as fashion, cosmetics and dress) was attacked as “supportive of a male supremacist and/or capitalist empire” (68). In accordance with this second-wave feminist frame, concerns with beauty and one’s own appearance provide one of the dominant themes of *The Female Man*. More specifically, the novel, with its four alternative worlds, highlights that femininity is a social construct.

To begin with, recognition of female beauty is not stable across these alternative worlds. The narrator describes Jeannine, who had just her nails done, as “rich in feminine power” and Jeannine thinks being beautiful defines her individuality (16). She occasionally repeats that she is prettier than Janet who “resembled a large boy scout with flyaway hair” (26). While well-styled hair, nails, eye-lashes and good clothes are very important parts of physical appearance in Jeannine’s world as it shapes a woman’s concept of femininity, they are null for Janet: ““Who did your hair?” she [Jeannine] asked Miss Evason [Janet], and when Miss Evason didn’t understand: Who streaked your hair so beautifully?”” (27). Although Jeannine wants “[a] beautiful body and personality to burn” (27), even the latter seems inaccessible since her oppressive patriarchal society makes her “stupid,” “inactive,” and “pathetic” (92). As Teslenko comments, in Jeannine’s world women live “on the margins, invisible, mute, constrained within stereotypical roles of possession- child or mother, sexual object” (139). In Joanna’s world, femininity in terms of appearance and personality is quite important; she was repeatedly told to be a beautiful and passive woman to please men (205). According to Millett, gender-norms maintain women’s subordination since women are socialised into submissive roles through cherishing values such as “passivity, ignorance, docility, “virtue,” and ineffectuality” (26). Likewise,

Joanna accounts for contemporary women's concern with beauty to attract men as such: "A dozen beautiful "girls" each "brushing" and "combing" her long, silky "hair," each "longing" to "catch a man"" (75). However, feminists in the 1970s diligently attract notice to the necessity of women's gaining awareness of their socialization into these types of femininity, as it creates and maintains gender asymmetry. Unlike Jeannine who is blind to the construction of gender inequality, Joanna acknowledges that there is an "opera scenario that governs [their] lives" and in this scenario, even the utopian Janet would become a feminine woman putting on mascara in order to gain men's compliments (30). While Joanna despises sexual difference because it causes gender inequality, Jeannine is not yet aware of how her body is interpreted as a source for the justification of biologically determined roles perpetuating the oppression of women.

Thus, as they travel in time, the Js come across different attitudes towards female embodiment and see that beauty ideals change from one society to another. For Jeannine's and Joanna's worlds well-styled hair is of great significance simply to find a man. However, they notice that Janet does not care about the appearance of her hair. When the Js come to Whileaway, they bring their own assumptions with them. As Joanna reveals: "Vittoria's [Janet's wife] too stocky for Jeannine's taste; she could at least be good-looking" (90). A "big ass" is desirable in Whileaway whereas in other worlds it is not appreciated. The Js' understanding of the beautiful female body is further tested by Jael who is a cyborg with grey hair, lined face, macabre grin and steel teeth. Her head and hand move in "sinister disconnection like puppets controlled by separate things" (158). Also, her hands are crippled as "the ends of her fingers . . . were once caught in a press and are growing cancerous" and they are described as "disbodied" (159, 158). As Cortiel argues, Jael's body shows the destabilization of the "original female body" as it "is carefully crafted as a killing machine for the physical destruction of male bodies; her 'female' body, which was the site of her powerlessness, becomes the site of power" (211). Jael distorts the link between biology and gender; and any assumption of a connection between female anatomy

and passivity is exploded by her becoming a female assassin. In contrast, among the heterosexual Manlanders in Jael's world, men are categorized as real men, the changed and the half-changed. Through the Manlanders, the novel once more lays bare the constructedness of femininity. While the changed ones have been surgically turned by the real men into females for their sexual pleasure, the half-changeds "keep their genitalia but who grow slim, grow languid, grow emotional and feminine" (167). The beauty ideals of Jeannine and Joanna's world exist here, but they are now applied to the half-changeds. Observing their bodies and behaviour, Joanna contemplates what a woman is:

Look at the necks, look at the wrists and ankles, penetrate the veils of false hair and false eyelashes to measure the relative size of eyes and bone structure. The half-changed starve themselves to be slim, but look at their calves and the straightness of their arms and knees. If most of the fully changed live in harims and whore-homes, and if popular slang is beginning to call them "cunts," what does this leave for us? What can we be called? (167-68)

Anna, one of the half-changeds that the Js meet for business, wears "a pink chiffon gown, with gloves up to his shoulder" (171). He is "a monument of irrelevancy on high heels, a pretty girl with too much of the right curves and a bobbing, springing, pink feather boa" and his green eyes narrowed with his false eyelashes" (171). Though referred to as a "he," Anna is defined with qualities and features attributed to female sex; moreover, his behaviours are also defined as feminine. Jael reveals that "[t]here must be a secret feminine underground that teaches them how to behave" (171). That is, the text highlights how these features attributed to sexed bodies are socially constructed and learnt things rather than natural facts (Boulter 160). Thus, with this representation, Russ shows the fallacy of attributing certain roles to a certain gender and prioritization of one over other, which is the case in two 1969 New Yorks depicted in the novel.

Joanna's New York, to illustrate, is a patriarchal society where gender differences have, in Millett's words, "essentially cultural, rather than biological bases" (28). This is reflected in the novel when Janet meets a man there who tells

her that gender is determined by anatomy, and a woman should acknowledge this: “Unequal pay is a disgrace. But you’ve got to remember Janet, that women have certain physical limitations” (43). Joanna living in this world is already used to such assumptions and believes that one’s physicality cannot be a source of privilege. She says: “Manhood . . . is not reached by courage or short hair or insensibility” (20). Joanna, in fact the female man of the novel, relates the conflict she felt between her femininity and intelligence. Being a beautiful woman with an I.Q. shot past 200, she says: “I’m not a woman; I’m a man. I’m a man with a woman’s face. I’m a woman with a man’s mind” (133-34). Thus, she starts to protest against her inferior positioning in gender structures and she rejects to be a dependent woman who is exposed to unequal treatment in a patriarchal society. Correspondingly, Joanna’s becoming a female man takes place in 1969 which is regarded as the start of Women’s Liberation Movement in the States. She relates that: “I had just changed into a man, me, Joanna. I mean a female man, of course; my body and soul were exactly the same. So there’s me also” (5). Her turning into a man thus means her disrupting gendered categories since she will be a woman who is not passive and inactive, rather a rebellious, assertive and even violent.

Within this frame Jael’s entry into the novel gains more significance as other Js recognize the vision of how so-called natural gendered identities are instable and thus can be reconstructed. Actually, even in Jael’s world, gender oppression also exists. She explains to Jeannine that her society also attributed negative connotations to the female sex:

I knew it was not wrong to be a girl because Mommy said so; cunts were all right if they were neutralized, one by one, be being hooked on to a man, but this orthodox arrangement only partly redeems them and every biological possessor of one knows in her bones that radical inferiority which is only another name for Original Sin. (194)

Yet, unlike Jeannine, Jael fights against the social oppression based on anatomy and tells the other Js that:

We are less alike than identical twins, to be sure, but much more alike than strangers have any right to be. Look at yourselves again.

“We’re all white-skinned, eh? I bet two of you didn’t think of that. We’re all women. We are tall, within a few inches of each other. Given a reasonable variation, we are the same racial type, even the same physical type—no redheads or olive skins, hm? . . . Look in each other’s faces. What you see is essentially the same genotype, modified by age, by circumstances, by education, by diet, by learning, by God knows what. (161)

In this respect, the story of the four Js who have the same genotype yet become different people fits the second-wave feminist discussion of how cultural factors are influential in understanding corporeality. Here, Teslenko’s relating this representation to ideology is truly significant because she renders that these four Js are the products of their own cultures. As Burke explains: “Ideology is like spirit taking up its abode in the body; it makes that body hop around in certain ways; and that same body would have hopped around in different ways had a different ideology happened to inhabit it” (6). That is, the same physical embodiment becomes a completely different person in a different ideological discourse. Therefore, the novel further encourages women like Jeannine who are not yet aware of their oppression by patriarchal ideology to gain awareness like Joanna and even actively fight against it like Jael.

Before & After

In *Beyond Power*, Marilyn French, like many other radical feminists, explains that patriarchy mythologizes sex relations by relating them to a falsified biology in which (it is assumed) man becomes universally dominant over the female sex:

Rule of might overlaps with male dominance but is not identical with it. Males are not dominant by nature, or they would always be dominant, in the way females always have the babies. In one sense, patriarchy is an attempt to make male dominance a “natural” fact. (65)

In *The Women’s Room*, French certainly problematizes this inaccurate “natural fact;” along with other debates concerning the physiology, nature and belief in

stereotypical images of femaleness, the novel's discussion of the female body aims to display how women become oppressed in a patriarchal society in which it is assumed that "women were victims by nature" (22). In her introduction to the novel, French points out that "[a]s human beings, women have the right to control their own bodies, to walk freely in the world, to train their minds and bodies, and to love and hate at will" (ix). Accordingly, the novel revolves around various female characters and their lives to point out men as instigators of and heirs to patriarchy that supports surveillance of the female body. It depicts the protagonist and focaliser Mira from childhood to her maturity pointing out she is only one of those women who share the same oppression and indicating through her how they can have different lives if they fight against this oppression. Thus, the narrator lays emphasis on the shared oppression and imposed inferiority of women by mentioning women from different countries whose bodies are all controlled by men:

In the Moslem countries, they make women wear jubbah and yasmak. This makes them invisible, white wraiths drifting through streets People don't see them, they are less differentiated than the dogs that run among the fruit carts. Only the forms are different here. You don't really see the woman standing at the glove or stocking counter, poking among cereal boxes, loading six steaks into her shopping cart. You see her clothes, her sprayed helmet of hair, and you stop taking her seriously. Her appearance proclaims her respectability, which is to say she's just like all other women who aren't whores. . . . Wife or whore, women are the most scorned class in America. You may hate niggers and PRs and geeks, but you're a little frightened of them. Women don't get even the respect of fear. (8)

Within this frame, throughout the novel women's unawareness and awareness of their bodies are correlated respectively with their oppression and liberation; thus they are interrelatedly depicted. In the early 1970s, following Beauvoir's ideas on the female body, feminists criticized the negative descriptions attributed to female body since they continue to influence women's later experiences (Lennon n. pag.). Menstruation is one of these aspects of female corporeality and how women are socialised into it is thus quite significant. In this novel, for example, Mira's first experience of menstruation is painful and

disturbing both mentally and physically: “Suddenly her body had been invaded by a disgusting, smelly substance that brought pain to her lower half and anxiety to her mind. Could other people smell her?” (21). The idea that it would continue for years depresses her; the blood, smells, and bloody “napkins” taunt her imagination as she is repelled by the idea that her “clean white smooth body” has this inside it. It should be recalled that for the 1970s’ feminists, the association of female body with disgust and irritation contributes to inequality between sex/gender roles. As Millett renders, gender is “the sum total of the parents’, the peers’, and the culture’s notions of what is appropriate to each gender by way of temperament, character, interests, status, worth, gesture, and expression” (31). Likewise, Mira’s fear of menstruation is strengthened by Mrs Mittlow who insists that “women build poisons up in their bodies and they had to be gotten rid of” and that men did not build up the same “poisons” in their bodies. When Mira’s mother objects to this, Mrs Mittlow assures her that it’s true, saying she heard it from the priest. Mira thus concludes that “men remained in charge of their bodies; they were not invaded by painful and disgusting and bloody events they could not control. . . . That was why they were the conquerors. Women were victims by nature” (22). Subsequently, she associates her first experience of masturbation and its pleasure with rottenness and corruption:

she began to experience strange fluidities in her body, and her mind, she was convinced, had begun to rot. She could feel the increasing corruption, but couldn’t seem to do anything to counter it. . . . She smelled the air of the summer night and a tremendous sensation of pleasure encompassed her whole body. (15)

The novel illustrates how these negative descriptions of the body also lead to discomfort with femininity in appearance, which second-wave feminists debated in relation to women’s oppression. Young Mira carefully observes how girls become interested in their appearance which she thinks is a reason for their inferiority to men. Although all the girls she knows were smarter than boys, they started to be silly as they one by one “had started to lick their lips all the time to make them shiny, only to end up with chappedness around their mouth. They

would pinch their cheeks to make them pink” (15). She wonders how those stupid boys came to be regarded as “men” and admired by women. She observes that her female friends, nuns at school and characters in films and fiction are dependent on men and she decides not to “lick her lips and pinch her cheeks and giggle and whisper like other girls” (17). Then, in this novel, societal norms are depicted to mould women into stereotypical images of femininity in terms of appearance and personality. In this sense, these personal concerns with appearance have political implications. As Firestone argues:

When women begin to look more and more alike, distinguished only by the degree to which they differ from a paper ideal, they can be more easily stereotyped as a class: They look alike, they think alike, and even worse, they are so stupid they believe they are not alike. (172)

Namely, she observes that stupidity and uniqueness are the outcomes of the sexual oppression. Likewise, the novel, through Mira’s experiences, illustrates how the female body is usurped by a patriarchy that codes and stereotypes women and places them in the oppressed sides of their binaries. Although young Mira had felt determined that she would not let her anatomy determine her destiny, it turned out to be a difficult task as she went through different adult experiences, changing from a submissive housewife into a liberated woman. The narrator reveals how, as a mature but still unliberated woman, Mira tottered around on her high-heeled shoes in the first days of her Cambridge life: “she always walked shakily in high heels but she always wore them” (8). As the narrator, she feels a little contempt to her previous self since she wore these shoes, even though they were uncomfortable merely to comply with the beauty ideal of her society; nevertheless, she does not blame her all, recognizing that she was one of those women who, like her mother, pursued a life regulated by cultural assumptions rather than by personal aspirations. Thus patriarchy, under different names like capitalism, religion, and even friendship, can control women’s bodies and, quite literally, shape them and make them behave in conventionally dictated ways.

Although the novel undoubtedly criticizes how girls are taught to be uncomfortable with their bodily experiences, it does not promote the celebration of biological materiality specific to female embodiment such as pregnancy and menstruation since this would be another form of mainstream pressure on women. For instance, throughout her pregnancy Mira feels sick and uncomfortable “with constant nausea and stomach pain” (48). Thus *The Women’s Room* also draws attention to the fact that not all women enjoy pregnancy and giving birth, particularly if it is not their choice. In fact, the narrative develops through two different types of women: those who follow mainstream society in believing “Sigmund’s ‘anatomy is destiny’” and thus strive to develop “a sympathetic, responsive nature” and those who rebel against it, like the radical feminist Val and lesbian Iso (9). Pursuing this contrast, the novel delves into the lives of two different female subcultures that: of the world of suburban housewives and that of female intellectuals who are aware of patriarchal oppressive structures. Mira belongs at different times to both groups and in this respect awareness of the female body as a source of patriarchal oppression is shown to be an initial step towards feminist consciousness.

Fur coat or School Uniform?

In *Lying Down to Die*, the discussion about the female body will be explored through Aysel, the protagonist of the novel. Aysel’s high school years corresponds to the early Republican era when the efforts to maintain republican reforms gain nationwide significance. During that era, the elite of Turkish society featured a “passion for civilization” as a result of which regulations to ensure the integrity of the society became a “modernization project” (Biricikoğlu 6). This project included regulations such as hat revolution, clothing reform, adoption of Western calendar and the Latin alphabet, and the introduction of the metric system (Kadıoğlu 121). In this context, women’s clothes and appearance were of particular significance for that project since the new regulations of clothes and attitudes attributed to women also symbolized the modernization of Turkish nation (White 2003; Çaha 2011). In this frame, the female body becomes a

remarkable tool for this modernization project, which is also observed in Aysel's situation. Bodily representations focusing on young Aysel's hair and clothes are especially important; her long light brown hair comes to be associated with her rural origin and her clothes along with her hair braids are scorned and ridiculed by other children when she moves to Ankara to pursue her education after primary school. In one of her letters to a female friend, she writes how she resented being assigned to play the role of a peasant girl in a school play, which makes her understand that she is still considered as such not only by her friends but also by her teachers; her physical appearance becomes an indicator of her lower and conservative familial background:

But I don't know why Miss Melahat chose me while there are lots of girls whose fathers are civil servants. I heard the part is a peasant girl. Of course, I am upset because the whole school, particularly my teachers, still see me as a peasant girl. Everyone else's uniforms are knee-top, mine is still below knee. Everyone else's hair is short; I still have two braids as you know."²² (86)

Not only hard work and good education but also a modern outlook is a must for Aysel to reach this ideal image of a modern woman. She feels the pressure of being conscious of her physical appearance since she cannot entirely reach this ideal unless she appropriates her appearance. She later relates another instance when one of her teachers tells her that her clothes are ugly and she should get an *alagarson* hair cut like a Western girl (97). Aysel is very upset because she is sure that she cannot have this haircut as her father would never permit it. Although she wants to be a modern girl in appearance with better clothes, this almost seems impossible due to their low economic status and conservative values of her family particularly of her father who puts great pressure on Aysel, as he does on her mother who is not allowed to remove her headscarf (98). In fact, he once made Aysel wear one when she went to town for school holiday, upon which she felt quite embarrassed since she thought she would never be a modern girl of the type that Atatürk wanted to see in Turkey. As White argues "until the massive rural to

²² All translations are mine.

urban migration beginning in the 1950s, headscarves were associated with peasant life . . . and reviled as a glaring sign of how much civilizing work still had to be done” (150). Akin to this argument, Aysel expresses her distress with wearing a headscarf in a letter:

When I was there [her hometown], the thing offended me the most was my parents’ forcing me to cover my head. As I told you, here, we—the girls at my age and me—never cover our heads. We only wear our caps when going to school. Besides, our eternal *Ata*²³ wanted us to be aware and modern. What would my teachers say if they saw me wearing a headscarf during the summer? Yet, it is impossible to tell this to my mother and above all to my father. (69)

As Erol also argues, *Lying Down to Die* presents a criticism towards the Kemalist ideology because Aysel’s story is intermingled with that of the nation (8). In this context, Aysel’s body appears as a site for the projection of the conflicts between operative national regulations of the modernization process and more conservative traditional values of the relatively older and poorer population of the rural era. However, not only the Republican ideal of woman but also class distinctions and socio-economic status were relevant to Aysel’s conflict. In the novel, the school play prepared for the fifteenth anniversary of the Turkish Republic is one of the instances which shows that what Aysel experiences deep inside is a reflection of the nation. As the narrator described the audience, she detected the diversity among the women members, including those in head scarves, those with *jilbabs*²⁴, and those wearing hats—some even with peacock feathers (12). While those with hats are described as belonging to a privileged and educated class, the others were from lower socio-economic backgrounds. The former group enjoyed at the play, whereas the latter were made uncomfortable by it. The narrator describes that: “Old women are covering their faces with their checkered scarves. Praying inwardly saying that “O Allah, please do not consider me sinful,” they are spitting ten times to their bosom” (12). Undoubtedly, the

²³ Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey; this shortened version means “ancestor,” “father,” etc. Thus, Atatürk stands for “the father of the Turks.”

²⁴ “A long robe covering the head worn by some Muslim women” (“Jilbab”).

discontent towards the play depicted the conflict prevalent in a Turkey which had not internalized the new state ideology which encouraged coexistence of women and men in the same public space. At the same time, it highlighted class differences. To illustrate, Aysel and her mother had difficulty in finding the proper clothes for her role as a civil clerk because they could not afford to buy these clothes themselves. Eventually, Aysel had to wear her mother's only high-heeled shoes that she kept for special days and a coat they borrowed from another acquaintance; to emphasize the incongruity between Aysel's background and the social class of her theatrical role, this costume presents an ironic picture of Aysel appearing too small for these clothes which are, in fact, too big for her. Years later in high school she still wears her hair in two braids and is still wearing coats longer than everyone else's (135).

Lying Down to Die thus shows that the gender-based difficulties of a young woman in the changing Turkey of 1970s were bound in many and complex ways to class, religion and politics. To be recognized as a modern woman was not a simple task because it meant breaking free of very many entrenched conventions, beliefs and habits. The Kemalist concept of a modern woman displayed in the novel was very close to that of an educated Western European woman. The first person to refer to her as a young European girl is Aydın, her classmate at primary school from whom Aysel always wanted recognition as an intellectual. When Aydın says she resembles a European lady, he does so in purely physical terms, noting how beautifully she has draped her hair over her shoulders (161). Aysel's personal narratives, especially her letters, reflect how deeply she is influenced by pressures of this nature and question why people could not understand that concerns over her appearance were not of primary significance to her, because her major efforts were spent in trying to go to school.

The female body gains more attention in this text when the narration is interrupted by an older Aysel who reflects on her life as she lies naked in a hotel room. She continually mentions her nakedness and uses the possessive pronoun in expressions such as "my naked body" (26), "my naked hips" (43), "my hymen"

(46), “my naked belly” (65) and so on, which indicates that she is now more able to connect with her body. She recurrently refers to her hymen and how she experienced a second loss of virginity:

His shirt became blood-stained. With it, I wiped my hymen that was deflowered again. No one can believe IT. But I saw, I know: the hymen tightens again years later. It is there as if it had never been touched. You tear down, tear down all of the curtains of captivity; and then you look, there you see virginity. (46)

Aysel’s body, which has always been defined by other people, now becomes a way for rebelling against these definitions; she questions the concept of virginity referring to it as a “disease placed under our skins by force” (46). Contemplating on the buttons of her vest, she assures herself that she did not walk the streets with her chest exposed since her coat would cover her nakedness (62). This again reflects how society regulates women’s body and appearance; Aysel is very much aware of the fact that as a chaste woman she is expected to dress properly and modestly. Nevertheless she immediately recognizes that whether she was naked or covered does not matter now because she will die soon, and her being a prostitute or an intellectual would not matter, either (63). She feels closer to her body, inspecting its details and recognizing the two purple veins on her left hip, which she sees as a sign of tiresome and busy days. As she touches her body, she in fact starts a conversation with herself and reconsiders her personal life. Concentrating on her skin, stomach, belly and breasts, she wonders about pregnancy and what kind of changes her body would go through if she was pregnant:

I am looking at my stomach. My belly, which has slightly fattened and swollen, seems as if it suddenly released a lump formation. A yellowish thick skin is left behind. . . . Can such a skin hide a child? . . . Here are my breasts which have maintained their firmness so far seem loose overnight. (102)

Remembering her childhood and her old nanny who was helping her mother in housework when she was younger and now living with them, she relates how she used to suck her wizened breasts and love them, and concludes that she might have loved her for her generosity in not hiding her withered breasts (102). Then,

Aysel's reflections in the mirror of the hotel room show how she experienced an emotional alienation from her mind and body and the conflict between the two. She recognizes that this alienation inherent in the effort to become an example of "[t]he privileged intellectual woman of Turkey" (107); and point often overlooked is, the text indicates, this woman dissociates her mind from her body to conform to the republican ideal (107). This is a woman who treats the Turkish men around her as her brothers but who at the same time is expected to communicate with them in order to be Westernized. Yet at the same time she has to be very careful not to bring disrespect to her family. Thus, her body becomes a site for both repressions and contradictions, imposed by education, political ideals and religion.

In this sense, the novel also interacts with Western second-wave feminism whose one important predicament is rejection of femininity (Hollows 2). Likewise, although she does not completely reject a feminine appearance, Aysel dissociates herself from an over engagement with her body. As her letters evince, in her younger years, she used to criticize one of her female friends who would spend her time looking at women's magazines such as *Yıldız*. Aysel would reassure herself that such girls could not contribute to the development of the country because they could never be sisterly towards men (172). When she went to the beauty salon as a more mature woman, she used to catch herself casually mentioning her position as an associate professor (174). That is, to be a successful woman like men; she has to foreground her intellectuality since being a woman was associated with domestic values rather than academia. She reflected upon these conflicts because she slept with her student—Engin—, which made her conscious of being a woman and at the same time an intellectual, and thus reconciled her mind and body. Remembering those days, she reflects that:

From that morning on I understood that my body was a concrete thing that could be grabbed and seen. But I was still timid that morning. I faltered in recounting the existence of this head that has become a reservoir of thoughts for me, this neck, these arms and legs even when I am having my hair moved. (177)

Wondering whether she ever behaved as herself free of social expectations, she becomes even more interested in her body and reveals her ideas about being an individual (177). As she reflects, she realizes that she learnt to feel comfortable with seeing her nakedness in a mirror on that day that she slept with Engin, and later, when lying naked in the hotel room and reviewing her past, she starts to question why her body was disconnected from her:

So, I guess I learnt to walk entirely naked around the room on that morning. I am thinking how habitually and comfortably I just looked at my nakedness in the bathroom.

Why my body has been disconnected from myself for years? (178)

As also Irzik explores, Aysel's nakedness in the hotel room symbolizes her withdrawal from the "socially scripted roles and imposed identities she has so far assumed" (551). In one of her dreams, she sees herself wearing a school uniform, a pair of high-heeled shoes from snake leather and a fox tail, which makes her feel ashamed because Atatürk and other professors would think of her as a woman who is fond of finery. Soon, it turns out that she is trying to find her dissertation as she is holding the head of fox with one hand and searching for the pockets of her school uniform with the other (299-300). The dream indicates that her concern with her physical appearance which, she thinks, would devalue her intellectual identity was repressed by the expectations of new Republican ideal of woman and family relations as a result of which she had never embraced her corporeality. The hotel room, consequently, becomes a place where Aysel accepts the familiarity of her own body and inner self regardless of the roles previously assigned to her.

A Strange Sea Creature Getting Naked

In *A Strange Woman*, discussions about female embodiment mostly centre around the debates on public shame and family honour. The narrative draws attention to how the female body becomes a site for patriarchal oppression due to different institutions such as the family, party politics and religion. The novel focuses on Nermin—a woman in her early twenties who sympathizes with leftist movements—and the conflicts she experiences as a woman in her social circle.

According to Baş, in Erbil's short stories the main factor that determines and limits female identity is gender and how women are considered in society (4). Baş's argument is also valid for *A Strange Woman* in which the female body is exposed to social and parental repression. The first part of the novel, called "The Girl,"²⁵ concentrates on Nermin's relationship with her mother who is trying to live according to the moral values of Muslim culture. Nermin and her mother, Nuriye, are depicted in a constant fight against each other; Nuriye tries to impose her religious beliefs on Nermin who continually rebels against her. In the beginning of the novel, Nermin reveals how her mother regularly gives religious instruction about her body: "She started with nonbelievers, the tortures liars will suffer in hell, and the wrath those who do not cover their private parts will be exposed to" (23). In this context, covering the female body is a sign of religious purity and necessity which is otherwise exposed to God's punishment. When Nermin questions her mother's wearing a hat (rather than a headscarf), she explains that this is because her father made her to do so; having the fear of sinning, she begs for God's mercy (23). Within this frame, the text interrogates the religious and modern codes of Turkish society and how they are projected to the female body. In the above example, both women are deprived of the right to choose; Nuriye cannot wear a headscarf because her husband forbids her to do so whereas Nuriye compels Nermin to cover her body thus taking her right over her body. White argues that, seeking to create emancipated women, the new Republican reforms also increased the gap between two groups of women which are those who thought that "their religious beliefs required them to dress modestly and cover their heads" and wanted to keep their older customs, and those who behaved and dressed in a modern, Westernized manner defined by the state (146). Thus, both women are rebelling not only against each other but also against the inscription of sociocultural norms onto the female body. In this party, Nuriye, though resented being oppressed by her husband, represents the former group and wants to exert control over Nermin. While Nermin wants to stop her mother's

²⁵ Use of the word "girl" is important here since in Turkish "girl" meaning *kız* refers to a virginal status in contrast to "woman" meaning "kadın" who is not a virgin. This part will be explored in Chapter V.

reactions, which she calls “preachings,” as soon as possible, Nuriye does not let her go without answering whether she performs *ghusl*²⁶ or not (24). Although she does not perform it, Nermin lies and says yes, not to annoy her. Nuriye nevertheless becomes angry, blaming Nermin for being a dishonest girl who is doing things behind her back. She believes that teaching her religious and moral values is her duty as a devoted religious mother. When Nermin attempts to leave the room, she slaps her face, telling her that the lessons of God are more important than what she learns at school (24). Thus the narrative portrays religious performances such as covering the body and *ghusl*²⁷ as essentially repressing mechanisms disguised by the name of piety. If a woman does not follow these habits and rituals, her body is considered sinful and accordingly doomed to hell. For Nuriye, their neighbour Neriman is the ideal woman as she is both educated and religious. She praises her for never having shown her hair in front of non-*mahrims*—men whom she is allowed to marry and thus with whom she has to cover her body (26). Nermin, on the contrary, is casted out as being sinful, strange and rebellious.

For the most part, the social, religious and moral significance ascribed to parts of the physical body strikes Nermin as somehow disturbing, perhaps even absurd. More than any other part of the body, the small and hidden part of the female body called the hymen is the ultimate symbol of chastity and losing it would be considered as the ultimate shame brought on a family. In one of her dreams, Nermin sees that Bedri—her future husband—is attached to her leg in a chaotic street where her mother is running towards her with a white seat in order to help her (31). When Nuriye sees Bedri on her leg, she puts the seat under Nermin and tells her to repent as she has committed a sin. Her mother interrogates her, asking if she is a virgin or not, Nermin cries: “I am a virgin, Mummy, I did not do anything” (32); the chaotic atmosphere settles down and she finds herself

²⁶ “Ritual washing of the whole body, as prescribed by Islamic law to be performed in preparation for prayer and worship, and after sexual activity, childbirth, menstruation, etc.” (“Ghusl”).

²⁷ Islamic tradition requires both men and women to perform *ghusl* after specific experiences.

surrounded by happy children who are choosing flags. As she takes her flag, she sees that it is a black and white one. Waking up, she feels ashamed of having such dreams. In this context, her dream comes to represent the shame she feels about her body and conflict she has between her body and the parental pressure put on it. Any contact with men, represented by Bedri here, is strictly scrutinized by cultural norms regulating female sexuality; this dream reflects how Nermin is disturbed by non-sensical nature of her society's investing the unthinking, purely physical body with such powerful meanings.

Nermin observes the functioning of social pressure on the female body out of her family, as well. In one of the school parties, she sees Kevser and Şeref dancing cheek-to-cheek, but apart from the waist down. Nermin ironically reveals: "They are saving their honour like this, I guess" (27). Even dancing in public, the proximity of male and female genitals is to be avoided; the entire female body in this context is equalled the virginity which should be kept intact till marriage. As Gündüz argues, in the Turkish context "[v]irginity is definitely not a personal choice; it certainly involves society" since "their [women's] sexual purity is essential for the survival of the standards and values of society" (124). The novel in a way problematizes these norms regulating female body. Nermin frequently reveals her discontent with the fact that the invisible hymen is given such importance by a society which associates it with dignity. She wants to get rid of it as soon as possible precisely because keeping it until marriage is the task she is expected to do. For example, once, being kidnapped by the police when she was a university student, Nermin feels that they could easily deflower her upon which she realizes she was actually more afraid of her mother's reaction- since she glorified virginity so much- than she was of the threat of rape:

I am not afraid of being beaten but "what if he knocks me out, behaves swinishly." What if, in the first place, a policeman spoils that peace of membrane my mother put on a pedestal. Besides in such a setting. . . . if I get rid of this situation, I said to myself, I will get an amenable man to take care of this stuff. (39)

In order to show her discomfort with the over-inflated value given to the hymen, Nermin repeatedly talks about it as something to be get rid of or granted to people like Bedri who are obsessed with sex. For instance, relating how Bedri continuously stares at her breasts, she says that: “Maybe I would give away this piece of membrane to him. He is actually cut off for this (48). In another instance, she thinks granting it to a man stalking her at the street:

In front of the Saray Bookstore, a big guy is repeating “100 liras, 100 liras” like a broken record behind me; once he gets ahead of me and waits there, once he stalks behind me; with a flat cap on his head, muddy plastic shoes on his feet, long beard, he is half a bandit half a burglar. I was not angry with him. What was the difference, in terms of attitudes toward women, between this guy and those like R.R. who are taken as the brain of Turkey? Nothing. . . . Others are thousand fold guilty compared to him, for sure. The guy came close to me for one moment and showed a piece of banknote “100 TL.” I laughed. He grinned, as well. I wonder if I grant this membrane to him. (63-64)

As Mumcu also mentions, what is important for Nermin is not sexual experience but to be released from the pressures of living in a society that seems obsessed with sexual morality (116).

In this respect, Nermin’s mother can be taken as an extension of the patriarchal society. As Şahin explores, generally in Erbil’s novels mothers are the ones who shape girls’ understanding of sexuality as they do not hesitate to convey patriarchal oppression to their daughters although they were also oppressed by the same system (60). In this novel, Nermin names her as the “madam protector of hymen” and protecting the hymen is in fact associated with protecting the whole female body (68). As Nermin relates in one of her memories about her youth, her mother was very conscious of covering her body properly so that she is not seen in her bathing suit:

My mother rolls me up cylindrically in a huge towel; I undress and put on my bathing suit. My swimsuit has been knitted by my mother, it is multi-coloured and comes all the way up to my neck, and it is a strange thing with half-legs. There I run towards the sea like a sea animal created by my mother. She herself sits on a blanket she has spread on the stones, not

taking off her beige coat and opens up her black rain umbrella against the sun. . . . “There are tides again, come toward here” “You will run here once I have the towel ready” “One, two, three, run.” We go back. (73-74)

This flashback is included in a scene when Nermin and Meral are on a rowing-boat and chatting. Soon they are interrupted by teenage boys asking them to show them their vaginas. Nermin says that: “I pulled up my skirt, half removed my panties and showed it to them” (77). She stresses that she did not feel embarrassed at all but just thought about easing Meral’s shame, because Meral has just revealed that she lost her virginity due to her brother’s sexual abuse: “Meral shouted at me “Aren’t you embarrassed?” I said “I am not.” “Now, get the hell out of here,” I yelled at them [the boys] I was not embarrassed. I thought I would relieve her shame” (77). Unlike Meral who considers losing her virginity as a disaster and a dirty thing, Nermin does not show revulsion and tries to console her. Thus, her showing off her ‘private parts’ is one of her reactions against all kind of oppressions that dictate that women’s bodies should be covered and that make women feel ashamed and guilty about their bodies.

Results

As shown thus far, all these novels deal with the representation of the female body in order to draw attention to how it is used to oppress women and force them into a secondary position within patriarchal institutions. Thus, the novels provide reactions against the Freudian voice of a society that stresses that anatomy is destiny. Namely, a spotlight on the social construction of embodied femininity is prominent in the selected novels; nevertheless, they differ in their discussions of the issues related to female corporeality.

To begin with, in *The Passion of New Eve* and *Praxis*, the female body appears in tandem with subversive sexualities and actions as a result of which these novels create characters that go beyond and perhaps shatter the normative categories of embodied femininity. Carter’s abject and grotesque bodily representations, such as the transsexual Eve/lyn and the transvestite Tristessa, blur the boundaries between definitions of sex and gender categories. Likewise,

Weldon's *Praxis* is a female character whose self-conscious commitment to prostitution and incest transgress the phallogocentric view of how women use and feel about their bodies. Any cultural inscription about sexual difference is mocked by these writers, mainly through employment of an erotic sexual content juxtaposed with representations of the 'maternal-feminine' which Irigaray noted as the sole recognition of sexual difference in patriarchy. Thus, *The Passion of New Eve* and *Praxis*—with female characters not fitting into a stable category of femininity—echo Butler's assertion that gender identity is a performative act. As Butler argued; "genders can be neither true nor false, but are only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity" (*Gender Trouble* 186). Eve/lyn and Tristessa demonstrate that their essences do not fit their biologies and what they reflect is an excessive and grotesque femininity imposed on them by external factors; in Eve/lyn's case the maternal realm pushes her/him to act according to the strictest definitions of feminine behaviour whereas Tristessa voluntarily masquerades as a "perfect" woman according to the same socially imposed criteria. The grotesquery of Weldon's *Praxis*, which is her way of rejecting a passive maternal feminine role, lies in her use of prostitution and incest to gain control of her body.

The texts become playgrounds where these so-called natural categories of femaleness are scrutinized. Reminiscent of Butler's ideas, the protagonists learn to see such categorizations as a result of "the naturalizing narratives" that forcibly relates gender difference to biological difference (*Gender Trouble* 200). Carter and Weldon break the stream of narratives that repeatedly enact and represent conventional gender performances. Furthermore, their texts show that gendering of the body is not only an imposition and an unnatural violation, but that it happens differently in different contexts. Butler has emphasized that besides gendered binaries, "the constitution of class, race, ethnicity, and other axes of power relations" are also influential in the constitution of identity, as a result of which "the singular notion of identity" becomes "a misnomer" (6). This is manifest in *The Passion of New Eve* and *Praxis*, where not only sex but also class

and race are foregrounded as parts of women's oppression. Leilah's experiences of subordination as a woman were aggravated by her being a black woman who is prostituting herself to earn money. Praxis also frequently refers to her being both Jewish and illegitimate. Thus, her experience of oppression could not be the same as that of Mrs Allbright, the wife of the reverend who sees her as "his Holy Madonna."

In the American novels analysed in this dissertation, sexual difference is taken as the ultimate cause of the women's oppression, and female corporeality is deployed to note how sexual difference places women in a disadvantaged position. In her analysis of American women writers, Payant mentions that "for the most part 1970s feminist fiction seemed to view being female as a negative condition" (25). Similarly, Joanna in *The Female Man* and Mira in *The Women's Room* decided not to behave in ways conventionally expected of women because they saw it as an obstacle to entering public life. Both characters experienced consciousness-raising that allowed them to challenge the female submissiveness associated with a female body. Russ uses a completely different technique to show the significance of the socio-political context; she uses four alternative and very different worlds and four different women who have the same genotype. In contrast, French's novel investigates a single world that is peopled by many women coming from different backgrounds. In spite of these differences, in both novels patriarchy is taken as the ultimate enemy abusing sexual differences. Therefore, although the novels include many women characters and refer to women of different colour, religion and race, female corporeality gathers them together under a shared experience which is based on surveillance of women.

The Turkish novels selected for analysis here both adopt the female body to underscore the conflicting relations between different wielders of social power, which are the state ideology, socialism and Islam. The protagonists of both novels feel that the conflicts of the preceding generation are visited upon them. The religious traditions of their societies put a heavy emphasis on covering the female body while the Republican clothing reforms, which are also powerful forces in

their societies, have banned these performances. “Dress became a cornerstone of Turkey’s modernist transformation,” says White and explains how these transformations are adopted by young women, which also seen as a threat to traditional moral values of the society (149, 154). In *Lying Down to Die*, Aysel reveals that her father made her wear a headscarf during the summer holidays which made her feel socially embarrassed and also guilty because she felt that in covering her head she was betraying Atatürk, the venerated figurehead of the modern Republic of Turkey. She also mentioned the daily and personal constraints that this traditional head covering placed upon the earlier generation by noting the sadness of her mother who was not allowed to display her newly-styled hair. Body covering is also shown to be a key mode of the oppression of women in *A Strange Woman*. Here Nermin’s mother places utmost importance on not allowing her own or Nermin’s body to be seen, and she is angry with her husband when he makes her wear a hat that does not allow her to cover her hair. This novel presents another type of repression on the female body in the form of the ritual known as *ghusl* which is in fact imperative for any adult Muslim, (both males and females) to purify the body after any orgasmic discharge and after completion of the menstrual cycle, giving birth, and death by natural causes. In the novel, Nermin is continuously interrogated by her mother who is checking up on her, to see whether she is chaste or not. The patriarchal society’s almost obsessive focus on unmarried female chastity is reflected in both of the Turkish novels’ frequent references to the hymen and how it is valued in the characters’ society. The significance of women is seen to be associated, in an exaggerated and unbalanced way, with keeping their hymen intact until marriage. Both Aysel and Nermin reveal their distress with being reduced to no more than the state of their vaginas. As Lennon explains: “The way we have of experiencing our bodies invests particular contours with emotional and affective salience. Some of our bodily zones and shapes become significant to us, while others are barely noticed” (n. pag.). In this respect, the reason why Aysel and Nermin continuously refer to their hymens can be traced back to the cultural norms they are exposed to.

3.2. Views on Sexual Objectification

Sexual objectification gained significant attention in the 1970s mainly through efforts of radical feminists such as New York Radical Women and their protests against organizations such as the Miss America pageant (Hodgdon n. pag.). How men treat women as sex-objects and the way it solidifies women's degradation and oppression were thus the oft-mentioned concerns of feminist discussions, which is also reflected in the selected novels. Especially, taking her argument from Foucault's 'disciplinary practices' Barthes talks about the cultural dimensions that create a specific female embodiment in which not only men objectify women and but also women learn to see themselves as objects in a "recognizably feminine" way (65). All the novels analysed in this dissertation show examples of these practices, which involve the influence of media, myths, literature, science, religion, and morality. Yet methods of representation and attitudes toward the subject displayed in the novels differ.

With this in mind, features that Langton and Nussbaum identify in treating a person as an object and their relevance to representations of objectification in selected novels are to be briefly mentioned here. In the British novels, for instance, sexual objectification is represented mainly through body parts, which corresponds to Langton's definition of a "reduction to body" that is the treatment of a person "as identified with its body, or body parts" (228). These novels explore the objectification of women and how they are treated as passive objects, Carter focalising body parts and Weldon concentrating on the whole body. In the American novels, however, the prominent feature of objectification is a "reduction to appearance," in which a person is treated as an object "primarily in terms of how it looks, or how it appears to the senses" (Langton 229). In the Turkish novels, the objectification foregrounded can be described as what Nussbaum calls a "denial of subjectivity," that is "the treatment of a person as something whose experiences and feelings (if any) need not be taken into account" ("Objectification" 257). No matter what they say, the protagonists of both of the Turkish novels cannot dissuade men from viewing themselves as sexual objects,

and they fail in their attempts to be recognized as individuals and to be respected in terms of their intellectual standing. Differences in terms of thematic exploration of the sexual objectification will be elaborated after the analysis of each novel.

“A Masturbatory Fantasy”

In *The Passion of the New Eve*, Carter explores sexual objectification through an erotic iconography. Above all, how women are treated as sexual objects is problematized by the novel, in order to challenge the stereotypical images of women produced by and found within a patriarchal society. In this respect, the text aligns with second-wave feminists such as Greer who highlights that female body is perceived as an object for male satisfaction (17). Evelyn as a man treats women merely as objects to decorate his sadist fantasies; he either does not know or does not remember the names of his sex partners since he is not interested in them as people but just as sex toys. Tristessa—reduced to a supreme example of “the iconography of adolescence” (4)—is his first object of desire and her posters and photographs decorate his walls. He dreams of meeting her “stark naked, tied, perhaps to a tree” (3). Similarly, when he first sees Leilah, he voyeuristically watches her legs which immediately feed his sexual fantasy:

Her tense and resilient legs attracted my attention first for they seemed to quiver with the energy repressed in their repose, like the legs of racehorses in the stable, but the black mesh stockings she wore designated their length and slenderness as specifically erotic, she would not use them to run away with. As soon as I saw her legs, I imagined them coiled or clasped around my neck. (15)

With her stockings and scarlet garters, she is a fetish image for Evelyn and the only thing he thinks about is having sex with her. According to Gamble, “[n]ot so much individuals as stereotypes of male and female, Evelyn’s and Leilah’s sexual interactions are represented with the stark exactitude of the pornographic text, which spurns the discreet veiling of romanticism” (*Angela Carter* 122-23). Correspondingly, “I was nothing but cock” says Evelyn and he does not refer to any kind of verbal interaction with her; he thinks of her as “the night’s gift” to

him and she is thus viewed as an object to be exchanged (21). As indicated in Langton's classification of objectification, Leilah is reduced to her body parts as Evelyn voyeuristically gazes upon her mouth, nipples and pubic mound while he lies in her bed "like a pasha, smoking" and watching her "in her cracked mirror" (24) as she becomes "a fiction of the erotic dream" for him (26). He assumes that Leilah, who sees him watching her image in the mirror, allows "herself to function only as a fiction of the erotic dream" (26). His objectification of Leilah underpins the feminist criticism of the prevailing patriarchal view of women as de-personalized sex objects for mere pleasure of men. As a woman is positioned as an object, man can have her whenever he wants. Although Leilah is preparing herself for the night club where she works as a naked dancer and therefore does not want to be touched at that time, Evelyn urges her to have sexual intercourse, which foregrounds his sadism:

I never knew a girl more a slave to style. It was the most important thing in the world to her that her eyelashes and the sculptured arc of her hair be just so. She did not want me to kiss her before she went out to work in case I smudge her lipstick or otherwise untidy her so, of course, so aroused was I by her ritual incarnation, the way she systematically carnalised herself and became dressed meat, that I always managed to have her somehow, at the last minute, even if it was up against the wall, while her lips stretched back to show her dark gums in an agony of affront and she gasped: 'No!' and her purple fingernails scored my back more out of indignation than passion. (27)

The novel soon subverts and deconstructs women's sexual objectification by making the male gaze the objectified, which lays bare that these categories are not natural but slippery and can be altered. In Beulah, the Mother turns him to "the *Playboy* centrefold," as a punishment for his mistreatment of women; as he admitted, "I was the object of all the unfocused desires that had ever existed in my own head. I had become my own masturbatory fantasy" (71). With the psycho-surgery he is given by the Mother, Carter parodies what Bartky calls as the disciplinary practices that create a specific female embodiment through which women learn to objectify themselves. These practices such as dieting, exercise and plastic surgery, try to create a body type that accords with the ideals of male

sexual fantasies (65-67). Then again, the Mother and militant team members reinvent the patriarchal assumptions of femininity as they turn Evelyn into a woman; the psychosurgery he is given includes not only physical changes which fit the beauty standards of the contemporary society but also a series of lectures and movies on how to behave like a woman. The “excessive femininity” of Eve/lyn after his/her surgery is a comic imitation of these practices. He is now forced to be an object as in the same way he earlier considered Leilah only as a sex object and satisfied his sexual desire by using force.

Furthermore, feminist discourse scrutinizes “the woman herself” who “often actively takes up her body as a mere thing” (Young 44). Thus, women who are preoccupied with their physical appearances are sometimes severely criticized for their objectifying themselves to please men and obtain social approval (Beauvoir 1949; Greer 1970; Bartky 1990; Bauer 2011). Carter, on the other hand, brings about another discussion where such practices can also be quite subversive. Tristessa demanded the same surgery from the Mother who was then working as a cosmetic surgeon in Los Angeles, and “offered her a million dollars to match his function to his form” (169). The Mother refused to give him surgery because he was “too much of a woman, already,” and “she was struck by what seemed to her the awfully ineradicable quality of his maleness” (169). Thereupon Tristessa objectifies himself as a woman since he already feels like one; he becomes the epitome of the erotic suffering woman for men like Evelyn. According to Gamble, “the melancholic figure of Tristessa legitimises the spectacle of female suffering, creating a stereotype of masochistic femininity to which real women are educated to aspire and men to desire” (*Angela Carter* 126). Actually, Evelyn’s early sexual fantasies were shaped by that figure of suffering femininity which he performed later during his sexual actions. Referring to the social construction of femininity, Carter quotes Theodor Adorno in her “The Wound in the Face:” “the feminine character and the idea of femininity on which it is modelled, are products of masculine society” (110). With this in mind, both Evelyn and Tristessa are the projects of masculine views of femininity; however, they also go beyond the

hierarchy of binary thinking as their sexualities and actions do not fit in the constraints of heterosexuality²⁸. Actually, Tristessa self-consciously objectifies himself to be more feminine and while they make love Eve/lyn's use of the stark language of pornography objectifies both Tristessa's and his/ her own body. This is because Tristessa, as a Hollywood star, is Evelyn's first object of desire and her cinematic vision is created by masochistic images of women, which sadist Evelyn adores. Evelyn's perception of female sexuality is mainly shaped by the display of sex and eroticism he has adored in Tristessa's cinematic history:

I stretched out my hand and touched his fleece, I grasped a greedy lover's handful of fleece and drew his head to my breasts. . . .

He licked my right nipple . . . and covered my other breast with his left hand. . . . He softly bit at my right nipple . . . ; I caught his cock between my thighs (143-44)

As Tristessa a transvestite and Eve/lyn is a man turned into woman, their objectifying each other draws attention to the whole issue of sexual objectification that is inherent in society, and most openly revealed in pornography.

Seen from this perspective, the novel's depiction of Evelyn and his sadistic objectification of women as mere sexual beings, which is actually fed by screen images of Tristessa's masochistic femininity, is a critique of female sexual objectification which is, Barkty argues, reinforced by the media as well as male partners (74). Nevertheless, it problematizes other biological iconographies of femininity as well. For example, Evelyn was disappointed by MGM's sending him a photo of Tristessa playing golf since he never imagined her as a real person but only as a cinematic figure to fantasize about. Then, he reflected: "She had been the dream itself made flesh though the flesh I knew her in was not flesh itself but only a moving picture of flesh, real but not substantial" (4). In this sense,

²⁸ Tristessa's femaleness is a result of her performance of the femininity that is constructed through Hollywood that functions as the male gaze. As Carter explores in "*Femmes Fatales*," the actress is "perceived not as herself but as the projection of those libidinous cravings" (351). Nevertheless, with Tristessa, Carter challenges this projection as Tristessa is biologically a "he" and produces herself as a "she" through Hollywood. Also, through her/his cinematic images, s/he is not only the object of the gaze but also the beholder of the gaze because through her image, Eve (he was once the beholder of the gaze when watching her on screen) constructs her femininity.

Tristessa's erotic image for a sadist fantasy is criticized as it creates a sexist discourse in which the female is nothing but a passive object. However, Tristessa in the photo is actually forced into another "mold," that of the fashion in the late forties which starred "[s]trong women with bulging pectorals" when "health and efficiency became the motto" (3). As Botescu-Sireteanu argues, "the figure of Tristessa, the movie queen, serves to reveal the immense artificiality and inauthenticity of Hollywoodian myths as manufactured stories used to manipulate people" (133). In this regard, the image of the sportswoman is the outcome of another practice; here she is objectified to serve the consumerism of capitalist society while as an erotic image she also belongs to the masculine imagination.

In this sense, the iconography of the erotic objectification of women is used as a critique of masculine and feminine discourses and practices which entrap women in specific biological destinies. As mentioned before, Leilah ceased to be an erotic object when she got pregnant; her maternal body eroded her eroticism. In contrast, the Mother turned Evelyn into a masturbatory fantasy but at the same time urged him/her to be a mother which she saw as a biologically determined act. Separately, Tristessa's sadistic eroticism was undercut by her fashionable sportswoman image. Nonetheless, Carter's text is never free of slippery meanings in her representation of sexual objectification, either. The erotic content can also be quite subversive as shown in the love-making of Tristessa and Eve/lyn since they are beyond sex-gender categories. Yet even these subversive personalities such as Eve and Tristessa are shaped by essentialist notions of sex categories. As also related by Gamble, this "recurring trope of dualism" illustrates its consciousness of the contradictions conveyed by "the notion of the performative subject itself" (*Angela Carter* 128, 129). That is, "a liberatory concept, indicative of the multiple, malleable subject" can find itself "limited by the ideological structure within which it finds itself placed" (129). In this sense, Carter does not present the readers with answers, she rather uses sexual objectification to problematize the essentialist notions of sexual difference and the way people internalize these notions.

“An Object Lesson, Not a Body”

In accordance with the 1970s’ feminist debates of female sexual objectification as a cause of gender inequality, *Praxis* displays a critique of the fact that the female body is seen as an object to be used by men and that in practice a woman has no right to own her body. While men feel free to project their own perspectives onto the female body, women keep silent and cannot find a way to express themselves. Sexual encounters in the novel, particularly the ones *Praxis* has with Willie and Philip, delineate such an experience. When *Praxis* goes to her first dance, she meets Willie whose “eyes were on her breasts” during their conversation (84). Later, Willie’s friend Philip joins them and two boys start to examine her body, Philip asking: “Does she have a shape under that dress?” (84). Soon they “ceremoniously” remove her dress; “one on each side they raised her arms to study the marks left by the whalebones” (85). From that moment on, the text delineates Barkty’s aforementioned objectification theory as *Praxis*’ body is separated from her personality and exposed to male gaze, sexual desire and power. Philip moves his fingers over the weal left by her dress and round her breasts upon which Willie tells him to take his hands off her because she is now “an object lesson, not a body” (85). Here, objectification, as in the second-wave discourse, is taken as a symptom of a hierarchy between men and women; the sexual activity following the objectification of *Praxis* depicts this imbalanced power structure. Willie tells her to remove her bloomers and she does so, speaking only when she is asked to. Talking about who is to have her, they see her as an object to possess in her nakedness. Philip is the one who will get her, and their sexual intercourse becomes an act in which *Praxis* becomes a passive and silent being, there only to satisfy him:

Philip bore her down upon the ground. The grass was damp and chilly, but his body was warm and welcome. His belt and buttons scratched her. As if in the interests of her comfort, he removed the belt and undid his trousers scarcely rising from his prone position; unaware that his shirt buttons were making severe indentations on her right breast. As fast as he assuaged one wound, it seemed he created another. His knee came between hers, forcing them apart. (86)

When she becomes conscious of her quickened breath and “Philip’s harsh panting,” she thinks that Philip’s body has a force on her own and occupies it, seeing her body as “a space she had always considered her own, but which apparently total strangers could enter with impunity” (87). She is depersonalized, rendered powerless and deprived of emotional attachment. The scene thus depicts sexual objectification as an act in which woman’s body becomes a space occupied by men; this is why Praxis refers to Philip’s body as “some moist foreign body” (87). Furthermore, the next day she is disappointed to see that it was an “unshared” experience since Philip even does not remember their sexual encounter during which Praxis lost her virginity. In her next sexual encounter, this time with Willie, Praxis feels “physical pleasure,” nevertheless, the narrator remarks, “Willie was in some way distasteful to her” (88). Again, her positioning as an object is foregrounded as she realizes that Willie is marking out “some kind of territorial boundary inside her, which he would from now on feel entitled to occupy and defend” (89). Important to realize is that while having sex with her, Willie does not take off his glasses and watches “her expression carefully” (89). His gaze justifies his control over Praxis’ body. Later, Philip objectifies Praxis as if holding a camera and “framing her with his hands” which made her uneasy (94). Praxis is objectified by men as they are the possessors of gaze and her actions in sexual activity are led by their directions. Willie with his glasses and Philip with his camera consolidate their positions as active subjects whereas Praxis is reduced to passive object to be controlled by them.

Further, objectification of women is not limited to erotic relationships; men feel free to comment on and use women’s bodies for various purposes. As Brooks notes, “the culture has granted men the right and privilege of looking at women, women have been expected to accept the role of stimulators of men’s visual interest, and their bodies becoming objects that can be lined up, compared and rated” (3-4). When Willie and Praxis move to the house Praxis inherited from her family to live rent-free, they have to hitch-hike to school since they cannot

afford rail fares. This time Willie begins to use her body to attract the driver's attention:

Willie found a nice pair of high-heeled shoes for Praxis at a church bazaar . . . and she wore them for hitch-hiking, instead of her usual sensible lace-ups. She sat on a rucksack by the side of the road with her legs showing to above the knee. Willie hid behind a tree. When a car stopped he would step out and there they would be, the pair of them, and the car driver left with little option but to take them both. (104)

Praxis is no different from a commodity to be exchanged or displayed for the benefit of one or more male. Although she feels "uneasy about such tactics," she cannot express her feelings, and Willie is happy using her in this way to save money. Another form of exchange occurs in Willie's imagination when he compares Praxis to her sister, Hilda who has a "lovely body" according to him. He seems to consider their relative values as objects of desire: compared to Praxis, Hilda is longer in the waist and has longer legs, although Praxis' face is "prettier" (105). The female body is used as literally exchangeable in the direction of plays, too. When the actress he works with does not want take her off clothes on stage Philip wants to "intercut telecine of Praxis' bare breasts seen in the shower, into his latest play" (201). Praxis asks whether he ever shows the men nude, he answers: "Who's interested in nude men?" and gets angry with Praxis' not allowing him to film her breasts, saying they are "private" (201). During these interactions, Praxis' not reacting against, or only slightly disagreeing with, these objectifications is crucial as it functions as a powerful narrative strategy to accentuate how women internalize objectification and serve to satisfy men; as long as women keep silent men's power over women is reinforced.

Within this frame, *Praxis* aligns with most second-wave feminists who regarded objectification of women as a pejorative term and thus morally problematic (Nussbaum, "Objectification" 249). However, Weldon also presents Praxis as experiencing a strange pleasure mixed with discomfort when she notices Philip watching her having sex with Willie:

Her breasts would tingle at the thought of his observation: the back of her mouth go dry: her eyes blacken: her buttocks tighten; the centre of her body shrink, oddly, away from him, not towards, as if desiring yet fearful of too overwhelming an experience. Her body acquiesced to Willie: yet crept round him, through some darkening of vision, some fusing of matter into magic, reaching out to Philip. (95)

In this sense, Praxis becomes momentarily active as she lets herself to be objectified at least by a man whom she really wants, and she enjoys being aware that she is sexually appealing to him. Actually, Praxis' thoughts when she finds her mother's nude photographs are relevant here. In those photographs, she was "in her prime, posing for the camera, oddly coy, with one hand over her breast, the other one over her crotch, head thrown back, enticing" (95). She wonders why her mother kept these photographs while she destroyed those of their childhood days: "Had it been a struggle between decency and indecency, the maternal nature and the erotic, that had in the end destroyed poor Lucy?" (96). Revealing how "the white of her eyes showed unnaturally," she contemplates whether it could be due to madness, lust, embarrassment or despair (95). These are actually what she feels when Philip voyeuristically watches her. She wants to be recognized sexually yet at the same time she cannot feel comfortable with her erotic image and she stays silent and self-repressed, neither rebelling nor enjoying it. Likewise, Miss Leonard, living without a man for years, fetishizes herself to enjoy herself; with "black mesh stockings, high heels, yellow satin blouse, tight black cr pe de Chine skirt, swinging a white handbag" she walks "unrecognizably" around the esplanade but runs home as soon as she is accosted by a man (68). Thus, what Weldon criticizes most is the sexual objectification of women as passive objects, unlike those instances where women may enjoy being sexually appealing and where they become active subjects in charge of their own bodies. The text reveals that this is neither an easy task nor one without risks: Miss Leonard enjoys having sex with a man she meets at in of her walks, but she is then raped by the man's son²⁹.

²⁹ Will be further elaborated in the following subchapters.

“Sexless Sex Object”

Feminists in the 1970s criticised the women’s positioning as passive sex objects since it was an outcome of patriarchal ideology which constructed masculinity as the dominant category (Firestone 1970; Millett 1970; Greer 1970). Therefore, beauty ideals and feminine appearances and how they are imposed on women were much debated. By the same token, feminists problematize fashion as it “creates, perpetuates or reinforces the positioning of women as (sexual) objects” (Edwards 73), which is reflected in *The Female Man*, as well. Looking at the fashion magazines and their objectification of the female body, the narrator calls them “pornography for the high-minded.” She finds:

Girls in wet knit bathing suits with their hair dripping, silly girls drowned in sweaters, serious girls in blackless jersey evening dresses that barely cover the fine-boned lyres of their small chests. They’re all slim and young. Pushing and prodding the little girl as you fit a dress on her. (63)

The girls in the magazines are reduced to visual objects and treated as one of a type, which collaborates in women’s oppression as in the case of women in the worlds of Joanna and Jeannine. Reflecting on Bartky’s view of the influence of disciplinary powers on femininity, Papadaki explains that the idea that women should have a more feminine appearance is inscribed everywhere since “it is reinforced by parents, teachers, male partners, and it is expressed in various ways throughout the media” (n. pag.). For example, Joanna reflects how everybody in the subway car stared at her legs as if she was a cheerleader (83), and it was awareness of the objectifying gaze of males that made her desire to be a female man; she wanted to be acknowledged as a person with a mind, not just as a body or a commodity, and she wanted to feel free in her sexist society. Jeannine, on the other hand, enjoys being sexually desirable and admired by men. Once going to a store with Jeannine who wants to buy a red fishnet hose, Joanna detects a shop-window mannequin which, she notes, roused her “active hatred” (86). She comments that these mannequins always look as though they are forever dancing, with a “throwing back of the head and bending of the arms and legs” and “[t]hey enjoy being mannequins” (86, 87). In this scene, Joanna associates the mannequin

with Jeannine; they are both passive objects that are expected to be dull lifeless creatures and seem pleased every time not reacting against anything. This scene thus fits in Dworkin's definition of objectification in which "a person is depersonalised, so that no individuality or integrity is available socially or in what is extremely circumscribed privacy" ("Against the Male Flood" 30-1). Like the mannequin, Jeannine lacks individuality; the difference between her and mere images is that she needs men to appreciate her beauty. The narrator indirectly reports her thoughts: "The lines of her figure are perfect, but who is to use all this loveliness, who is to recognize it, make it public, make it available?" (109). Here, it is noted that Jeannine has already internalized her construction as a sex object and thus her identity is based on man's recognition of herself only as a sexual devoid of personality. This is why, like a sleeping beauty, Jeannine just waits for her "prince" (125). As Joanna says, in "the opera scenario that governs our lives" (30), women are nothing but fetishized objects for man's pleasure and Jeannine is one of those women who have internalized their object position. Unlike Jeannine, Joanna was disturbed by being a sex object, as she disclosed that her life as a "sexless sex object" started at the age eleven when an eighth grader boy muttered to her "shake it but don't break it" (151). The text undoubtedly juxtaposes Jeannine and Joanna, which eventually raises awareness of how objectification operates against women and is most dangerous when women are unaware of it. That is, as long as women internalize objectification, the society will maintain their oppression. With this in mind, Jael's role in the novel becomes more important.

Among the Js and their worlds, Jael and her world where there is a fight between the Manlanders and the Womanlanders, are the ones who completely disrupt women's positioning as sex objects. Both Womanlanders and Manlanders are heterosexual societies and need the opposite sex for sexual activity. Nevertheless, since there is a war between these communities, the contact between two sexes is limited to administrative works; therefore, they create their own sexed objects through technology. That is, not only women but also men are

constructed as sex objects. For instance, the Manlanders change those boys who are not successful in their training into the changeds and the half-changeds to function as women because real-men would not want real-men as sexual partners (167). Jael, on the other hand, has a male-robot named Davy whom she uses as a sex toy and whom she calls her “classis mesomorphic monster-pet” (197). More evidently, this scene enacts a reversal of the objectifier/objectified roles where a powerless female always is objectified by the male. Here the objectified is a material object with no power of its own, and it is the female that has become the objectifier. She voyeuristically watches his body in his sleep and wakes him up to satisfy her. She is the one in control:

I nudged him gently and he shivered a little; bringing his legs together and spreading his arms flat; with my forefinger I made a transient white line on his neck. Little Davy was half-filled by now, which is a sign that Davy wants to be knelt over. (197)

Jael feels proud of having him; “I’d had him. Davy was mine” (198). As the other three Js watch this, Janet exclaims, “Good Lord! Is that all?” (198). Janet is a complete stranger to the experience of being objectified in this way, having never experienced it in her utopian world whereas Joanna, Jeannine and Jael are treated as sex-objects by men in their worlds. Janet’s comment indicates how insignificant the sex act is in itself, once emptied of the power-play that it incorporates in human-to-human sexual relations. Davy’s situation as a sex toy is familiar to Joanna and Jeannine who can therefore empathize (in a way) with the robot while Jael reconstructs herself as the objectifier. In this sense, through Jael, Russ portrays the need to act against being objectified because Jael (inside and outside of her own world) not only reacts but also militantly fights against being reduced to a sex toy. The boss in the Manlanders looks at her as a sex object having “a hole down there” and attempts to rape her (181). In her anger, Jael kills him with her claws and teeth and later reveals that “[m]urder is my one way out” (195). Trying not to be one of the *cunts* who is expected to be “neutralized, one by one, by being hooked on to a man,” Jael subverts that system through violence; she cannot eradicate it, however, and merely recreates it by becoming one who

uses others her pleasure sexual pleasure. Important to realize is that the text does not offer Jael's world as a perfect alternative since it is depicted as a dystopia; it rather attracts attention to need to take action against being a plaything stripped of integrity.

“Twentieth-century Pornography”

As Craig also remarks, beauty and fashion practices are scrutinized in the 1970s by radical feminists as means of patriarchal ideology which constructs women as sexual objects to satisfy male desire (n. pag.). Echoing this perspective, “What else was the point of the rouge, the sequins, the corselets” commented Mira of *The Women's Room*, when everybody started flirting at the first house party she arranged in her suburban neighbourhood (83). While men were dressed as usual, the women looked quite different: “The shabby slacks, the unmade-up faces, the curlers and aprons had vanished. They were done up in low-cut dresses, rhinestone jewelry, high-heeled shoes, eye shadow, rouge” (81). As Papadaki, argues, “women's constant preoccupation with appearance has come to be regarded as something natural and voluntary; it is something that women have internalized” (n. pag.). Referring to such practices of beauty and their influence on women, Dworkin reflects that:

In our culture, not one part of a woman's body is left untouched, unaltered. No feature or extremity is spared the art, or pain, of improvement. Hair is dyed, lacquered, straightened; eyebrows are plucked, pencilled, dyed; eyes are lined, mascaraed, shadowed; lashes are curled, or false – from head to toe, every feature of a woman's face, every section of her body, is subject to modification, alteration. (*Woman Hating* 112)

These women Mira described internalized these practices; in order to be attractive, they all accepted “being done up in uncomfortable bras and girdles, high heels, false eyelashes, and hair plastered into shape by hair spray” (82-83). At that point in her feminist development, Mira did not blame any of them: “They may have looked like the sophisticates in *Vogue*, but most of them were as innocent as they had been at fourteen” (83). In this respect, the party had released them from their roles as housewives and they enjoyed feeling attractive again. Her criticism in this

part of the novel is aimed at the fact that all these American suburban housewives did in daily life was done to please men, while they were actually disappointed with their sex lives. As a whole, the party is a microcosm of patriarchal society which treats women as passive sex objects, and in which women blindly collude. The party primarily displayed women, as if they were in starring roles, while men were less distinctive and less noticeable:

They were like the males in pornographic movies: the film is written, directed, and produced by them, includes male figures, and is intended to please men. But the whole film focuses on the female, upon her body, her joy as semen spurts all over her face or she is penetrated through her anus. Twentieth-century pornography . . . was like Greek tragedy, and situates emotion in the woman. (84)

While the woman's body is there to be exhibited, the women get nothing in return. As the narrator reveals throughout the novel, even magazines that are not meant to be pornographic are full of erotic pictures of women in black underwear, naked women, chained woman, a woman with a man holding a whip, and so on (20). In this respect, the text closely aligns with radical feminists such as Millett and Dworkin who related women's sexual objectification to pornography to highlight men's sexual control of women. Magazines, fashion ideals, beauty standards, literary images are thus accordingly held responsible to contribute to sexual politics. The movies, the novel relates, also promoted the submissive women figures who admired the male tyrant:

sometimes the hero would spank the heroine, who before that was fresh and talked back, like Mira herself. He would come bursting through a door and pull her over his knee and she would yell, but after that she would adore him, she would follow him with her eyes and obey him submissively, you knew she loved him forever. It was called conquest and surrender, and a man did one and a woman did the other, and everybody knew it. (21)

These images ally with pornographic images where women are represented as victims, which is akin to MacKinnon's idea that pornography depicts women as enjoying their violation:

In pornography, women desire disposition and cruelty. Men . . . create scenes in which women desperately want to be bound, battered, tortured, humiliated, and killed. Or merely taken and used. Women are there to be violated and possessed, men to violate and possess us. (148)

When one of Mira's friends at the suburbs found her husband's drawings, she was terrified to find images of violence and torture performed by a man on women. The narrator explains that "[t]he involvement was less sexual than violent" (136). Mira tries to reassure her friend by saying that he was thinking about writing pornographic stories and most probably his own fantasies which are actually shaped by the culture they live in (137). Dworkin also mentions that men do not regard rape or sexual violence as a real violation because they have been long reading pornography which underpins that "sexual violence is desired by the normal female, needed by her, suggested or demanded by her" (*Pornography* 166). In fact, Mira masturbates with images like this in mind because she is drawn into "masochistic fantasies" which are nothing but the result of her experiences in books, magazines and movies, which are in fact the tools patriarchal misogynist attitudes operate through:

History lessons about the treatment of women in China, the laws of England before the twentieth century, or the customs of Moslem countries would provide her with weeks of new fantasies. Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors*, and plays of Romans, Greeks, and Englishmen offered visions of world where such things were permitted. And there were lots of movies like *Gone With The Wind*, or movies with Nazis invading a little town in the Netherlands and taking over the big houses in which lived the daughter of the man who owned it, or with mean men, like James Mason, threatening beautiful women even lesser scenes could serve to trigger the alert imagination" (20).

In Greene's words, "what the protagonist finds in the texts of the culture is reinforcement of the very stereotypes that are the source of her problem, for if 'the tradition' inspired women's aspirations, it also frustrated her dreams by marginalizing and denigrating her" (10). Thus, *The Women's Room* displays how both men and women internalize the objectification of women, which patronizes the subjugation of women.

Naked Engin

Turning back to the Turkish literature of this period, we can see how, in *Lying Down to Die*, sexual objectification of women is seen as an obstacle to women's individual freedom. According to Sirman, the new establishment of the Turkish republic promoted to an image of "new woman" who was expected to "take her place in the public life of the republic as an educated social woman" (5). Accordingly, Kemalist women featured their "professional identities" rather than their sexes as the national ideology was paramount to them (Durakbaşa, *Halide Edip* 26-27). The protagonist Aysel recognizes that her entry into the public life as an educated woman is a must to realize her aspirations to be a devoted daughter of the new Republic. Despite the parental pressure and her lower economic background, she achieves her aim through hard work and self-determination. Yet she recognizes that her sex constructs a challenge to her intellectual side. Resenting being treated as a sexual object especially by Aydın, she complains that: "No matter what happens, Aydın won't forget that the one with him is a woman. He won't think that she is a human being among other people" (329). She always detects his gaze upon herself, which she comprehends more clearly when she later meets Ömer and Aydın who respect her as an intellectual rather than seeing her as a sexual being:

Alain's hugging her so naturally didn't appal her at all. The only thought she had how nice it was to be friend with Alain! His eyes were not feasting on her arms, legs. His eyes were not saying, "What do you know?" either. Yet, Alain is only twenty-one. Why were others, those in her country, not like him? Why was Aydın not like him? . . . Suddenly, Aysel felt ashamed of herself. Was not she unfair to all young men of her country? There Ömer is. He is not feasting his eyes on girls, either. He knows how to think and make others think. . . . But wasn't Ömer a special case? Wasn't he from Oxford? (325-26)

On the one hand, Aysel reflects that Alain is French and Ömer spent six years at Oxford and relates their attitude towards women to their acquaintance with the Western values. On the other hand, she blames herself of overgeneralizing her judgements onto all Turkish men and stereotyping them. She

wants to treat males as friends and brothers, because this is the behaviour promoted by the images of the new women of the Turkish Republic; she feels comfortable with men who treat her like a sister, but Aydın does not behave like this because he is sexually interested in her (243). She teases Aydın about rubbing his legs against those of a woman under a dinner table and about using even his leftist publications as ways to touch a woman's body (252, 311). Nonetheless, she also pities him because she recognizes that he is also a victim of societal oppression and she wonders how Aydın and those like him became the way they are while they were actually striving to be "dutiful children" of the "mother country" (311). In this sense, she thinks he is no different from her and interprets her drinking chocolate milk with her student as a different kind of leg-rubbing. Then, it can be argued that the idolizing of the intact, virginal female body is not only a repression but also reinforcement of women's positioning as sex objects. Inhibiting the smallest contact between male and female sexes, the cultural values of Aysel's world undermine women as human beings and forces both sexes to suppress their sexual needs.

Actually, the novel turns sexual objectification as a site of resistance for Aysel since toward the end of the novel she becomes the objectifier rather than the objectified. When Engin comes to her house the day after they had sex, she makes him take off his clothes, walk around the house and eat something in the kitchen (345). She lays emphasis on her being dressed from head to toe while he does this, even buttoning her sweater. This act, however, is not voyeurism; rather it is a message. She wants him to understand she has nothing more to give him (345). Till then, she has tried to resist being sexually objectified to foreground her intellectuality and use her right to exist in the public realm with men. Yet now she is showing him that she is the one in control of her body. The fact that this objectification occurs in an extra-marital affair makes the protagonist not only challenge the man's superior positioning in the gender hierarchy (which Western feminists debated much) but also the male-defined cultural norms that position women as obedient chaste wives or educated asexual women. Aysel's obtaining

the gaze creates her a new space to define her body according to her personal preferences. Furthermore, she feels freer to express disillusionments and discontents related to these ideologies.

Hypocrisy

In *A Strange Woman*, Nermin also reacts against the patriarchal discourse which treats her as a sex object rather than as a person and an intellectual. Her society is shown to equate a woman's value with her virginity and chastity to which Nermin is firstly socialized through her mother. Nermin's mother overvalues virginity and thus reduces Nermin to an object position that is to be protected till marriage. In this sense, Nermin's mother functions as the spokesman of patriarchy which actually makes Nermin conscious of her role as a sex object in the society. Yet Nermin does not internalize this position but challenges it. Within the feminist discourse (both in the Western and Turkish context), the idea of emotional non-involvement or lack of reciprocal communication in conversations are associated with women's objectification (Dworkin 2000; Nussbaum 2007). Likewise, regarding sexual objectification as a pejorative condition, Nermin resists being reduced to her sexuality and feels comfortable with men who treat her as a person, without reference gender. Haluk represents such a person, and of him she says: "He directly talked to me, without looking to my eyes, face. I felt comfortable with him" (25). On the other hand, she resembles Bedri to a caveman as he cannot take his eyes from her breasts while talking to her (48). In one instance, she and Ayten plot to get him to reveal his real feelings for Nermin. Ayten gets dressed in a sexy way to seduce him; if he is attracted to her it will mean that his love for Nermin is not true love. When the trio meets, Bedri firstly feasts his eyes on Nermin; but he turns his attention to Ayten once she takes off her coat and from then on he looks only at her (52). His male gaze constructs women as sexually consumable objects; any female object adhering to his fancy is focalized by him. Nermin reveals her disappointment with Bedri who had courted her and claimed to be in love with her for ten years (53, 55). She realizes that Bedri's first concern is sex, especially as he starts a close relationship with Ayten

soon after this scene. Although the details are not given, Nermin indicates that it is mostly a sexual relationship. For Bedri, at that time, love exists only at sexual level where no emotion is valued over sexual satisfaction.

Similarly, gossip encountered in Monsieur Lambo's place disillusioned Nermin. This is the place where she occasionally meets male intellectuals whom she assumed were treating her as an equal human rather than as a mere woman. However, some of them were spreading rumours that that she had an emotional interest in them, one another made up a story about taking her to his bachelor's flat to indicate having sex with her (61). Even Nermin, whose socialist consciousness makes her define herself as a sister to men, cannot overcome being objectified. As a single woman her entry into man's space is not allowed and even punished with slut-shaming. This is, as Başlı also notes, can be named as a strategy of Erbil to explore the division of personal and public spaces and how it is actually regulated by patriarchy which traps women in domestic spaces (52-53). Therefore, Erbil's female characters defy such regulations even though their attempts are undermined within their society (53). To illustrate, though disappointed by her male friends, Nermin confronts all of them, accusing them of hypocrisy to their face. However Monsieur Lambo simply explains that "they are men;" and thus they cannot see her as a sister (63). Although the Republican reforms prompted women's entry into to public space as equals to men, sexist attitudes and double-standard discourages women from doing so. The novel further narrates another incident; once she leaves the place, she is followed by a man who secretly offers her "100TL" for sex (63). Here, Nermin comprehends that there is no difference between men, whether they are educated and regarded as the "brains of Turkey" or illiterate; they all take women as sexual objects (63).

Results

As shown thus, sexual objectification is a prominent theme in all these novels and they all criticize the inequality that it brought about in and through the gender roles. Nevertheless, differences are found in the novels' stances towards

sexual objectification. It can be said that Carter and Weldon in some ways associate it with female sexual pleasure and hence with women's equality and empowerment when women themselves consciously objectify themselves and enjoy being sexually attractive to men. On the other hand, American novelists show that sexual objectification is always damaging to women as it foregrounds men's pleasure and superiority. Turkish novels reflect that it is deeply embedded in the society's religious, moral, social and political very being that it is ineradicable. Sexual objectification in the novels of Carter and Weldon is shown through and associated with erotic representations where female sexual arousal is indicated. To that end, although they see sexual objectification as a form of stereotypification, they at the same time use it as an example of all biologically determined roles and show contradictions in such essentialism by juxtaposing erotic and maternal bodies: Evelyn no longer sees Leilah as a sex object when she gets pregnant; in her mother's nude and lusty photographs Praxis recognizes the conflict between her erotic and maternal roles. Then again, these novels question whether a woman has to suppress her sexuality in order to be a mother, even though this function is also attributed to her sex. Carter disrupts configurations of female body once more through the character of Tristessa as he is a man wanting to be a woman. Furthermore, these two novels illustrate how one can enjoy sexual objectification especially, if in consciously objectifying oneself. For instance, while Evelyn and Tristessa make love they both objectify each other by focusing on each other's sexual organs and this is described through an intense and pleasurable sensation they both felt. While Praxis shows no sign of pleasure in her sex life with Willie, she is shown to be sexually stimulated by Philip's voyeurism because she wants to have sex with him. These writers have created characters that turn their objectification into subjectivity through the active agency of their bodies. Tristessa, hiding his male organ, decorates himself with feminine qualities in order to become a beautiful woman, Leilah fetishizes herself in order to do the naked dance at the club, and Praxis objectifies herself through prostitution. In all of these cases the characters also gain control over their bodies.

In comparison, *The Female Man* and *The Women's Room* centre on the radical feminist understanding of the sexual objectification of women. These novels show that concepts like beauty and femininity are used by patriarchy to exploit women's bodies. While liberal feminism in the States in the 1960s concentrated on the objectification of women within the background of a consumerist society at the heights of Ad Era, the radical feminists of the 1970s tried to lay bare the functioning of the ideology behind it (Craig n. pag.). They strictly rejected eroticism "as a cultural construction of male dominance" (Jones-Devitt and Dickinson 95). Thus, in the 1970s the beauty dilemma was one of the major concerns of American feminist discourse, which is reflected by Brownmiller as follows:

As a matter of principle I stopped shaving my legs and under my arms several years ago, but I have yet to accept the unesthetic results. . . . but I look at my legs and know they are no longer attractive, not even to me. . . . To ease my dilemma, in the summertime I bleach my leg hair to a golden fuzz, a compromise that enables me to avoid looking peculiar at the beach. Sometimes I wonder if I'm the only woman in the world who puts color into the hair on her head while she takes color out of the hair on her legs in order to appear feminine enough for convention. (*Femininity* 156-57)

Both novels reflect concerns over beauty dilemma in referring to conflicts between being feminine, beautiful, desirable, and dependent and being unfeminine, undesirable, and radicalized. Association with the second set of terms, and radical feminism in general, was undoubtedly imbued with negative connotations, and the pejorative comments of the patriarchal discourse are illustrated through frequent use of terms such as "bra-burner," "man-hater" and "hairy masculine woman." At the same time, the capitalist society continued to promote association of women with the first set of terms, favouring a sexually appealing image of women. The following lines from "Consumerism and Women" by Ellen Willis³⁰ who was a member of the radical feminist group—the

³⁰ Ellen Willis did not use her name in "Consumerism and Women," instead, she used "A Redstocking Sister."

Redstockings—reflect a feminist concern of the 1970s, which is to show that the underlying idea behind the objectification of women is to oppress them:

The real evil of the media image of women is that it supports the sexist status quo. In a sense, fashion, cosmetics, and “feminine hygiene” ads are aimed more at men than at women. They encourage men to expect women to sport all the latest trappings of sexual slavery—expectations women must then fulfill if they are to survive. . . . For women, buying and wearing clothes and beauty aids is not so much consumption as work. One of a woman’s jobs in this society is to be an attractive sexual object, and clothes and make-up are tools of the trade. (“A Redstocking Sister” 483)

Akin to these discussions, both of the American novels analysed here regard the sexual objectification of women as sexual slavery. Mira’s changing her high-heeled shoes to comfortable ones, Jeannine’s mannequin-like existence and Joanna’s growing awareness of objectification all move towards that very same feminist goal. As these characters become more independent, they become less objectified. More importantly, in these novels, anything reducing women to sexual objects is associated with pornography. In this sense, both novels represent anti-pornography feminist views often addressed by MacKinnon and Dworkin who considered pornography as inimical to women since it maintains men’s domination over women. Russ and French illustrate this anti-pornographic stance by creating characters that are exposed to such sexist views. Magazines, movies, literary works and psychological works are all reinforce the idea of women as victims which is the very core of pornography. In this sense, out of all these characters, Joanna and Mira are the ones most consciously fight against their objectification and have the potential power to challenge patriarchy.

In the Turkish novels, the protagonists Aysel and Nermin suffer from sexual objectification which denies their individual capacities. Aysel has dedicated herself to the republican ideals of womanhood while Nermin is a devoted socialist; they both try to be friends with men with whom they aspire to share a common goal. Aysel wants to be recognized as a dutiful daughter of the state to cooperate with her male friends while Nermin tries to be a sister to her

socialist fellows. Therefore, they disregard their “femininity” because they see it as an obstacle in reaching equal access to public life with men. Yet the men they have contact with cannot ignore these women’s sex. The novels do not put the blame on men but rather onto clashes between different ideologies, in Aysel’s case the conflict exists between the state and Islam and in Nermin’s case it is between socialism and Islam.

The state ideology and socialism promote women’s access to the public life with men while Islam puts strict lines between gendered spaces. The society, as represented in both these Turkish novels, is in a transition period and has not yet internalized the reformations brought to it with the newly established republic. There is thus a significant generation gap between these protagonists’ peers and their parents; both sexes could easily be accused by the older generation of being sexually impure for even such a simple act as going out on a date. Relations between the opposite sexes are strictly prevented in the society depicted in these novels, and they show that this deprives both men and women of sexual freedom. As sexual behaviour is taboo and suppressed before marriage, these women associate sexual objectification with the bleeding that may occur when the hymen is broken as these concerns with female virginity reduces women them to their hymens. Both protagonists lock themselves in a hotel room, get undressed and objectify themselves through looking at themselves in a mirror and this objectification in a way awakens them to their sexuality which was previously repressed by the ideals and oppressions of society. They look at their bodies, focussing on their body parts and touch them as if they do not belong to them. While Aysel reflects on her pleasure in making love with her student, Nermin masturbates with her mirror image; in these ways both characters manage to see their sexuality as something distinct from their hymens.

3.3. Sexual Desire and Pleasure

“By the 1970s, the knowledge that sex could and should be pleasurable for women had seeped into mainstream culture, but many young women outside

feminist circles remained in ignorance of their own sexual anatomy and orgasmic potential” (Jackson and Scott, *Feminism and Sexuality* 12). In this sense, feminist literary works of the decade aimed to reach such women to show them the possibility of female sexual pleasure. Also, the analogy between sexual pleasure—orgasm in particular—and liberation was commonly underscored in theoretical and literary discussion. Our novels from three cultures similarly focus on female desire in sexual relationships and they all reflect how it is repressed in heterosexual discourse. In all these novels, there are female characters whose interests in love-making are not taken into consideration. Namely, Leilah, Praxis, Joanna, Mira, Aysel and Nermin are reduced to passive sex objects and their potential to experience, let alone their right to, sexual desire and pleasure are taken as non-existent. However, the way these writers deal with this issue bring out some cultural differences. Carter and Weldon explore female sexual desire through the lens of subversive acts, Russ and French analyse it by concentrating on scenes of lesbian love making and masturbation, and the Turkish writers approach it through their depictions of heterosexual relationships.

Seppuku vs. the Swooning Pleasure

The Passion of the New Eve illustrates the essentialist patriarchal view where women are used as objects for male satisfaction and the female desire for sex is ignored or regarded as non-existent. In this sense, the text aligns with second-wave feminists’ protests against images of women as subordinate to men which Bordo refers to as “the oppressor/oppressed model” (23). Evelyn, as embodiment of the abusive patriarch, sees the sexual act in terms of a master-slave relationship and is concerned only with his own pleasure. Besides, he fears female sexual arousal and accordingly punishes Leilah if she takes sexual initiative. For instance, once when in the sleep of sexual exhaustion, Leilah—“still riven by her carnal curiosity”—moves on top of him:

Waking just before she tore the orgasm from me, I would, in my astonishment, remember the myth of the succubus, the devils in the female

form who come by night to seduce the saint. Then, to punish her for scaring me so, I would tie her to the iron bed with my belt. (23)

He punishes Leilah to suppress her active sexual desire and to confirm the feeling that he was the master of her house which he saw as his “domestic brothel” (25). As Johnson also states, “Evelyn’s male narrative” confirms to a “stereotypical and hierarchical view of gender relations” in which “the fantasized woman is silent and passive, while the historical man in speaking is active” (“Unexpected Geometries” 171). After his sex change operation, his captivity in Zero’s harem is undoubtedly a reversal of the situation as he becomes the slave under someone else’s subjugation. Zero’s system was an “inflexible” one where his seven wives slept with him by turns and neither Zero nor these women discuss or question female pleasure since they are afraid of Zero (85). For example, the wives’ front teeth were removed because Zero sent them all to the dentist after one of them “nicked his foreskin too painfully in her ecstasy whilst performing fellatio on his sacred member” (85). Thus, Zero’s harem is a simulacrum of Evelyn’s “domestic brothel”, and here where s/he is reduced to a passive sex object and female desire, regarded as dangerous, is oppressed. Eve/lyn calls sexual intercourse with Zero a kind of “seppuku” in which s/he felt only “pain and unpleasure” (98).

In addition to exploring how female desire is undermined in sexual intercourse, Carter also draws attention to marginalized forms of sexualities which are beyond the combinations accepted as normal within the dominant discourse. Elaborating on the Radicalesbians³¹ “The Woman Identified Woman” (1970), Douglas-Bowers explains that the homophobia even “in the larger feminist movement” supports the patriarchy since “it keeps women in the mindset of the heterosexual patriarchy and forces women to take a less militant stance for fear of being called a “dyke”” (n. pag.). Therefore, such subversive sexualities are not voiced but either suppressed or kept secret, which is again explored through depiction of Zero’s harem. Eve/lyn is surprised to discover lesbian relations in

³¹ The Radicalesbians, though short-lived, was an important group within the lesbian and feminist movements (Rapp 1).

Zero's harem; she observes that "with such erotic envy their [Zero's wives'] hands would creep helplessly to their slits and sometimes to one another's" (103). These girls would go "dyke-hunting" with Zero as if nothing happened and they would continue their lesbian performances despite the tyranny of homophobic Zero, which Eve/lyn decided was "an inevitable concomitant of harem life" (103). The lesbian desire is threatened, suppressed and silenced by Zero who is the best representative of patriarchy and does not value women's sexual pleasure. The text further shows that lesbian desire exists independently, and not only as a result of a shortage of attention from the other sex. When Eve/lyn sees Tristessa lying on top of glass coffin, s/he reveals a spontaneous attraction towards her:

I was again the child whose dreams she had invaded and also the young man for whom she had become the essence of nostalgia and yet I remained the thing I was, a young woman, New Eve, whose sensibility had been impregnated with that of Tristessa during the insomniac nights of transmutation in the desert. (115-16)

Eve/lyn cannot categorize the desire she felt for her and admits that this desire is not related to biological sex: "I fell in love with you the minute I saw you, though I was a woman and you were a woman" (120). Thereupon, Carter challenges the so-called bond between sex and desire as Tristessa turns out to be a man who turned himself into a beautiful woman, hiding his sexual organ (125). While Zero's crew treat Tristessa as a circus member, Eve/lyn feels still attracted to him/her. Escaping Zero's crew, the couple has sexual intercourse for the first time, during which Eve/lyn wanted "the swooning, dissolvent woman's pleasure [he] had, heretofore, seen but never experienced" (144). The female sexual appetite which Evelyn feared when he was a man is now experienced as a powerful sensation. What was once alien and abject is now a pleasure: "When I was a man, I could never have guessed what it would be like to be inside a woman's skin, an outer covering which records with such fidelity, such immediacy, each sensation, however fleeting" (145). As they make love, Eve/lyn becomes active as s/he smashes Tristessa under him/her; the active female sexual appetite is not oppressed but rather celebrated. Eve/lyn tries to position herself as

a woman and Tristessa both as a woman and a man. Yet the narrative highlights that man and woman are no longer self-evident unified categories:

We sucked at the water bottle of each other's mouth for there was nothing else to drink. Turn and turn about, now docile, now virile – when you lay below me all that white hair shifted from side to side . . . your hair dragged your head impetuously with it, this way and that way; I beat down upon you mercilessly, with atavistic relish, but the glass woman I saw beneath me smashed under my passion and the splinters scattered and recomposed themselves into a man who overwhelmed me. (145)

According to Schmidt, their sexual act associates “the male role with active pursuit and the female one being overwhelmed” (qtd. in Day 121). However, as Day also claims, both Eve/lyn and Tristessa become active during this sexual activity and they are both overwhelmed and thus it is not necessary to be physically or from birth a male or female to take on one or the other of the roles. As Eve/lyn relates:

every modulation of the selves we now projected upon each other's flesh, selves—aspects of being, ideas—that seemed, during our embraces, to be the very essence of our selves; the concentrated essence of being, as if, out of these fathomless kisses and our interpenetrating, undifferentiated sex, we had made the great Platonic hermaphrodite together. (148)

In *The Sadeian Woman*, Carter talks about “the object of a reciprocal desire which is, in itself, both passive object and active subject. Such a partner acts on us as we act on it” (146). The love making between Tristessa and Eve/lyn is one where such a “reciprocal desire” is experienced. Not being able to describe the orgasmic pleasure s/he felt, Eve/lyn reveals that “speech evades language” to tell “this mutual speech of flesh” (144). Although Tristessa has male organs, she has a female appearance; and though sometimes takes on a submissive (so-to-speak female) role in the sexual act, Eve/lyn emphasizes the ambiguous nature of masculinity and femininity because Tristessa did not use his penis -actually did not feel a man- and what Eve/lyn has in fact are only the “engine-turned breasts” (146). The attraction and physical relationship between Eve/lyn and Tristessa are beyond the biological categorization of man and woman, as Eve/lyn reflects:

“Neither as man nor woman had I understood before the unique consolation of the flesh” (147). In this sense, Carter not only delves into the repression of female sexual desire but also into those of lesbians, transsexuals and transvestites, namely anything within and going beyond what society regards as legitimate sex; sexual pleasure is not limited to the attraction between opposite sexes and it has to be released from the stability of binary thinking.

“Praxis meaning turning point, culmination, action; orgasm; some said the Goddess herself”

In the 1970s, feminists such as Greer, Mitchell, Millett and Firestone defended “women’s right to their own bodies and a sexuality of their “own”—a sexuality that is disconnected from the obligations of marriage and motherhood” (Krolokke and Sorensen 11). Greer’s following statements, for instance, were influential in the understanding of female sexual pleasure against the patriarchal discourse:

Sex is not the same as reproduction: the relation between the two is especially tenuous for human beings, who may copulate when they will, not only when they are driven thereto by heat or an instinctual urge. The difference must be at least caused by the fact that human beings have memory, will and understanding to experience the pleasure of sex and desire for itself. Little girls only learn about the pleasure of sex as an implication of their discoveries about their reproductive function, as something merely incidental. (53)

Likewise, *Praxis* mainly looks into how female pleasure is ignored or not even considered within sexual relationships, which is an extension of “some natural law of male dominance and female subservience” attributed to female sexual difference (16). Women who are not aware of the empowerment of their sexuality are seen as passive and submissive while those who are active in the pursuit of sexual pleasure are depicted as more likely to gain control of their own lives. Miss Leonard experiences orgasm with a man she just met towards whom she felt a kind of “tenderness” in spite of the fact that when she cried out in orgasm he felt embarrassed and told her to be quiet, which made Miss Leonard feel ashamed of

her sexual pleasure (68). For a little time, she imagines herself as his wife and plans to tell him that she is not “a whore at all, but a schoolteacher, to be taken seriously, loved and appreciated” (69). Yet her daydreaming stopped when she realized that the father and his son agreed to take turn having sex with her and the son actually raped her; considering her as a prostitute, they already left her money on the table. On her way home she had sex with a drunken stranger for ten shillings; passivity towards male sexual demands had taken her over:

she allowed herself to be leaned against a wall, her skirt taken up, her knickers down, and herself penetrated by a member as long, pale, lean, cool and strong as the G.I. hands she had often wondered at, so unlike the tense and crooked hands of the English. She remained quite passive herself: he did not seem to notice, but walked on after the incident as if he had been merely relieving himself. (69-70)

Miss Leonard wonders whether this could be called sex, describing it as “a simple pulse” (70). In these scenes, the novel portrays the sex act as a performance in which female sexual desire is not included or is exploited by men for their own satisfaction. In another scene, Mrs Allbright is portrayed as having no interest in sex since her sexual life is governed by her husband who only concentrates on her pleasure. Having sex is associated, for Mrs Allbright, with having babies. She is merely afraid of getting pregnant and thinks: “Was sex really necessary?” (30). Later in the novel, when sexual relations with her husband have almost come to an end, since he now sees her as “his holy Madonna” he is shown as nevertheless unable to resist his sexual impulses and he has sex with her without seeking her consent. As for Mrs Allbright, “[s]he was confused: she caught the infection, or perhaps came to the realization of sexual guilt” (110). Active female sexuality is a symptom of woman who has the potential of having power over man and it is thus feared; passivity, on the other hand, is approved since it reassures man’s authority. The lodger Henry’s confidence which had been shattered by Lucy’s insults is restored by Judith’s “placidity” and “lack of response” in bed:

Active women frightened him. He’d been with a French girl once, on leave. She’d seemed to explode, as a man might. It had frightened him; sudden explosions in the trenches killed and maimed; explosions in the

head, in the loins—all much of a muchness—were surely something to be feared. (32)

In this context, Weldon depicts women being deprived of the right to have pleasure and to decide on whether they want sex or not; they are called frigid if they reject sex and made embarrassed or guilty if they have an orgasm. According to Greer, the fact that women are taught to deny the pleasures of their bodies accepting the idea of femininity as meaning “without libido” is the cause of the powerless “female eunuch” (79, 78). Therefore, for a woman to know her body is a must to end her oppression. Akin to this discussion, Weldon juxtaposes Praxis’ early experience of passive sexual activities to those where she is active and in control of her body. In the earlier parts of the novel, Praxis does not do anything for her own pleasure but just satisfies Willie and his almost obsessive sexual urges. She responds “kindly and affectionately” to his sexual needs; in fact she has to do this “six or seven times a day” no matter whether or not she wants it (91). Neither Willie nor Praxis questions her sexual desire:

“Thank you,” he would say: and he was fond of her and she of him: the nakedness of his need touched her: but neither he nor she herself seemed to expect a female response in the least equivalent to the male. She never cried out, or thought she should, or knew that women did, or why they would. (91)

Their sexual intercourse is merely a penetration which does not have anything to with female pleasure.

These scenes depicting sexual intercourse are significant as they reflect one of the important discussions of the second-wave feminism. That is, not being able to name the problem is depicted as one of the obstacles in women’s empowerment. When Willie’s desire for sexual activity decreases, Praxis feels sorry; yet she cannot name the reason. It is through giving utterance to her problem, she is endowed with agency to act independently. She starts prostitution during which she was asked by her clients to perform different sexual tricks she would feel orgasmic although she did not like the idea because she associated it

with “her own abandonment” (125). It is in one of these instances that she feels comfortable with orgasm:

His methods were straightforward: himself on the top of her: admiring, leisurely, talking at first, later busy and exciting. She cried out, in genuine orgasm: she had all but forgotten how not to feign them. (129)

Although it turns out that she has committed incest, she once more has sex with him “at which orgasm shook her body” (131). In her incestuous sexual pleasure followed by her leaving Willie, she enacts the meaning of her name, which stands for “turning point, culmination, action; orgasm; . . . the Goddess herself” (12). In this respect, she achieves the aim of second-wave feminists who remarked the importance of “sexual pleasure” through which “women could transform society by claiming full sexual entitlement and agency” (Gerhard 107). Afterwards she marries another man and has children; yet she has extramarital sexual affairs and then leaves her children to be with Philip—her first sexual interest. In the society she lives in, she can be regarded as a wicked woman but the novel presents this character as one whose subversive actions enable her to have pleasure and ability to control her life.

Brynhildic Fantasies

In the 1970s, lesbianism became a serious issue for the feminism since it was contested by some feminists for disrupting the unity of sisterhood and undermining the political agenda of the feminism (Westerband n. pag.). In that respect, groups like Radicalesbians and their texts like “The Woman Identified Woman” were influential in legitimizing lesbianism and persuading feminists that “lesbianism was not simply a bedroom issue and that lesbians were not male-identified “bogeywomen” out to sexually exploit other women” (Echols 216). Thus, Echols argues, “in response to heterosexual discomfort, lesbian feminists distanced themselves from the sexual aspect of lesbianism and assured feminists that lesbianism involved “sensuality” not sexuality” (216). In this respect, *The Female Man* is a lesbian novel that celebrates lesbianism, in contrast to heterosexual love as a more liberating and sensual type of sexuality where

women's pleasure is at the centre. Watching the sex between Jael and her male-robot, Janet exclaims: "Good Lord! *Is that* all?" which indicates that she regards Whileawayan sex life as more impressive and fulfilling than what she has just witnessed (198). It is worth noting that Janet's understanding of female sexual pleasure is constructed in the all-female society of Whileaway where no heterosexual bias related to female body exists. This also underpins the gynocentric radical feminist view which sees female body as a source of empowerment which can lead to a social transformation (Rich, *Of Woman Born* 1976; Daly 1978). As the text illustrates, unlike Joanna and Jeannine who are passive sex objects in their worlds, women in Whileaway enjoy sexual activity. It should be pointed out that drawing on Beauvoir's ideas on how young girls are socialized to feel shame and disgust after experiencing the first menstruation, feminists in the 1970s argued that female sexual pleasure is thus suppressed (Firestone 1970; Millett 1970; Greer 1970). In this respect, Whileawayan women's joy of sexuality is earlier constructed through the attitudes towards female body. They are given vibrators to celebrate their first menstrual cycle:

On Whileaway these charming dinguses are heirlooms. They are menarchal gifts, presented after all sorts of glass-blowing, clay-modeling, picture-painting, ring-dancing, and Heaven knows what sort silliness done by the celebrants to honor the little girl whose celebration it is. (148-49)

Janet offers to give hers to Joanna and in a way leads Joanna to possibilities other than heterosexual sex. For Joanna it is something "[i]nfinately" dangerous, while Jeannine stands there "with an expression of extraordinary distrust" on her face (149). The ideas of masturbation, lesbian sexual activity and the pleasure Whileawayans have from sex are unfamiliar to them because they have not been allowed to value their sexual pleasure; female desire does not count in their relationships. Joanna, regarding herself as a "sexless sex object" (151) soon comments upon his perception of her after sex about her sexual life: "After we had finished making love, he turned to the wall and said, 'Woman, you're lovely. You're sensuous'" (150). Jeannine does not want to have sex with Cal because she does not find pleasure in it; she, at that time, interrogates her lack of pleasure and

wonders it may also be because she is having sex before marriage. In either case, she does not try to change this situation but keeps her relationship with him.

Janet, in this context, provides Joanna and Laura's initiations into lesbianism where they enjoy the sexual act. As Cortiel also reveals, lesbian love-making is important since it discounts men as sex partners since it would disrupt the norm established by psychoanalysis (162). Yet, unlike Janet who is in fact a lesbian because in her world no man exists, Joanna is very well aware that she is infringing the norms of her society and very much frightened by "bringing [her] fantasies into the real world" as she realizes her attraction to Laura (208). Similarly, before sleeping with Janet, Laura also used to regard female homosexuality as abnormal and she was unable to disentangle the different associations of the word 'normal':

I've never slept with a girl. I couldn't. I wouldn't want to. That's abnormal and I'm not, although you can't be normal unless you do what you want and you can't be normal unless you love men. To do what I wanted would be normal, unless what I wanted was abnormal, in which case it would be abnormal to please myself and normal to do what I didn't want to do, which isn't normal. (68)

The carnal desire growing between the two is narrated along with the tension they both felt; Janet was distressed because she was breaking the "cross-age taboos" of Whileaway whereas Laura was behaving against the Freudian voice of the society. It is eventually Laura who initiates their physical contact; they had sex talking and listening to each other, which is very different from the heterosexual love-makings mentioned in the novel. For Laura, oral sex was "the first major sexual pleasure she had ever received from another human being in her entire life;" while the very same thing is considered as "inadequate" and abnormal in her world (74). Janet gives her the vibrator, which she calls "an exotic Whileawayan artefact (with a handle)" and teaches her how to use it, and allows her to take enjoyment in herself, too:

Touched with strange inspiration, Laur held the interloper in her arms, awed, impressed, a little domineering. Months of chastity went up in

smoke: an electrical charge, the wriggling of an internal eel, a knifelike pleasure. (74-75)

Thereby, Laura's and Joanna's meeting with lesbianism offers an alternative to heterosexual love-making where female desire is neglected. While the sex with men reduced women to passive sex objects or to frigid creatures if they reject sex; Janet shows them the possibility of having pleasure through masturbation and same sex lovemaking. Joanna, though fearful at first, brought her "Brynhildic fantasies about [Laura]" to real life when she has sex with her (208). Cortiel explains that Brynhild is a woman character from a heroic epic named *Nibelungenlied* and her supernatural power is connected to her virginity; therefore, she argues that "all women characters in Western literary tradition who are represented as powerful as long as they stay away from romance with men are direct relations of Brynhild" (123). Towards the end of the novel Joanna states that "Brynhild hung her husband on a nail in the wall, tied up in her girdle as in a shopping bag, but she, too, lost her strength when the magic schlong got inside her" (207). Becoming the embodiment of Brynhild, Joanna describes herself as a "tall, blonde, blue-eyed lesbian" who no longer feels the submissiveness she felt in her earlier heterosexual relationships (209). In this case, the sexual pleasure she feels is then represented as closely related to her liberation from heterosexual oppression.

Sexpot

The Women's Room also highlights that heterosexual love-making positions women as passive sexual objects to satisfy male desire. The protagonist Mira's early experiences of sexual pleasure lay bare this perspective since she is disturbed by the masochistic fantasies where she imagines herself as a woman sexually aroused by the violence of men. Having the "sudden overwhelming desires to put her hand under her pajamas and rub the skin of her shoulder, her sides, the insides of her thighs," fourteen-year old Mira meets sexual desire for the first time (15). Yet she cannot proceed because she is disturbed by the idea of fantasizing about boys, and names the situation as a "decaying condition" (15).

Referring to literary texts, movies, and women around her, Mira has already associated sex with being submissive and passive. Thus, her first experiments with masturbation included masochistic fantasies since “[t]hese things crept into her imagination as her hands crept about her body as she lay in bed” and she calls her orgasm “the moment of surrender itself” (20, 21). The narrator soon adds, “if Mira fantasised masochistically, she did not act so” (21). Associating sex with humiliation, Mira avoids physical contact and sexual activity with men and thus resists being positioned as a passive sex object. In dates with boys, she rejects male sexual moves. Furthermore, the narrator relates her slapping “the face of the first male who had placed a kiss on her lips, finding it wet and ugly, hating the feel of another flesh against her own” (24). Being distressed by the idea of a sexual relationship with a man, Mira, nevertheless, begins to accuse herself. This is because, the text shows, reading some books on psychology, she learns that “her form of orgasm was immature and showed that she had not yet moved into the ‘genital’ stage of development” (24). French’s discussion of masturbation here is a reminiscent of Anne Koedt’s argument of clitoral orgasm. According to Koedt, being fed by Freud’s contention that “the clitoral orgasm was adolescent,” and that “women should transfer the center of orgasm to the vagina,” women who do not have orgasm through sexual intercourse are regarded as abnormal (n. pag.). Accordingly, to be a mature woman who “relates to males,” Mira tried to be as passive as possible “when they [her dates] slid their arms around her, or tried to grab her body” (24). Yet she felt nothing but “invaded, violated” and, not being able to tolerate the physical contact, eventually stops dating. In this respect, Mira suppresses her sexual desire because she associates sex with men with passivity and masturbation with abnormality. Later, during her date with Lanny, Mira enjoys kissing him and wants to have sex with him: “She wanted him: her body wanted this, and her mind wanted the experience” (26). This time, however, she is impeded by remembering her mother’s remarks about sex and how it leads to pregnancy which in return brings a chain of events of marriage, poverty, resentment, a baby and a life like hers:

She saw her choice clearly as being between sex and independence, and she was paralysed by that. Since she always risked pregnancy, which meant dependence, a sexual woman lived with Damocles' sword always over her head. Sex meant surrender to the male. If Mira wanted the independent life, she would have to give up being sexual. This situation was a terrible incarnation of her masochistic fantasies. Women were indeed victims by nature. (29)

Thus, she resists sex and gains the reputation of a "castrater," and is called "domineering," and a "snob." Eventually, Lanny leaves her because of her refusal to have sex with him.

Later, in her marriage to Norm, Mira feels the delight of being able to "kiss and hold without fear" (40). This is mainly because she adapts herself to cultural norms which approve sexual activity within a legal marriage as a contributor to reproduction of patriarchal family structure, which feminists in the 1970s criticized much (Firestone 1970; Greer 1970; Millett 1970). Yet heterosexual love proves for Mira that female orgasm is ignored and not taken serious. Although it is a pleasure to both of them to enjoy their bodies, Mira does not reach orgasm, and a month into marriage she decides that she is frigid. When she timidly asks Norm to hold a little till she reaches orgasm or try to make love for a second time in one night, he would say no because it is 'unhealthy' for a male to do so. The only thing she can do is to wait for him to go sleep and then "masturbate herself to orgasm" (40). When she starts using diaphragms, she entirely dislikes the idea of sex since "he would get her roused and leave her dissatisfied" (42). Their sex life deteriorates further when they have children and she feels that the sex with him was always unsatisfying as she "lay back and permitted it" (66). Her attempts to talk to him about sex are blocked by Norm who ironically calls her a "sexpot" (67). That is, expression of female sexual desire is not allowed; calling her a "sexpot" Norm reduces her to an object without libido. She feels that he thought it was proper for her not to enjoy sex.

Mira's disappointment with sex at last ends, years later, when she meets Ben whose emotional involvement during the sexual activity eliminates Mira's sexual objectification since he also values Mira's pleasure:

For Mira, Ben's lovemaking was the discovery of a new dimension. He loved her body. Her pleasure in this alone was so extremely that it felt like the discovery of a new ocean, mountain, continent. He loved it. He crowed over it as he helped her to undress, he kissed it and caressed it. (342)

Though shy at first, Mira touches his penis; affection accompanied with gentleness describes their sexual act. She realizes that Ben has already had orgasm before she reaches her climax, which at first disappoints her since it was no different from her earlier experiences of sex where she was left unsatisfied. Yet she soon sees that he is different:

He was gently rubbing her belly and sides, her shoulders...he was kissing her genitals, licking them, she was horrified, but he kept stroking her belly, her leg, he kept doing it and when she tried to tighten her legs, he held them gently apart, . . . he turned her over, he kissed her back, her buttocks, he put his finger on her anus and rubbed it gently, . . . She surrendered her body to him, let him take control of it, and in an ecstasy of passivity let her body to float out the deepest part of the ocean. There was only body, only sensation. He was rubbing her clitoris, gently, slowly, ritually, . . . and she came over and over again in series of sharp pleasures that were the same as pain. (343-44)

Mira's clitoral orgasm, though not free from her unconscious which already associated sex with passivity, is described in detail. Her supreme satisfaction occurs when her body is given the utmost importance and her pleasure was valued by Ben. The hug they give each other is defined as the one which friends would give each other (344). Unlike Norm, Ben tries out many different things to please her and his treatment of Mira -before, during and after sex- is full of affection. As a result, Mira feels no less than identity with a "goddess" (345).

Undoubtedly, the heterosexual sexual relationship between Ben and Mira and the lesbian one between Iso, Kyla and Clarissa call for the agency of women in order for them to take pleasure in sex. While the lesbian love-making is not

described in detail, it is indicated that it is fulfilling. Mira's and Ben's sexual intercourse is described in some detail, as seen above, but it does not lead to a satisfactory long-term relationship. This is because Ben wants Mira to give up her academic aspirations in order to marry him and have his children. Mira eventually stops dating men and prefers to be alone. In this respect, the novel shows that heterosexual sex, though it may be satisfactory, is not liberating at all.

Second Bleeding

Scholars such as Yavuz (1977), Durakbaşa (1987) and Paker (2014) explain Aysel's crisis in *Lying Down to Die* as a conflict between her intellectual identity and sexuality. Throughout the novel, Aysel is observed to repress her sexual side till her extra-marital affair. In this respect, contradictions behind the construction of a republican female identity are of significance for the discussion of female sexual pleasure. In "Kemalism as Identity Politics in Turkey," Durakbaşa relates that some of the factors contributing to the conflicts of a republican women are "the traditional values of virginity before marriage, fidelity of the wife, and a particular public comportment and dress," "obsession with male honour and family reputation," (148) and also the demand to be "the exemplary daughters of the new republic" who have equal status to men but still under the domination of men (150). The novel explores this theme through the images of virginity and hymen since women's sexuality is reduced to chastity. Aysel reflects when contemplating on her sleeping with her student, Engin:

How many of us are out there to satisfy those "how want to be satisfied with mind along with the body"? How many parts does our hymen have to have, how many parts does it have to break into so that it can feed all our literate men. (308)

She compares him to those who see her only as sexual being and to her husband for whom she is an intellectual being rather than a woman. Engin respects Aysel's ideas as an intellectual and desires her as a woman, which combines the two things which were never before reconciled for Aysel. Being a woman never existed separately from other things such as being a modern, Westernized and

chaste wife. With Engin, she realizes that sexual desire is simply a normal “human feeling” (269). This time, however, her being a married woman who has to be chaste not to shame herself and her husband, and the teacher-student relation she has with Engin put an extra burden on her. Actually, Gündüz also argues, due to the symbolisation of women in Turkey, “[w]omen’s chastity is the most important mechanism of control of female liberty” (124). Therefore, female sexuality is controlled by different people “who all claim to be responsible for securing the appropriate sexual behaviour of women” (124). Women’s sexual purity and virginity before marriage and chastity and fidelity as a married woman was inevitable for the maintenance of cultural values. This actually highlights a difference between Turkish and Western contexts studied in this dissertation. Müftüler-Baç explains that:

One aspect of sexual purity for women is that premarital and extramarital affairs are strictly forbidden. The basic difference between Turkish society and European societies is that, in Turkey, these activities are not personal but involve state authority. The state in Turkey is a party to women’s sexual activities reflecting society’s values vis-à-vis women’s sexual purity. For example, married women caught in the act of infidelity receive jail sentences; single women caught with a married man may be subject to virginity tests to determine whether sexual intercourse has occurred; girls under state control, such as at state schools, orphanages, and mental hospitals, may be required to undergo virginity tests. (309)

Akin to this discussion, the novel remarks that concentrating on female desire as separate from social context becomes impossible for woman, and this is why Aysel continuously refers to her sexual intercourse with Engin as a second-bleeding. Her sexual desire was repressed by a society that associated sexual act with the rupturing the hymen within which female desire is symbolically repressed. She says: “A proper [sexual] intercourse never shivers, tears, wears off, throws away and changes any part of a woman” (268). In this respect, Aysel’s sleeping with Engin is not only about sexual desire but also about transgressing the borders that limit her as an individual. As she reveals early in the novel:

Yes. I slept with my student once. I enjoyed a fleeting, strange pleasure form it. That’s true. It was the lust of an empire in my mind rather than my

body perhaps. If one cannot liberate herself alone and drowned in the feeling of liberating herself alone, she has to lie under those coming after her. (44)

In this sense, her second bleeding was an action of liberation to prove herself a “liberated Turkish woman,” which for Aydın is associated with being comfortable with the opposite sex (46). However, it has not been easy for her to reconcile with this action. For instance, she expresses feeling never comfortable in her sexual relationship with Engin because her mind never allows her to embrace it. She associates the act of extra-marital sexual intercourse with identification with the youth and the working class, because Engin belonged to both (312). This is why her sexual intercourse gives only a momentary pleasure through which she realizes that pressures she has been exposed to as a woman are so heavy that she has forgotten her is her being a human (46). Considering the social context of the novel, it can be argued that Aysel’s extramarital affair is also an acting against the law and thus more traumatic and subversive. As again Müftüleri-Baç relates, in Turkey the best example of “gender-based legal inequality” is *zina*—that is extramarital sex—which was considered as illegal and therefore defined as a crime till 1998. “*Zina*, under the Civil Code, is a cause for divorce. However, under the Penal Code, married women accused of *Zina* are punished with jail sentences, whereas married men committing the same act of infidelity are not punished at all,” she explains (311). Through this second-bleeding of hymen, Aysel disrupts the symbolisation of women whose corporeality is reduced to their virginity and politics regulating female sexuality. Her lying down to die naked in a hotel room is reconciliation between her repressed feelings and she eventually develops an acceptance of her illicit affair.

Making-love with the Mirror Image

As aforementioned, in the 1970s in Turkey, repression of women’s sexual side was an inevitable aspect for women’s access to public life as free citizens (Müftüleri-Baç 308). *A Strange Woman* highlights this point through the protagonist Nermin who repressed her sexual desires firstly to escape being

sexually objectified and then to devote herself to socialist ideas. In one instance, Meral asks Nermin if she ever felt strong physical desire as she had already experienced acute physical desire for the sexual act without being associated with any particular person. Nermin reveals she never had any such desire but simply wished to be loved by a respected person (75). Neither for her male friends nor for Bedri (whom she married to escape from parental pressure) did she feel sexual attraction; her main aim was to be recognized as a person among them. Middle-aged Nermin, alone in a hotel room, exposes the internal conflicts she experienced over the years; while she was fighting for women's political liberation, she ignored her sexual and erotic side:

Womanhood was not quite what she expected it to be, she did not know what to do and when to do; this "duty" suddenly fell on her with all its ugliness. She saw that she did not have the fights and ranting for herself as she did for women's holistic freedom. She wanted to revolt against injustice, she wanted to show her home, her society what is to be done, she wanted to be a trailblazer but there was a mistake in her calculations, she was trying to find out what the problem was. She was talking to Bedri and discussing these with him. The young man was listening to her, he was justifying her, and then clinging to her, he was ejaculating on her... . (251; ellipsis in orig.)

Thus, their earlier sexual activities offered no pleasure to her as they were mainly performed by Bedri in order to satisfy himself. It was only after Nermin told him that she knew about the incest between him and his sister that she began to be more comfortable. Within the frame of second-wave feminism of the 1970s, incest is discussed to emphasize the unequal gender system of the patriarchy; as the male is the powerful, he subjugates the woman (Doane and Hodges 47-48). Through incest and loveless sex affairs, Bedri is an extension of patriarchal understanding of sexual activity in which female's pleasure is not even considered and female body is exploited. Then, revealing his secret, Nermin in a way disrupts the paternal rule. Bedri temporarily loses his sexual dominance and turns into a loving and caring man and Nermin loses her virginity on that day: "Bedri wiped his tears with the pillow, stared at Nermin. Nermin wrapped her arms around the man's neck; tightly closed her eyes and let herself to be a woman" (252). The fact

that she married Bedri not out of love but to escape oppression prevented her from growing emotionally attached to Bedri and thus made her refrain from participating actively in their sexual acts. It took years for her to make real love without feeling embarrassed or distressed; eventually, however, he abandons her since he cannot bear her socialist ideals.

In her loneliness, she once more suppresses her sexual desires since he left her due to her devotion to socialism: “She was flushed, she was refraining thinking another man; the more she refrained, the more she felt into the embrace of her people” (254). She becomes split between her ideals and love for Bedri since the two cannot co-exist. She misses Bedri but at the same time she is appalled by this idea because she considers missing a man who does not respect her devotion to her ideals a disloyalty to herself. She reassures herself saying “I committed myself to my people, I can sacrifice my life for them” (254). Nevertheless, she cannot get rid of sexual feelings since her mind gets obsessed with such ideas. Nermin gains a new vision as she looks over her life and her disillusionment that develops as she never reaches the working class and her marriage also results in disappointment.

In a scene towards the end of the novel, Nermin watches herself half-naked in a pier glass at the hotel room where she has been questioning her femininity and political views. She likes her image, which she sees as slimmed down. Although she feels content with her body, her mind seems to move away from it to uncomfortable thoughts about her marriage and political views. Putting her hand on her belly, she asks herself: “Am I on the right way, am I able to get closer to my people” (250). At this part of the novel, a split perception between the self and the mirror image is detected; Nermin feels dissociated from her reflection and sees it as a separate entity:

she came across with herself in the pier glass, half naked. She has got quite thinner recently, she liked it. Avoiding catching the eye of that woman watching her from the mirror and occasionally being hysterically particular about ethical issues, she stayed across her, . . . held her hands on her belly,

asked falteringly “Am I on the right track?” The woman condescendingly eyed her from head to toe and then, stretching her hands, caressed her naked body. . . . She recollected, shiveringly, how once Bedri seized and sucked those breasts (250-51)

The image in the mirror seems to despise Nermin for ignoring her ethical views; she misses her sexual life with Bedri from which she has recently started to get satisfaction whereas Bedri abandoned her for she insisted on living at a shanty town to create a bond with the working class. Reflecting that she is alienated from the society, she asks to herself: “Or am I a person who is fit neither for a monastery nor a mosque, as my mother would say? . . . Is there a holy person like me who is not fit to her society?” (253). She is occupied with these thoughts, yet she tries to distract herself from them and winks at the mirror “sassily” and presses her whole body to the mirror (254). Enjoying this experience, she kisses her mirror image on the lips and repeats the words Bedri uttered before their first sexual intercourse: “You are an angel, I love you very much, don’t leave me” (255). Removing her panties lastly, Nermin leaves the thoughts that haunt her and, now satisfied with her image in the mirror, she leaves herself to her fantasies (255). After so many years of alienation from her body, she is now united with it. Although it is not clear whether it is a long-lasting unity or not, Nermin is released from the socialism which has constructed her as a ‘sister’ among her fellow brothers, from the familial relations which expected her to control her body with chastity and from a marriage where she is to satisfy her husband regardless of her personal needs. Watching her body in the mirror, she touches it and starts making love with herself, and delves into a series of sensual fantasies where she imagines making love with revolutionary leaders such as Fidel Castro, Vladimir Lenin and Joseph Stalin. That is, she in a way reconstructs her identity as an asexual socialist since she is now actively engaged with her sexual side.

Results

In *The Passion of New Eve*, Carter presents Tristessa and Eve/lyn as figures representing subversive categories of sexuality; Tristessa is a transvestite and Evelyn is a transsexual. In their sexual congress both enjoy sex, while it is

shown to exist beyond heterosexual discourse. These characters do not belong to the normative views of sexuality and they shatter the so-called natural bond between sex and gender. Their love-making is a release from what Butler calls “a regulated process of repetition” (*Gender Trouble* 198). Likewise, Weldon’s Praxis is a woman who acts beyond the normative feminine roles; she prostitutes herself and commits incest with her father during both of which she experiences her most intense sexual pleasure and later she leaves her children and husband to be with the man who was her first sexual interest. In this sense, she is not a good wife and mother but a female villain who undermines conventionally moral definitions of femininity. Both writers foreground female sexual desire through characters that explore variation in sex-gender combinations.

The two American novels, on the other hand, challenge heterosexual intercourse by undermining the male partners and criticizing male sexuality as domineering and as oppressing and denying female sexual pleasure. While heterosexual relationships prioritize men’s satisfaction over that of women, in lesbian relations same sex partners may not only give one another sexual pleasure but also develop a deep emotional attachment. Also in both of the novels, female characters are occasionally accused of frigidity when they do not have an orgasm with their male partners, and the narratives juxtapose such unsatisfactory sexual episodes to those in which women reach orgasm. These novels reflect the highlighting and discussion of the female orgasm, which became prominent in American feminist discourse of the 1970s, mostly due to Koedt’s 1970 “The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm.” In this article she noted that:

[w]henver female orgasm and frigidity are discussed, a false distinction is made between the vaginal and the clitoral orgasm. Frigidity has generally been defined by men as the failure of women to have vaginal orgasms. Actually the vagina is not a highly sensitive area and is not constructed to achieve orgasm. It is the clitoris which is the center of sexual sensitivity and which is the female equivalent of the penis. (n. pag.)

In this sense, clitoral orgasm is a threat to “the heterosexual *institution*” because “it would indicate that [female] sexual pleasure was obtainable from either men

or women, thus making heterosexuality not an absolute, but an option” (Koedt n. pag.). Both Russ and French put an emphasis on women’s sexual pleasure and they depict a different option to their female readers. In *The Female Man*, the utopian character Janet introduces lesbian sex to Joanna and Laura who are living in 1970s America. Unlike the world of Janet, in Joanna and Laura’s society any relationship other than heterosexuality is seen as abnormal. In this respect, the novel shows that for the liberation of body, the mind should be liberated first; only then will these characters be able to have satisfaction in their sexual lives. The protagonist of *The Women’s Room*, on the other hand, is a straight woman who was disappointed by her sex life in which she had never reached orgasm, mainly because her husband regarded his own climax as his priority. After her divorce, she meets Ben with whom she experiences the pleasure of satisfaction. Mira, unlike Joanna and Laura in *The Female Man*, gains sexual awareness with a male partner. However, the narrator highlights that it is clitoral stimulation that triggers her orgasm. Moreover, sexual satisfaction is not enough to ensure a heterosexual relationship that is fair to the woman; their relationship breaks down because Ben wants her to abandon her ambitions and bear children for him, upon recognition of which Mira leaves him and stops dating men. Thus, although Mira herself never developed a lesbian relation, the text foregrounds lesbian relationships as an alternative to heterosexual ones. In this respect, the single lesbian Iso (who is already divorced) becomes the embodiment of a free and healing sexuality, sleeping with some of her female friends who feel disappointed with their male partners.

In the Turkish novels, there are two protagonists for whom mutual respect is more important than sexual pleasure in their youth. Sexuality was a kind of burden on them as it prevented them from being treated as equal to men in public life. Aysel marries Ömer because he respects her intellectuality and does not foreground her sexuality until she has an affair with one of her students. Although she enjoys sex with Engin, she cannot free her mind from the guilt of cheating on her husband, because she was brought up with the republican ideal of a chaste

woman. On the other hand, Nermin marries Bedri just to get rid of parental pressure and she cannot enjoy sex until the late years of her marriage. An improved sex life is not sufficient to mend their unsatisfactory relationship however, for Bedri cannot stand her devotion to socialism. Contemplating Bedri's leaving her and the pleasure she has recently started to obtain from their sex life, she recognizes that she misses him. Nevertheless, she represses her sexual needs for him because she rates her political ideals above her sexual identity. Nevertheless, both novels encourage women to enjoy their sexual desire so that they can really be liberated. Knowing and loving the body is then the initial step to liberate female sexual desire from pressures which are deeply embedded in the socio-politic context.

3.4. Reflections on Sexual Freedom

Availability of the birth control pill and legalization of abortion in the 1970s were associated with sexual liberation as they indicated the separation of sex and reproduction. Thus, women's control of their bodies and self-determined choice to be sexually active and enjoy sex (before marriage and sometimes with multiple partners) were underscored (Cohen n. pag.). Despite these formal improvements, in real life power dynamics and double-standard in sexual relationships still continued. All of the novels discussed here explore freedom by looking at how it was not equally available to all people in real life. It should be highlighted that in the British context, transgressive sexualities and actions, in America scrutiny of oppressiveness of heterosexual relationship and finally in Turkish texts importance of social freedom appear as centres of attention.

Dyke-Hunting

As previously stated, Carter attends not only to the repression of female sexual desire within patriarchal society but also to the marginalization of other neglected groups such as lesbians, transsexuals, and transvestites. Thus, *The Passion of the New Eve* again surpasses the frame of the second-wave debates of universal experiences of women since it ignores these groups staying out of this

binary logic of the sex/gender system. The novel reflects that misogynist patriarchal society is a strictly heterosexual and homophobic one in which marginalized relationships cannot be accepted, either. When these kinds of sexual acts are recognized, it is treated aggressively by people like Zero and his female crew, who are enthusiastic about “dyke-hunting” to show their mockery and aggressiveness. During his/her captivity in Zero’s harem, Eve/lyn was afraid that Zero was suspicious of him/her being a “tribade” due to his/her behaving “too much like a woman” (98). Zero was a homophobic who could not stand the idea of lesbianism:

If he had spied any, or surprised me fingering any of his girls, he would have shot me. His hatred of female homosexuality was inflexible; it was obsessional. And poor, beautiful, intangible Tristessa, was she not the Queen of Dykes; had she not dried up the desert, made it all sand, he said one night when he was drunk. (98)

His suspicion of Eve/lyn’s lesbianism made him more interested in her/him and as a result he became more violent in his sexual activities. Actually, Zero’s hatred began when he took up the belief that Tristessa was a “dyke” who put a spell on him which made him sterile; Zero casted her as a witch to be hunted. His homophobia turns to transphobia when he recognizes that Tristessa is a transvestite with a male organ upon which he urges her to have sex with Eve/lyn. In this sense, Lennon’s discussion of the performativity theories of Butler and Foucault seems appropriate here:

These others, women, homosexuals, transsexual people, those with differently abled bodies or differently shaped bodies to the dominant ideal, are treated socially as outsiders, ‘the abject,’ and subject to social punishments. (n. pag.)

In the same way, Tristessa is treated as an outcast and capturing him/her, Zero and his crew dangle her/his body by naked.

Tristessa and Evelyn escape Zero but they are soon captured by a group of boy-soldiers who see them making love; this time they are accused of “lechery” by the Colonel who thinks of himself as “the scourge of Christ” (151). The

military group, whose senior man is only fourteen years old, is nothing more than a ridiculous imitation of the patriarchal society. According to Day, Carter's depiction of this children's band is a satire of "the naivety, prejudice and violence of certain kind of American right-wing Christian belief" (125). The boy-Colonel tells Eve/lyn that Christ forgave the woman committing adultery but the Bible did not say anything "on the subject of the treatment of the man in the case" (151). The Colonel's referring to Tristessa as "the man in the case," is a reflection how transvestism exceeds the boundaries of the dominant discourse of sex/gender. His other criticism is that "an old man such as he ought not to wear his hair so long" (151). Beating Tristessa, they have her/his hair shaved. Through this instance, Carter makes clear that there is an arbitrary reason behind Tristessa's mistreatment; her being punished for her ambiguous nature is as absurd and ridiculous as the Colonel's fury about her hair. Whereas Zero's crew humiliated and dressed her as a man, the Colonel took her jewels: "He reverted entirely to the sinuous principle of his notion of femininity" (152). No matter that the Colonel addressed Tristessa as a 'he,' Tristessa died in "his female aspect," kissing the Colonel when he shot her (152). As Carroll also agrees:

The violence which is directed at Tristessa's body can be understood as homophobic not because its object is homosexual, but because its motivation is to do with fear of and hostility towards the possibility of same sex desire. (13)

Through the juvenile military band, Carter takes note of patriarchy's mechanisms of oppression over sex and gender categories, and with their absurdly young Colonel who "wore a Mickey Mouse watch," she undermines the authority of patriarchy's power holders.

Odd-One-Out

Weldon depicts sexual freedom through the lenses of different generations of women for whom it was experienced in different ways. Nevertheless, they are all depicted as women with transgressive actions; Praxis' mother's extramarital sexual relations with a Jewish man, Praxis' incest and prostitution, and Praxis'

stepdaughter's lesbianism are all subversive for the eras they live in. In particular, the exploration of lesbianism is of paramount significance since through it, the narrative brings together three generations' understanding and experience of sexual freedom. Actually, in the 1970s, discussions of female heterosexuality within the frame of sexual freedom were significant. Gerhard explores that:

Combining psychoanalysis and sexology in new ways, radical feminists across the spectrum elaborated on the sexual basis of women's liberation, from an authentic and pro-active heterosexual agency to a cuddly lesbian identity in which the entire female body, not just the genitals, polymorphously expressed desire. (82)

Therefore, expression of lesbian identity, which was silenced before, also meant a challenge to patriarchal assumptions of sexual identity. Announcing herself a lesbian, Victoria [Praxis' stepdaughter] brings her girlfriend home and Praxis sees them sleeping in bed together. Praxis is horrified by this and relates this to Philip whom she supposed to be angry with this. To Praxis' surprise, Philip—who was mocking his ex-wife for becoming a lesbian—takes it as normal and acceptable, saying “If it gives them pleasure. Safer than boys” (217). Although his perspective is heterosexual, he does not try to prevent them having a relationship. This event reminds Praxis her earlier attraction to a girl and her mother's response: she was severely punished and scolded, being called a “slut” and “dirty little piece of slime” (44). Unlike Praxis at that time, now Victoria defends her choice and assures her that “lesbianism was a higher state than heterosexuality: that there was affection, comfort, consolation to be found in girls; and only war with boys” (218). Praxis wonders whether things would be different if she and Louise, the girl she was attracted to, had had the opportunity to develop their relationships and sleep together. Victoria is able to speak openly, even saying “I wish it didn't turn Daddy on, that's all” (218). She can easily talk about the taboos of society and act as she wants. Here, younger generation have more sexual freedom—in action and expression—than the generation of Praxis and Philip. Years later, an older Praxis who is experienced in feminist activism reveals that her and other women's efforts for the Women's Movement helped the new generation of

women. Praxis regards these women as the “new race of young women” that knows their sexual freedom and can enjoy it. They are “dewy fresh from their lovers’ arms and determined to please no one but themselves” (16). They are what Praxis aspired to be:

The new Women! I could barely recognize them as being of the same sex myself, their buttocks arrogant in tight jeans, openly inviting, breasts falling free and shameless, feeling no apparent obligation to smile, look pleasant or keep their voices low. . . . If a man does not bring them to orgasm, they look for another who does. If by mistake they fall pregnant, they abort by vacuum aspiration. . . . They are what I wanted to be; they are what I worked for them to be: now I see them, I hate them. (16-17)

These lines highlight another discussion and also a conflict related to second-wave feminists views on sexual freedom. Although “emphasis on sexual expressiveness” and “celebration of spontaneous sex” were encouraged, they brought out new problems such as more images of women as sexual objects and greater risk of unwanted pregnancy (Gerhard 87). In order to attain a real sexual liberation, they had to rework “the symbolic associations between autonomy, selfhood, and sexuality from the counterculture and the social significance of private life from radical and Freudian psychoanalysis” (87). In this respect, *Praxis* depicts these “reworkings” and lesbianism appears as one of them that resists patriarchal oppression. There is no place for shame, responsibility and fear in these women, and this is thanks to women like Praxis who were involved in the struggle against the coercion of women. Praxis realizes that their experiences were really different from those of her generation; younger women are less concerned about pregnancy as they can easily have an abortion. Thus, the meaning of sexual freedom has completely changed. The new women do not feel ashamed of their bodies and are very comfortable with their actions; and more importantly they value their pleasure.

Within this frame, for young Praxis, sexual freedom was associated with prostitution and incest since only through them could she obtain the money and courage to leave her marriage in which she was emotionally and sexually

oppressed; “I was free to choose my clients” and “I was gaining some agreeable physical sensations,” she remarked while talking about her prostitution (148). Later during her marriage to Ivor, she had a secret affair but soon lost interest in “sexual adventure” (167). She used to observe that her mother [Lucy]- a Christian living with Jew without marriage and sleeping with her male lodger - saw herself as “polluted” because she was living in an age “when women’s instincts were so much at a variance with the rules of society” (37). Lucy used to hide her lack of legal marriage; she would think: “Better to live with the guilty secret than the open truth of their life together—that they were bound by the habit of illicit lust, mutual degradation. His Jewishness, her Christianity” (12). Unlike her family’s anti-Semitism, she did not despise the Jews and saw them as equals; in this sense, Lucy “was the odd-one-out in her own family” (10). Later, Praxis realizes that her mother was a misfit in a society which did not tolerate any illegitimate relationship:

Was my mother, from the age of thirty to the age of seventy, living out a part that did not suit her at all? I believe the latter. I concur with the vicar, the Reverend Allbright, and the younger Butt, who both avowed a woman who’d sleep with one man, outside marriage, would sleep with another. I have friends who married a virgin, and only made love with their husbands all their lives, and wouldn’t want it any other way. They seem the happiest with their lot in life. I wish it were not so, but it is. My mother tried to attain the happiness of the sexually exclusive, but had left it too late. She was polluted. (37)

Likewise, Miss Leonard would think that the death of her lover in the war was a punishment for their sin- for their sleeping together without marriage (67). A sexual relationship outside marriage was a sin and an embarrassment; as Praxis comprehended:

To lose one’s virginity is not . . . an insignificant event. It is tremendous, momentous, and sets the pattern for one’s entire sexual life to come. I even think, sometimes, that that narrow hypocritical society was right, and that Hypatia [her sister] and myself had no right to be alive: and had better have remained the outcasts we were born. (37)

Within this frame, *Praxis* calls for a revision of male discourse that supports the subjugation of female body. Having sexual freedom is associated with surpassing the norms of the society and the risk being a misfit and outcast. Yet the novel emphasizes that through such women who have the courage to do so, women's liberation is possible.

A Different Kind of Whoring

In *The Female Man*, the lesbian sexuality is seen as an alternative to heterosexual love where women are always the oppressed and violated. The experiences of women in three of the worlds can be measured against those of women in the utopian Whileaway, which is a place where women have the utmost use of their sexual freedom:

There's no being *out too late* in Whileaway, or *up too early*, or *in the wrong part of the town*, or *unescorted*. You cannot fall out of the kinship web and become sexual prey for strangers, for there is no prey and there are no strangers—the web is world-wide. . . . no one who will follow you and try to embarrass you by whispering obscenities in your ear, no one who will attempt to rape you, no one who will warn you of the dangers of the street, no one who will stand on street corners, hot-eyed and vicious, jingling loose change in his pants pocket, bitterly sure that you're a cheap floozy, hot and wild, who likes it, who can't say no, who's making a mint off it, who inspires him with nothing but disgust, and who wants to drive him crazy. (81-82)

In that respect, the depiction of Whileaway as a society where free sexual love is celebrated is a response to the 1970s' lesbian sex radicals who "actively reclaimed sexual freedom as instrumental to women's empowerment and thus to feminism" (Gerhard 187). Thus, Whileaway is an embodiment of a free society where women can really enjoy their freedom since there is no external threat to harm them. Actually, the concept of patriarchy and its institutions and discourse are long eliminated there; in Whileaway sexual freedom is a result of the social freedom of a genderless society. In contrast, in another world, Jeannine experiences the "unconscious guilt" of having sex before getting married and she wonders, "Do you think if I got married I would like making love better?" (150).

Although she does not enjoy sleeping with Cal, she does not leave him because she is expected to marry someone. Joanna also feels unsatisfied within heterosexual sex. Thus, the novel explores the extents to which women may enjoy sexual freedom while they are still abused and threatened by the male sex. While Jeannine gets depressed by the idea of feeling the same disgust for sex after marriage, marriage in *Whileaway* is based on the idea of the open relationship where the couples can have sex with different partners. Janet explains: “Vittoria is whoring all over North Continent by now, I should think. We don’t mean by that what you do, by the way. I mean: good for her” (79).

The meaning of sexual freedom is undoubtedly not the same for Joanna and Jeannine as they live in places women have never had the full agency of their sexuality. Even Jael who is a free and powerful individual does not have sexual freedom, as demonstrated by the boss’ attempt to rape her. Thus, it is only in *Whileaway* where there is only one sex that women can enjoy sexual freedom. Russ’ following remark, from a later work, is relevant here:

I believe the separatism is primary, and that the authors are not subtle in their reasons for creating separatist utopias: if men are kept out of these societies, it is because men are dangerous. They also hog the good things of this world. (“Recent Feminist Utopias” 77)

Thus, the novel suggests that it is only in lesbian relations sexual freedom exists since only then women are freed from the tyranny and brutality of men.

“Constitutionally Unfree”

The Women’s Room portrays women who cannot enjoy sexual freedom in a patriarchal society. This is closely related to the radical feminist view that while free love occasionally resulted in women’s exploitation, marriage brought forth their entrapment (Firestone 1970; Millett 1970; Showalter 1977). Mira was restless with her first date Lanny but felt safe with his male friends because she saw them as “her comrades, her brothers, she loved them all” (33). Yet after going to a party with her male friends whom she regarded as close friends, Mira’s

understanding of friendship with males completely changed since barely escaped being raped. She was disappointed to see that men felt free to abuse and rape her because she was a single woman who went to a party and got drunk; she was traumatized to observe:

That a woman was not marked as the property of some male made her a bitch in heat to be attacked by any male, or even by all of them at once. That a woman could not go out in public and enjoy herself dancing without worrying what every male in the place was thinking or even worse, what they might do, seemed to her an injustice so extreme that she could not swallow it. (36)

She recognized that although history books wrote that women's suffrage had given them equality, she was not free because she "was constitutionally unfree" (36). Only Iso, being single and lesbian, is free to act as she wants; she can have as many as lovers as she wishes and is still not exposed to violence or abuse. Nevertheless, as Val, the radical feminist of the group reveals, this is because "A woman as a lover does not count" in a heterosexual society (420). As the discussion of women's freedom is closely related to sexual abuse and violence in the novel, this part will be further analysed in the next subchapter.

Kaçgöç

Lying Down to Die focalizes Aysel's quest of individual freedom from childhood to maturity. It is only after she succeeds as an intellectual woman Aysel begins to consider her sexual freedom. As mentioned in previous parts, although the new Republic granted equal right to men and women, women were not able to use this freedom to the full extent. This was mainly because female body was taken as something that should be kept intact and thus unpolluted till marriage. Rather than having a man-blaming attitude as in the Western feminists of the 1970s, the novel highlights the significance of the cultural context. When Aysel goes to Paris for a scholarship, she observes how men and women can enjoy their freedom. Seeing Metin occasionally kissing different girls, Aysel would watch it with affection since she appreciated the couples' not having to hide themselves from public notice. The narrator's use of the word *kaçgöç* is significant here, as it

shows how religious ideas are intermingled in social behaviour. *Kaçgöç*, which also stands for *purdah* in some Muslim and Hindu cultural practices, refers to Muslim women's avoiding contact with men and becoming invisible to them ("Kaçgöç"). In the Turkish context, the term is used to refer a generalised segregation of women from public view. The word, in fact, is mostly used as an idiom to refer to things done in secret or hidden from other people and using it with the word *without* means the opposite. Whereas Aysel always conceals her very limited contact with her male friends, Metin and his girlfriends in France do not hide themselves, which Aysel envies much.

The era Aysel lives in is the time of the Turkish clothing reform, where women do not have to wear the veil any longer, but as the use of word shows, attitudes rooted in religion are inevitably infused in society and culture; Aysel and her generation experience this conflict in every phase of their lives. Freedom of sexuality was almost impossible for young Aysel as she was not allowed to be friends with boys; in fact she was scarcely allowed any time for her own self. In this respect, although she felt uncomfortable with men like Aydın who saw her as a sexual being, she would not blame them as they also suffered from these repressions and they also yearned to enjoy the freedom of friendship with the opposite sex. On the other hand, Aysel regards her younger sister Tezel as a generation who had more freedom. She divorced two husbands in three years and now she is having an affair with a married man (180). Unlike Aysel who internalized every kind of repression, Tezel is carefree and more individualistic. That is, the novel remarks that personal freedom is to granted and used so that sexual freedom can be discussed.

Shagbag

In the Turkish context where female body becomes a site for patriarchal, religious and social oppression, demands for sexual freedom for women fall behind the concerns for personal freedom. In *A Strange Woman*, Nermin remembers how she was beaten by her mother when she caught her kissing the

piano teacher. Her mother, who was always conscious of covering her own body as well as that of Nermin, was naked as she hurried out of the bathroom to catch them; as Nermin reveals she even did not cover her private parts. Thus, for Nermin, the importance given to a woman's virginity and fear of female sexuality are shown as really absurd, especially in relation to her youthful belief in the possibility of becoming friends with men. This is only one of the instances of a repression of women's sexuality that operates not only in terms of sexual activity but also on the level of flirtation or even friendship.

Nevertheless, hearing the gossip at Monsieur Lambo, Nermin was really disappointed. First of all, those making up sexual stories about her were the intellectuals she had respected and with whom she had tried to make human contact based on shared opinions. When she complained this to Monsieur Lambo, he assures that it is man's nature to treat women as sexual beings rather than simply humans (63). Then, Nermin cries that what such attitudes actually do is to trap her in the domestic space since these men do not see her as a sister or a friend; she can exist within their space only as sexual woman. Through this event, she understood that she was not free although Atatürk's reforms gave her the right to be involved in public life; as she lastly tells them: "Atatürk . . . set up brothels for you to leave us alone, as well, but he forgot to put money in your pockets to go there" (80). In this respect, women were more repressed in issues such as the matter of clothing, not going alone, protection of virginity and staying chaste till and during marriage are all involved. As she realized, neither in family nor in public life were women allowed free space to enjoy being simply individuals, humans not defined by their sexuality. There was a very thin line between chastity and whoring; a small smile or a friendly chat with a male was sometimes enough to be called a shag bag or a slut. Thus, although both sexes were oppressed by the conservative cultural inscriptions, women were more influenced by the whole bundle of behavioural implications of patriarchy that result in double standards.

Results

All of the novels discussed explore sexual freedom by looking at how it was not available in real life. Exploring the deployment of freedom in texts produced in the 1960s, Barnett finds similar issues. She mentions that in those texts freedom is figured as “transgressive sexuality (homosexual and interracial) and by liminal identity (androgynous and interracial)” (xi). As she argues:

Racism, sexism, and homophobia hinge upon individuals’ psychic commitment to binary identities. These binary identities are instantiated by sexual norms for heterosexuality and same-race sexuality. Resisting those norms and identities becomes a route to freedom in these texts. (xi)

In the British texts of the seventies studied here, freedom is represented mainly through such transgressive sexualities and actions. *The Passion of New Eve* explores the theme through characters of marginalized sexuality, such as Evelyn and Tristessa who are reduced to outcasts and receive hatred from society. In this respect, Carter depicts misogynist, homophobic and transphobic discourses of hatred and shows how they inhibit the liberation of such identities. *Praxis*, on the other hand, deals with the topic through subversive identities from different generations. In the case of Praxis’ mother, her unmarried sexual life made her an outcast. Furthermore, being a Christian woman living with a Jewish man further violated the norms of family and religion. Praxis herself transgressed the norms of her society: she chose to be a prostitute; she committed incest and left her children. Praxis’ step-daughter became a lesbian and assertively reacted against any authority trying to repress her lesbianism. These show how unambiguously Carter and Weldon review sexual freedom through transgressive identities who act beyond the norms of their society.

In the American novels lesbianism is treated as a form of sexual freedom, indeed the only form of sexual freedom for women. In both novels, there are both heterosexual and lesbian characters who aspire to have freedom; however, heterosexual patriarchal discourse inhibits female sexuality through violent oppressive mechanisms. This is why in these novels, sexual abuse and rape are

closely related to sexual freedom. As the novels show, in a heterosexual society where there is contact with men, it seems impossible to enact freedom. Janet, the utopian character of *The Female Man* is almost sexually abused by a man in the 1970s America while in her world- where no man exists- she has never experienced such an attitude. In *The Women's Room*, Mira was almost raped at a party she attended as a single woman. Therefore, these novels favour what Rich defines as a “lesbian existence” and “lesbian continuum:”

I have chosen to use the terms *lesbian existence* and *lesbian continuum* because the word *lesbianism* has a clinical and limiting ring. *Lesbian existence* suggests both the fact of the historical presence of lesbians and our continuing creation of the meaning of that existence I mean the term *lesbian continuum* to include a range—through each woman's life and throughout history—of woman-identified experience; not simply the fact that a woman has had or consciously desired genital sexual experience with another woman. (“Compulsory Heterosexuality” 648)

In both novels, there are both lesbian and heterosexual women but the “lesbian continuum” they share is a way out of the heteronormativity that inhibits sexual freedom. Janet and Iso are both lesbians who are free from heterosexual forms of oppression such as domesticity and violence.

Unlike the above mentioned novels, in the Turkish ones transgressive sexualities are not explored. These novels portray characters that have heterosexual relationships and they are in fact more concerned with social freedom than with sexual freedom. To have the latter, the former is a must. Both novels mention the policies of Atatürk as giving women the right to access public life but the socio-religious context inhibited women's freedom. In a context, where women were allowed to have minimum contact with men, there was undoubtedly no availability of sexual freedom. In fact, Aysel in *Lying Down* once made herself seen with a boy in order to discourage her suitors and it really worked, as the parents of the suitor no longer wanted Aysel as a daughter-in-law. In *A Strange Women*, Nermin got a bad reputation because she was spending time in a bar where intellectuals met occasionally; the very same intellectual whom

Nermin saw as a brother would easily humiliate her through spreading sexual gossip about her.

3.5. Breaking the Silence: Sexual Abuse and Violence

In the 1970s breaking the silence against oppression was taken as a must in feminist politics. Although women became more liberated and autonomous through legal regulations, violence and abuse they experienced in their private lives constituted a major threat to goals of feminism. Therefore, issues such as rape and battering and expression of them became prominent. In her analysis of the post-sixties literary representations in American culture, Barnett draws attention to how sexual freedom and sexual violence appear together in these texts (xi). As will be seen in the British and American novels, sexual violence is shown to be an oppressive mechanism restraining women from enjoying their sexual lives. In these cultures, as represented by the novels, forms of sexual violence are explicitly discussed mainly through the argument of rape. These novels differ in their approaches to the representation of sexual violence, while all four of them highlight the idea that, “[s]exual violence is the ultimate figuration of gender oppression. Women are defined as subordinate beings in many ways, but rape is the ultimate gendering act” (Barnett 103). In contrast, in the Turkish novels sexual violence is only occasionally mentioned and mostly it is indirectly mentioned or only implied.

Former Abuser, New Abused

Sexual violence and rape are abundant in *The Passion of New Eve*; Evelyn beats and tortures his sex partners, the Mother rapes Evelyn, new Eve gets raped by Zero who rapes and beats his seven wives on a regular basis and lastly Eve is made to rape Tristessa. In this respect, Carter shows that not only female sex but also all sexes are exposed to sexual violence; that is both patriarchy and heteronormativity are disrupted. First of all, Eve/lyn experiences being both an abuser and abused, which depicts women’s degradation by men through violence. Evelyn’s first awareness of rape occurs when the Mother rapes him in Beulah to

collect his sperms to create new female type who can impregnate herself. The comically grotesque context notes the unduly authoritarian matriarchal structure reinventing the male violence in order to punish Evelyn's former actions. A mezzo-soprano hails the maternal realm challenging the patriarchal oedipal realm: "Kill your father! Sleep with your mother! Burst through all the interdictions!" (60). Shrieking "Reintegrate the primal form!" the mother urges him to the floor to revenge the patriarch:

Her flesh seemed to me molten, burning. I caught one glimpse of her gaping vagina as I went down; it looked like the crater of a volcano on the point of eruption. Her head reared up to kiss me and, for hallucinatory instant, I thought I saw the sun in her mouth, so that I was momentarily blinded and retain no memory of the texture of her tongue, although it seemed to me the size of a sodden bath-towel. Then her Virginia-smoked ham of a fist grasped my shrinking sex; when it went all the way in, Mother howled and so did I. (61)

This is the first instance Evelyn experiences a sexual act against his wish; the erotic female sexuality once he attributed to Leilah is now replaced by the grotesque maternal body who has now power over him. He reveals that he had been: "unceremoniously raped; and it was the last time I performed the sexual act as a man, whatever that means, though I took very little pleasure from it" (61). Evelyn recognizes how she watched his "exemplary humiliation with perfect impassivity" (62). The Mother's rape is in fact a punishment for and reversal of his former actions. As she expressed to him: "And you've abused woman, Evelyn, with this delicate instrument that should have been used for nothing but pleasure. You made a weapon of it!" (62). Evelyn at that time described the Mother's rape as degrading because he was made "the object of pity" (62). As a man he was raped by a woman and reduced to a passive object.

Later Eve/lyn is raped again but this time s/he has a newly made female body. S/he relates his/her first encounter with Zero as follows: "He was the first man I met when I became a woman. He raped me unceremoniously in the sand, in front of his ranch house" (83). Eve/lyn is undoubtedly a stranger to such pain; the

sexual activity in which s/he had taken great pleasure as man is now only an abject experience:

I was in no way prepared for the pain; his body was an anonymous instrument of torture, mine my own rack. My nostril were filled with the rank stench of his sweat and his come and, dominating even those odours, the sweetish, appalling smell of pig-shit, a smell which clung to the entire ranch and its environs in a full miasma. When Zero had finished with me, he went into the house with the jumping dog and banged the door behind him. (83)

For Zero, sex is not only a self-centred action but also practice of denigrating the female body, which is an approach that had been familiar to the male Evelyn. Actually, Zero's rape makes Eve review Evelyn's previous actions:

the experience of this crucial lack of self, which always brought with it a shock of introspection, forced me to know myself as a former violator at the moment of my own violation. When he entered me, the act seemed to me one of seppuku, a ritual disembowelment I committed upon myself although I was only watching him and only felt my pain and unpleasure in his joy at my pain and pleasure at my distress. (98)

While Eve/lyn thinks of rape as a violation of her newly gained body, Zero's wives "dedicate themselves, body, heart and soul, to the Church of Zero:"

his myth depended on their conviction; a god-head, however shabby, needs believers to maintain his credibility. Their obedience ruled him. . . . They loved Zero for his air of authority but only their submission had created that. By himself, he would have been nothing. Only his hatred of them kept them enthralled. (96)

As Brownmiller argues in *Against Our Will*, "[w]omen are trained to be rape victims" (309), being influenced by "rape myths" such as "all women want to be raped" (312). In this sense, through Evelyn and the reversal of the rape situation, Carter interacts with 1970s feminist discourse on rape. Eve/lyn, now in a female body, recognizes that sex by force is not pleasurable for a woman, which is also indicated by the frequent use of word "unceremonious." Zero's regular violence and rape of his concubines are a depiction of these rape myths where male performance of abuse is justified through repetition and familiarity.

However, her discussion of sexual violence goes beyond this as she subverts the myth of rape which considers women as victims; Carter challenges the traditional rape scene with the Mother raping Evelyn, and Zero's forcing Tristessa to rape Eve/lyn. While Evelyn is punished for his mistreatment of women, Tristessa is punished for his/her transvestism. According to Butler, the "heterosexual *matrix*" is based on the idea of the male as penetrator and the female as penetrated (*Bodies that Matter* 51); Carter subverts this maxim mainly through these two rape scenes; in both cases, the ones having penis are raped by women. As Baker also mentions, what Carter does here is "a situation that is extremely subversive and not acknowledged legally" (79). In the Mother's case, the forcing of a male to penetrate a voracious female completely subverts the heterosexual understanding of sexual violence. In the case of Tristessa, the rape is very indirect-neither Eve/lyn nor Tristessa are rapists, but the enforced act is still a rape, enforced and therefore (in a way) done vicariously by Zero. Tristessa reveals that "I thought . . . I was immune to rape. I thought that I had become inviolable, like glass, and could only be broken" (134). As a biological man, Tristessa becomes a rape victim. Within this context, Carter reacts against "the discourses of the 1970s that re-inscribed men and women as diametrically opposed oppressor-victim" (Baker 69). Even in the case of Zero's raping Eve/lyn, Carter writes against the grain as his rape of Eve/lyn cannot be included within the binary thoughts. Eve/lyn is a woman only in appearance at that time and Zero's violence makes him acknowledge his role as a former violator.

"Localized Amnesias"

In the 1970s, radical feminists put forward provocative arguments related to sexual intercourse since they were critique of heterosexuality as an institution. Greer, for instance, discussed that "we must insist that only evidence of positive desire dignifies sexual intercourse and makes it joyful. From a proud and passionate woman's point of view, anything less is rape" ("Seduction Is a Four-Letter Word" 378). Weldon's depiction of sexual violence, including rape, and how women respond to it is a bit problematic for the frame of second-wave

discussion since Weldon's female characters never complain of not having sexual pleasure in sexual activity and call them victims when they are sexually abused. As children, Praxis and her sister had observed sexual violence at home when their father was beating and threatening their mother [Lucy] with rape:

“Frigid bitch,’ he seizes her hair, pulls back her head. He is strong: she is helpless: if he wishes to rape her, he could, he would. It is in the air. The little girls fall quiet: terror silences them. Ben makes love to Lucy, these days, with hatred, not with love. (13)

Yet Lucy felt sexually aroused by this threat as she thought “[s]he would crawl around on all fours, she would, the better to excite herself, and him. Oh, horrible” (13). At the same time, she was “ashamed of her own response to his violence: frightened of being out of her own control—is she not a mother? And mothers must be on duty day and night” (13). Within feminist discourse, ambivalent female responses to rape, ranging from lust, pleasure to fear and anxiety, were intermittently interrogated. One of these is man's uncontrollable desire for the woman which may become a source for female eroticism:

Most women want their lovers to be at least somewhat aggressive and dominating. Some consciously or unconsciously want to be forced. Their erotic pleasure is stimulated by preliminary love-play involving physical struggle, slapping scratching, pinching and biting. The struggle also saves face for the girl who fears she would be considered “loose” if she yielded without due maidenly resistance; it also relieves the guilt feeling that might exist if she could tell herself that “he made me do it.” (Weihofen 210)

Such rape fantasies though associated with active female sexuality are criticized since they make the rapist a romantic hero (Gavey 21). In Lucy's case desire to be raped yet points out the existence of female libido juxtaposed to an asexual mother figure. Desiring rape was incompatible with her role as a mother; Praxis observes that her mother is considered to be mad which is attributed to her [Lucy's] “deviation from maternal love” (55). While this kind deviation from motherhood is associated with an image of a powerful woman, Lucy can never reconcile with her sexual side. As Hansen also argues “[t]o avoid such painful,

imponderable questions of agency, responsibility, and maternal identity, Lucy disavows her experience (and later projects her bad side onto Praxis)” (196). Praxis calls her mother’s forgetting things as “localized amnesias” which was forgetting or rejecting the experiences she had. In the end, Lucy’s mental state deteriorates and she is put into a clinic.

Praxis herself also later recognized having “a wonderful, useful gift for forgetting the events of the past. Useful, at any rate, to everyone except herself” (200). She forgot how Philip in fact abused her in her drunkenness; while she was lying passively on the ground her breast were severely wounded by Philip’s shirt buttons. Praxis never calls this event a rape but she mentioned her fear of not being able to reject him because she was alone with him. Reflecting Praxis’ fear, the narrator states that “she was frightened: no element of choice remained. Phillip’s body was powered by a force he could not understand” (87). Praxis never mentioned this event again and soon started a relationship with Phillip’s friend Willie—this time to serve his sexual pleasures. Like Lucy and Praxis, Miss Leonard also keeps silent about her rape. Yet she had to mention it when she noticed that she was pregnant. The doctor refused to give her abortion saying that “[n]ot even in cases of rape is abortion anything other than a criminal act” and another doctor just told her it was her punishment (71). In this sense, a kind of forgetting and amnesia permeates these scenes of sexual abuse, which in a way identifies or reclassifies these women’s reactions as passivity. However, they are not presented as natural victims and the novel does not submit to the discourse of woman’s inevitable victimhood. As already mentioned in the previous parts, they, Praxis, Lucy and Miss Leonard, are all acting against the grain and they are in fact aware of their transgressive acts. In this sense, their passivity becomes a tool to cope with the mental repression they feel due to the incongruity between their actions and societal and cultural expectations inscribed on female body.

“I murdered because I was guilty”

Aligning with the anti-rape discourse of the 1970s, Russ also includes the discussion of rape in her novel. The cocktail party at Manhattan where Joanna takes Janet in *The Female Man*. is a reflection of the malestream view of women that distresses the two Js. These women respect male perspectives, with a mindless sycophancy that is represented through Russ’ parodic characters Sposissa, Eglantissa and Clarissa who agree with men as they comment on women’s inferiority. Even they agree with a male perspective on rape:

“For example,” he went on, mistaking her silence for wisdom while Ludicrissa muttered, “How true! How true!” somewhere in the background about something or other, “you have to take into account that there are more than two thousands rapes in New York City alone in every particular year. I’m not saying of course that that’s a good thing, but you have to take it into account. Men are physically stronger than women, you know.” (44)

The man reduces rape to a matter of statistical normality. Soon he asks Janet whether she is one of those extremists who “don’t take these things into account” (44). The tone of the man is cynical and insulting as he normalizes rape and debases the reactions of feminist activists against it. While Janet is angered by the man, Joanna tries to keep her calm. Eventually she wants to leave but is stopped by the man who takes her “by the wrist” and wants a good-bye kiss upon which Joanna pushes him away (45). Joanna describes the scene and addresses the reader as follows:

“What’sa matter, you some kinda prude?” he said and enfolding us in his powerful arms, et cetera—well, not so very powerful as all that, but I want to give you the feeling of the scene. If you scream, people say you’re melodramatic; if you submit, you’re masochistic; if you call names, you’re a bitch. Hit him and he’ll kill you. The best thing is to suffer mutely and yearn for a rescuer, but suppose the rescuer doesn’t come? (45)

The man goes on teasing her as he squeezes her wrist and puckers up his lips saying “Make me, make me,” swinging his hips from side to side. When Janet

calls him a ‘savage,’ he looks up his blue book³² which describes it as “[m]asculine, brute, virile, powerful, good” which makes him feel good (45). This is in fact a comical representation of what Millett defines as “sexual politics” that accepts man’s power over woman and thus positioning her as an obedient and a passive being. This scene is quite unfamiliar to Janet since in *Whileaway*, a woman would never be abused (82); thus she pushes him onto the ground upon which she hears a stream of insults that he finds in his book. While Joanna is terrified, Janet keeps fighting him. Joanna looks up her pink book to reveal the man’s last insult: “You stupid broad,” which is explained as “*Girl backs down—cries—manhood vindicated*” (47). In fact, what her pink book says about “Brutality” sums up the heterosexual society’s attitude towards male violence: “*Man’s bad temper is the woman’s fault. It is also the woman’s responsibility to patch things up afterwards*” (47). With these little books, Russ criticises the sexist logic imposed on gendered beings; men and women learn to behave in certain ways according to their sexes, which actually reinforces women’s subordinated position in society.

In the 1970s, radical feminists argued that in a misogynist male-dominated society, “victims typically internalized their guilt and anxiety over rape, thereby privatizing the problem” (Bevacque 165). In that respect, radical feminists’ politicizing the issue was of significance to challenge the male authority over women. Through consciousness-raising groups, discussion of domestic violence, sexual abuse and rape accordingly were treated with significance. *The Female Man*, accordingly, encourages self-defence and fighting against male violence. Jael, the militant activist of the Js, kills a man who attempts to rape her. The boss of the Manlanders with whom she meets for business first tries to seduce her and does not accept her rebuffs. 1970s anti-rape discourse also reacted against “views of rape as a “crime of passion,” motivated by the perpetrator’s overwhelming lust (presumably in response to the victim’s sexual attractiveness and/or provocation)”

³² In *Joanna’s World*, 1969s America, boys and girls given blue and pink books at high school called WHAT TO DO IN EVERY SITUATION.

(Whisnant n. pag.). Jael observes that: “These men play games, play with vanity, hiss, threaten, erect their neck-spines” (180). Although Jael clearly tells him that she is not interested in lovemaking, the boss ignores her:

“You’re a woman,” he cries, shutting his eyes, “you’re a beautiful woman. You’ve got real, round tits and you’ve got beautiful ass. You want me. It doesn’t matter what you say. You’re a woman, aren’t you? This is the crown of your life. This is what God made you for. I’m going to fuck you. I’m going to screw you until you can’t stand up. You want it. You want to be mastered. Natalie wants to be mastered. All you women, you’re all women, you’re sirens, you’re beautiful, you’re waiting for me, waiting for a man, waiting for me to stick it in, waiting for me, me, me.” (181)

The boss is, in fact no different from the man teasing Joanna and Janet; both do not accept rejection. Jael, however, is an angry activist and responds by killing him. Watching the murder, the other Js are terrified; Joanna who was already frightened by seeing Janet knocking down the man at the party, is embarrassed this time (182). The narrator contemplates what would Jael be told in Joanna’s world when murdering her rapist:

You could have nodded and adored him until dawn. . . . You could have lain under him—what difference does it make to you?—you’d have forgotten it by morning.

You might even have made the poor man happy. (184)

This is also reminiscent of Joanna’s pink book having sub-rubrics under “Management” and “Martyrdom” which advise women to be meek when men behave aggressively and even when they abuse them (47). Unlike the other Js, Jael does not care about the murder as she feels no guilt, although she reveals that “*I murdered because I was guilty*” (195). In that respect, the novel challenges the victim-blaming assumptions related to rape. Jael has a dream in which she, eleven years old, was raped and felt guilt for it:

Now in my eleven years of conventional life I had learned many things and one of them is what it means to be convicted of rape—I do not mean the man who did it, I mean the woman to whom it was done. . . . I slowly came to understand that I was face to face with one of those feminine disasters, like pregnancy, like disease, like weakness; she was not

only the victim of the act but in some strange way its perpetrator; somehow she had attracted the lightning that struck her out of a clear sky. . . . Her secret guilt was this:
She was Cunt.
. . .
She was out late at night.
She was in the wrong part of town.
Her skirt was too short and that provoked him.
She liked having her eye blacked and her head banged against the sidewalk. (193)

The dream reflects how even rape is blamed upon the girl, thus excusing the rapist's behaviour and making women feel guilty when raped. Jael does not really feel guilty, she merely expresses an understanding of how society places women in the position of the guilty party, and she shows her anger to those who want her to submit to this "radical inferiority" (194). Jael fights back against sexual violence, which actually makes Joanna realize that expression of anger is necessary in the fight against the enemy.

"All men are rapists"

Through sexual violence, French shows how men manipulate their sexual, physical, social and political strengths to victimize women and accordingly reinforce the idea that "women are born victims;" besides, the system (mostly run by men) cooperates with men with its laws. As Genty also discusses, French highlights the action of rape to display the relation between masculinity and violence (139). Accordingly, in *The Women's Room*, there are a series of sexually violent acts experienced by women from different social backgrounds. Mr Willis beats Mrs Willis (21), Duke tries to rape his wife Clarissa, Iso was raped by her boyfriend, Chris was raped by a stranger, Mira reads in a newspaper that an eighty year old woman was raped and killed in her own apartment (37). Mira herself escapes being raped at a party; if her friends had not been there, she would have been raped. She thought that: "It was not her virginity she treasured, but her right to herself, to her own mind and body" (37). On the other hand, if she had been raped, Lanny, her boyfriend, would have called her a "slut" and no matter she did, she would be the one blamed for the rape:

It was ridiculous to talk about injustice; it was useless to protest. She knew from her few experiences of talking about women and freedom that such protests were always taken by men as invitations to their taking greater freedoms with her. (37)

Within this frame, the novel problematized the distinction between the private and the public as the radical feminists such as Dworkin and MacKinnon encouraged women to do. They argued that:

The distinction provides men with a private world of male dominance in which they can garner women's emotional, domestic, sexual and reproductive energies whilst hiding the feudal power relations of this realm behind the shield of the protection of 'privacy'. The private world is defended from the point of view of male dominance as one of 'love' and individual fulfilment that should not be muddied by political analysis. It is a world in which women simply 'choose' to lay out their energies and bodies at men's disposal and remain, despite whatever violence or abuse is handed out to them. The 'private' nature of this world has long protected men from punishment because it has been seen as being outside the law that only applies in the public world. Thus marital rape was not a crime in this worldview, and domestic violence was a personal dispute. (Jeffreys 10)

Making the personal the public and political then enabled women to recognize how patriarchy maintained men's superiority and women's bodily and emotional exploitation. In the novel, rape takes its central action through the rape of Chris by a stranger on the street; she could not fight back as, revealing that he recently killed three people, he threatened to kill her too (455). The narrator relates that he raped Chris several times and never allowed her even the smallest movement:

Once, she moved her body a little, and he threw her down instantly and was on top of her again, with his stiffened penis in her. It was clear to her that the thing that turned him on was his own violence, or a sense of her helplessness. (455)

Chris had to give him her address and pretend not alarmed to get rid of him, which turned against her in court, when the boy claimed that she was his friend. In this respect, the novel highlights the cultural and emotional factors behind women's submissiveness and not fighting back. Fear of slut-shaming, inducing greater violence in the rapist and being killed are some of these contexts how

women are socialised into keep silent in cases of sexual abuse and violence. In Chris' case, another issue is that of the racism since the rapist is a black man. One of the attorneys told Val [Chris' mother] that maybe the boy's explanation is true as "lots of pretty little white princesses want to try a little black meat" (464). Val was horrified to hear such a racist remark which actually belonged to same mentality that considers Chris as a "privileged, white, and female" (466). She understands that the attorney is just a 'sexist and racist pig' and she tells him what they are concerned with is not chastity or virginity but "her right to exist in this world" (68). Val declares that:

It didn't matter if they were black or white, or yellow, or anything else for that matter. It was males against females, and the war was to the death. Those white men would stand up there and make Chris a victim rather than disbelieve a male who was a member of a species they heartily despised. (469)

Even though the attorneys wanted them to withdraw the case, Val and Chris insist on taking the rapist to court, and he eventually gets a six-month prison sentence (469). The only thing Chris can say about this insultingly light sentence is that "she had expected more of American justice" while Val develops a deep hatred towards all the male sex (469). Val later tells Mira:

And it became absolute truth for me. Whatever they may be in public life, whatever their relations with women, all men are rapists and that's all they are. They rape us with their eyes, their laws, and their codes. (476)

Mira does not agree with it but Val says that all men, regardless of race and socio-political background, are enemy and she adds that "gay men can be as bad as straight ones - some gay men hate women even more than straight ones do" (476). For Val, on the other hand, rape is an enactment of sexual politics which reinforces man's superiority through all patriarchal institutions. She eventually becomes a militant feminist and lives in all-women groups including the markets, banks, etc.. She observes that even they rape men are not punished which she once more experienced when Anita, a black prostitute was charged guilty as she killed the man who raped her; "He tried to rape me, so I stabbed him," she said to

a group of feminist waiting outside the courthouse while the narrator comments that the court already found her guilty because they believed “prostitutes can’t be raped” (508). French in a way juxtaposes the cases of Anita and Chris; unlike Chris who is a privileged white woman, Anita is a young black woman working as a prostitute to compensate her education expenses to be a school teacher. They are both raped but unlike Chris, Anita, who “is acculturated to the rough streets of disadvantaged black neighbourhood” fights back physically (Barnett 101). The results of their rapes are distressingly similar, however: in both cases the female is insulted and considered in some ways culpable of their own rapes. The novel, then, depicts rape as an extension of the patriarchal subjugation of women and whether they fight back, as Anita, or not, like Chris, they are victimized by men.

Veiled Forms of Sexual Violence

In *Lying Down to Die*, there are no directly related instances of rape or physical sexual assaults; nevertheless the novel indicates various forms of sexual exploitation which are experienced differently by women from different backgrounds. I prefer to name these forms of violence as veiled since they exist in the personal lives of women, though never mentioned out loud. Talking about the patriarchal oppression in Turkey, Müftüler-Baç argues that “[r]ural and urban women face different problems, as do women from the urban middle classes and lower middle classes, but they are all subject to the rules of patriarchy” (311). In the novel, Aysel remembers a man exhibiting his penis to her on her way to the university, which is not elaborated or mentioned again in the novel (336). Also, as mentioned in previous discussions of this novel, most of the time, and regardless of their intellectual backgrounds, men are shown to treat women as sexual objects. Although there are no explicit descriptions of sexual abuse, men are seen to disturb women physically. For instance, Aydın is always described as obsessed with physical contact with women and he occasionally tries to touch women’s legs under the table.

On the other hand, in the rural areas, women were exposed to different oppressions. The novel also refers to some young girls under the legal age of sexual consent who are made to marry someone older than them. Hasip, one of Aysel's primary school fellows, married a girl twenty years younger than him (216). He has become a religious person and regarded it as perfectly normal to marry her. Semiha, one of her best friends, was made to marry as her father renewed her identity card showing her as older than she really is; and she is not the only one who is forced to marry; Aysel advises her not to commit suicide like someone called Nimet (99), and it is implied that this girl had also been forced into an unsuitable marriage. In one of her stream of consciousness, Aysel's thought vacillates between Semiha, Hasip and a twelve year old girl abused by her father: "Semiha... Is that a big deal?.. A twelve year old girl in Nizip served as a wife to her father... That father... Hasip..." (269; ellipses in orig.). Relating these bits of thought to the above information the narrator has provided, it can be inferred that these girls do not give their consent in these actions since they are not given the right to choose. More importantly, these marriages or incestuous relations are connected to familial ties and thus kept secret. Likewise, these issues are not openly discussed within the narrative but implied with the fragmented thoughts of the narrator.

The Sense of Rape

A Strange Woman uses the notion of rape to interrogate how women's value is determined by their being virgin or not. A woman's sexuality is reduced to her virginity which she is expected to lose only in culturally approved ways such as a marriage accepted by parents as in the novel's context. The novel, through the rape case, problematizes this perspective since it displays that women experiencing rape or near-rape events are worried about the reactions they will get from their parents or the society in general rather than losing their virginity. When Nermin was kidnapped by the police, she thought that she would be raped. As the man was stronger than her, he could easily knock her out and rape her (39). Rather than fearing being raped, Nermin is worried about her mother's reactions

hearing that she lost her virginity since she valued chastity on top of everything—even her life. As a conservative religious woman, Nuriye (Nermin’s mother) associates virginity with purity and in the case of Nermin’s losing it even if she was raped, she would be desperate since she would bring shame to their family name rather than having sympathy for Nermin. In another instance, Nermin learns that her friend, Meral, lost her virginity when raped by her brother. Keeping this as a secret, Meral feels devastated because no man would want to marry her. In referring to these instances of violence and sexual abuse, the novel does not use direct statement such as “rape” and “incest” since characters themselves keep these as secret. In Meral’s case, for example, it is revealed as in the following lines:

I asked her [Meral] about her future plans, what she is going to do. “Isn’t it clear? I will finish school and try to get a teaching job, do I have any other options?” she said. I asked why she was so hopeless and offended. “Don’t ask as if you don’t know it” she said. “You’re exaggerating,” I said “nowadays you are being so *alaturka*³³! You are no different from my mother. I will run away from this country if you are also thinking that honour lies between the legs of a woman.” “It isn’t like this, you cannot know; I didn’t do it voluntarily,” she said. She was right.” Let it go,” I said. (82)

Throughout the novel, compared to women like Meral and Nuriye, Nermin is depicted as a nonconformist who criticizes these women who are terribly worried about virginity. She is distressed to see how these women and herself, even in rape cases, have to consider societal norms rather than coping with their traumatic experiences. The novel then criticizes the conservative cultural context in which the notion of virginity determines women’s value. Woman’s losing virginity, even in a voluntary sexual activity, before marriage makes her damaged. Since sexuality is also regulated by religion, any mention of it outside marriage is regarded shameful and taboo. Thus, in cases of losing virginity without consent as in rape cases, women keep silent feeling ashamed of themselves.

³³ Old-fashioned

Results

As has been noted thus far, in *The Passion of New Eve* and *Praxis*, sexual violence does not foreground women's victimization. Carter, first of all, subverts the heterosexual violence through reversing rape scenes: Mother rapes Evelyn, Eve/lyn later as a transsexual is made to rape the transvestite Tristessa. In these rape scenes, the male sexual organ loses its mythical power to victimize women. Even in the heterosexual rape when Zero rapes Eve/lyn, the act is beyond the normative definitions as Eve/lyn is a transsexual and did not consider himself a woman when raped by him; rather he still belongs to his male subjectivity which has "new flesh" (92). In this sense, the text deconstructs transphobic Zero making him having a sexual intercourse with a transsexual. In *Praxis*, Lucy is aware that Ben is able to rape her if he wants and is aroused by his violent actions. Yet at the same time Lucy's mind is preoccupied with the conflicts of being a carnal woman having an extramarital relationship with a Jewish man. When Miss Leonard gets raped, she is merely disappointed to find that sex is such a simple instinct. *Praxis*' first experience of sex is nothing more than a rape; she was drunk and could not even tell Philip not to proceed. She never complains about it but gradually develops beyond domestic and erotic stereotypes of femininity.

In the American novels, rape is first of all employed as a narrative strategy to point to the battle of sexes where women are victimized by men. The heterosexual context, that is conventional social grouping and everyday life, legitimizes male violation of women and women have already internalized this violence. The blame of rape is ultimately put on the woman herself; Jael's dream in *The Female Man* is a reflection the guilt women feel when they are sexually abused and in *The Women's Room* Anita's being charged guilty on killing her rapist shows the rough justice they have. In this respect, these texts share Brownmiller's idea that "[w]ithin the heterosexual world that most of us inhabit by choice, sexual violence is exalted by men to the level of ideology only when the victims are female and the victimizers are male" (*Against Our Will* 293). These novels represent men as the ultimate enemy since they are the cause of

female victimization. Therefore, women in these novels regardless of their socio-political origins cannot have sexual freedom in heterosexual relationships and rape is an extension of patriarchal power oppressing women. This is why the novels include characters some of whom are silent and submissive whereas some take action against sexual violence. Jael kills the boss in *Manlanders* as he attempts to rape her and Anita, the black prostitute kills her “respectable” white rapist. Both Russ and French create a shared oppression of sexual violence as experienced by different women with different backgrounds.

In the Turkish novels, the word rape is never used but the sense of rape is indicated in many scenes. Ağaoglu mentions how women are sexually abused by Aydın and how middle-aged Aysel feels threatened when she walks alone in the street at night time. Instances of young girls being made to marry older men may be counted as among these instances of the sexual violence hidden behind the words of the novels. Forced marriages are forms of sexual violence which are only thinly veiled by the fact that the men are legally permitted to own the girls’ bodies. Nermin, in Erbil’s novel, is quite conscious that sexual violence, even when not performed, exists as a threat to her freedom; men, either in their speech or in their actions, always imply sex. Yet she persuades herself that she does not care about being raped because she would like to get rid of the virginity that her mother valued so much. Moreover, Erbil includes an instance of incest to the novel to show how sexual abuse is not voiced. When Meral first mentions the case, she does not call it rape. She just says that the sexual act she had with her brother was not a voluntary one and that she feels devastated because she lost her virginity, which she believed destroyed her possibility of finding a husband. When Nermin tries to soothe her, saying that virginity is not important, Meral tells her she did not want to have sex with her brother. The veiled forms of sexual violence in both novels indicate that even the thought of sexual violence, let alone any direct mention of it, is seen as a taboo in the society, just as sexuality itself is also repressed. While the British and American novels explicitly work through and emphasize the theme, in the Turkish novels it is indirectly referred to.

CHAPTER 4

THE POLITICS OF RELATIONSHIPS

This chapter analyses women's place in relationships. As mentioned in the previous parts, the politics of relationships are quite important in the feminist theorising of the 1970s, and the well-known slogan of the time, "the personal is political," promotes the discussion of all private dimensions on the political level. More specifically, feminist critical works of the decade allocate a significant amount of attention to the scrutiny of all relationships in which women were involved. As Holmes explains, second-wave feminists claimed that "male-female relations were political, not 'natural'" (235). These relations were considered to be infused with power dynamics where men have the power and thus subjugate women. Within this frame, it was frequently highlighted that although women were granted legal rights on the both sides of the Atlantic, feminists were concerned that women were still treated unequally and were still oppressed by men. Undoubtedly, one of the main themes of second-wave feminism was that "women's liberation could not be achieved by political reforms or legal changes alone," instead it "demanded a more far-reaching and perhaps revolutionary process of social change" (Heywood 420). The movement thus aimed to "re-structure the 'private' sphere of family and domestic life, reflecting the belief that 'the personal is political'." Therefore, the nature of relationships, particularly those between men and women, which were analysed through power structures, gained utmost significance in the feminist discourse of the decade.

There is no doubt that the politics of relationships explore not only male-female relations but also women's relationship with children and other women along a broader spectrum, to include all institutions such as marriage, family, and motherhood. It should also be restated that although feminist theories of the

decade dealt with these issues mostly in universalistic terms, they were never unified since their focal points and treatment of these themes were different from each other. Furthermore, analysis of relationships only in terms of power relations was also limited since “it prevented a constructive analysis of differences between women and could produce personalised conflict between feminists” (Holmes 235). Focusing on literary texts from different localities, the following pages will explore how perception of relationships changes and gains different meanings across cultures. More specifically, the relationship between men and women through the analysis of romantic love and marriage, women’s relations to motherhood and reproduction and relationships between women focusing on sisterhood, which were recurrent themes of the feminist theories of the 1970s, will be studied in this chapter.

4.1. Male-Female Relations: Romantic Love and Marriage

The feminist discourse of the 1970s discuss male and female relations mostly in explorations of romantic love and marriage. Critical texts analyse these relationships mainly through the lens of inequality between the sexes and pursue the issue to uncloak how this inequality functions not only in the private realm but also at the political level. They share what John Stuart Mill expressed centuries earlier in *The Subjugation of Women*; that is, “the inequality of women in the family was incompatible with their equality in the wider social world” (Satz n. pag.). Although all the novels scrutinized in this study reflect this concern to some extent, their focal points and perception of male-female relations are different from each other.

Mock-relationships

In the second-wave Western feminist discourse, family is regarded as an ideological construct of patriarchy which Walby defines as “a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women” (20). According to Greer, a concept of a family unit which is “ruled over” by father and “nurtured” by mother has been regarded, by men and women, as

“inherent in the natural order” (247). Therefore, feminists in the 1970s focused on the role of ideology to lay bare the underlying mechanisms of this structure. Correspondingly, in *The Passion of New Eve*, Carter depicts Zero’s ranch-house as a simulacrum of the patriarchal family structure where the man has the ultimate authority while women are reduced to being no more than servants to the male sex. Zero treats his wives as slaves who cannot act against his strict rules whereas his wives do not more than contribute to his authority as they submit him without questioning his actions. Through Zero’s wives, the narrative, affiliating with Marxist feminist analysis of patriarchy in the works of Rowbotham and Barrett, delves into the lives of women who are charged with the double burden of work at home and outside it; within this context women’s awareness of their material realities is a necessity for a social change. Carter depicts Zero’s wives as blindly tied to Zero’s authority; they start their daily routines only after kissing “his solitary foot” (93). Mentioning Zero’s incomprehensible language, Eve/lyn conveys that “he regulated our understanding of him and also our understanding of ourselves in relation to him” (93). They do all kinds of housework, they work in the garden, tend the domestic animals and mother the pigs to whom Zero gives far more importance than he assigns to his women (90-94). They also collect garbage and prostitute themselves to economise and to make money for Zero (95). With such a workload, they have no time to spend on themselves, and anyway Zero always orders them to do something:

He took great pleasure in forcing us to eat our breakfast in an indigestible hurry and always rang his bell so soon after we sat down that we hardly had the time to gobble a single biscuit and, if we did not eat then, we must go hungry until lunchtime, since Zero forbade snacks between meals on pain of the lash. (93)

Although they are referred to as his wives, they merely function as concubines subservient to Zero. Here, marriage is depicted “as an artificial and ludicrous construct which has nothing to do with issues such as love, devotion or mutual respects” (Botescu-Sireteanu 132). Eve/lyn as the newest member of his harem further observes that nobody interrogates his authority and all of these girls

actually dedicate themselves to Zero. They do not interrogate their lived experience but worship Zero; besides, they cannot stand hearing any criticism against Zero:

Their common passion for the one-eyed, one-legged monomaniac predicated their conviction in his myth and since belief was the proof of love, each girl strived to outdo all the others in the strength of her conviction because they fretfully competed amongst themselves all the time for more than their share of his attentions. (96)

Their devotion to him reinforces his authority since “his myth depended on their conviction; a god-head, however shabby, needs believers to maintain his credibility” (96). Through this power structure in Zero’s harem, Carter lays bare the patriarchal ideology which reassures itself through institutions built upon such relations. Nonetheless, the novel destructs this power structure depicting Zero as an infertile man who thus cannot maintain reproduction, which actually threatens the continuation of patriarchy. Also, Zero’s polygamy with eight wives is specifically undermining the Christian idea of marriage; as Botescu-Sireteanu argues:

The excessive number is meant to mock at the allegedly unique, sacred and pure character of the patriarchal institution of marriage.... Carter’s subtle criticism toward this secular Christian institution, the monogamic, where apparently women trade the rule of the Father for that of the Husband supports the larger subversive frame of the novel. (132)

In *The Passion of the New Eve*, the hegemonic heterosexual relationships, constituted through love and marriage, are further undermined to allow space for multiple identities. As Pitchford argues:

Feminist interventions in representation must be historically flexible, responding to the varying means of male power in specific local contexts (forms of the family, of sexual relationships, or of state/military power that differ according to race and class). (132)

In this respect, the novel undermines Zero’s seeing himself as the ultimate guardian of patriarchy once more through a mock-wedding practice. Zero’s anger at Tristessa increases as he recognizes that Tristessa is a transvestite who has a

male sexual organ. Zero and his girls dress her as a gothic bride and Eve/lyn as a groom (using Tristessa's costume collection), because Zero "intended to close the performance [Zero's compelling Eve and Tristessa to masquerade as the opposite sex] with a marriage, the formal conclusion of pastorals" (129). For Tristessa, the situation is quite ironic; he has always wanted to be a woman and Zero urges him to be a bride which is conventionally assumed to be a natural role for a woman. The narrator reflects: "'Isn't it *every* girl's dream to be married in white?' the virgin bride demanded rhetorically of the company in her heroic irony" (130). Acting as "the captain" of Tristessa's ship-shaped glass house, Zero roars, bays and howls like an animal, using common language for the first time to ask Eve/lyn whether he is taking the woman as his bride. In this gothic wedding scene, Zero becomes the ultimate patriarch since he urges Tristessa and Eve/lyn into a compulsory marriage highlighting their gendered identities. However, categories of sex and gender are already ambiguous for Eve/lyn and Tristessa and their enforced cross-dressing in this scene contributes even more to this ambiguity. Eve/lyn expresses that:

This young buck, this Baudelarian dandy so elegant and trim in his evening clothes – it seemed, at first glance, I had become my old self again in the inverted world of the mirrors. But this masquerade was more than skin deep. Under the mask of maleness I wore another mask of femaleness but a mask that now I never would be able to remove, no matter how hard I tried, although I was a boy disguised as a girl and now disguised as a boy again, like Rosalind in Elizabethan Arden. In the desert, we played out an arid pastoral. (129)

Although Zero wanted a formal pastoral performance, ending with the man and the woman getting married, this marriage is not an ordinary one. Eve/lyn says that: "he made us man and wife although it was a double wedding – both were the bride, both the groom in this ceremony" (132). Thus, even though Zero thinks he is establishing a heterosexual marriage, their marriage cannot be defined within heterosexual binaries as they, Eve being transsexual and Tristessa being transvestite, are beyond such sex categories.

A Doll's House

Congruent with the 1970s' feminist analyses of love, marriage and family, Greer regards all these relations as the sources for women's entrapment in domestic space and encourages women to take action: "Obviously any woman who thinks in the simplest terms of liberating herself to enjoy life and create expression for her own potential cannot accept such a role" (261). Aligning with this second-wave feminist discussion, Weldon's argument of women's place in relationships centres on rejection of passivity and the taking of action which she explores through various antagonistic representations of dating, marriage and family structure within which women choose to stay although they are not content with their lives. Within this frame, Weldon looks into women's experience of relationships mainly through Praxis and her mother, Lucy as their reactions to these oppressive relationships are different from each other.

According to Jackson, for "feminist critiques of love," "love was seen as an ideology which legitimated women's oppression and which trapped them into exploitative relationships" (98). Jackson's idea of love is written into *Praxis*, as well. To illustrate, seeing that Ben has become a bully, Lucy's romantic aspirations melt away, as well:

And indeed, Lucy's Jewish lover, her piece of exotica, had turned into as boring a drunkard as ever graced the golf courses and clubs of the twenties, frittering away in alcoholic despondency the fruits of his father's and grandfather's labours. But of course he drank to excess: it was Lucy's fault: she had dragged him down: he should be married to some nice Jewish matron and his eldest son coming up to Bar Mitzvah. (12)

Weldon thus shows how romantic love turns into disappointment, and Lucy is eventually beaten and trapped in the domestic space. After beating Lucy, her husband leaves for the golf club while she stays at home and depressively goes over her relationship with him:

How she resented the time he spent at the golf course, and in the golf club, while she sat bored and miserable on the beach. Was this what she had shattered convention for; broken with her family, her friends? Everything

she had ever known; doomed herself to eternal damnation, for the sake of what she had believed. (11)

Love in this context functions to consolidate women's oppression. According to Greer, patriarchy idealizes heterosexual love as a prelude to marriage and family as a result of which women consider this experience as the only "normality" they can have. Walter elaborates that:

Even if not all writers who are associated with feminism's second wave had quite Greer's cheerleading tone when talking about promiscuity, this was a time when women who had more than one sexual partner were often seen as necessarily more honest and braver than those who chose monogamy. (n. pag.)

As the questioning of marriage was foregrounded, depiction of a fulfilling life without marriage gained significance in the 1970s. Weldon's interrogation of women's place in relationships convey a similar message yet with different tones; *Praxis* argues that love and marriage can be both liberating and limiting and in different contexts, they can raise different strategies to problematize patriarchal institutions regulating such relations. Lucy's experience of love, marriage and family can be described as one beyond normative relationships, which is not celebrated by Lucy as second-wave feminists encouraged women to do. Lucy is an outcast from her family and former friends because she is in love with a Jewish man; even Ben himself despises Lucy for being with him: "You had to come to me; no one else would have you. Idle cow" (12). She is further alienated from the society since she cannot marry Ben, the father of her children, legally since she was already married to a man who probably lost his life in war. Also, she does not want to urge Ben to marry her in case he rejects her and, more importantly, it would inform society that they have been living in sin:

The international divorce laws, she told herself (and Ben), were too difficult to face. At any rate, she did nothing about a divorce. Perhaps she was afraid of being free to marry Benjamin in case he did not, after all, want to marry her. Better to live with the guilty secret than the open truth of their life together—that they were bound by the habit of illicit lust, mutual degradation. His Jewishness, her Christianity. (12)

In this regard, Weldon draws attention to other factors influencing this marriage; it is not only the war between sexes but a larger web of relations. Lucy cannot get out of this relationship mainly because she is afraid of becoming even more alienated from society if they find out she is a “kept woman” (14). Therefore, the positive and fulfilling depictions of rejecting marriage, as promoted by the second-wave feminist critics, are not valid for her. She cannot take action to overcome these conflicts; as a result she loses her psychological stability and is eventually put into a mental institution. In Lucy’s case, love and marriage have the potential of subverting the state and religious regulations heterosexual relationships; yet this potential is never fulfilled by Lucy.

Within this context, Praxis’ heterosexual relationships create a challenge to the meaning of love and marriage deeply rooted in and idealized by patriarchy; what entraps Lucy in domestic space and eventually in a mental institution makes Praxis a woman beyond normativity. Praxis’s early perspectives of marriages are already negative, as she expresses with her question “Who would ever marry me? Pattie wondered. Who would ever want to? Jewess, bastard, pervert. Daughter of a mad mother: insanity in the blood, running strong” (60). According to Hansen,

For Praxis, the anxiety of lacking a single, knowable identity and failing to belong is initially fuelled by the disintegration of the patriarchal family, which normally functions to provide at least some sense of self and connection. (196)

Nevertheless, what Hansen describes as “disintegration” provides Praxis with agency and self-empowerment; unlike her mother, Praxis does sustain her relationships with her male partners. From another angle, Jackson argues that “[l]ove was linked to women’s search for a positive identity, a sense of themselves as valued, in a society which undervalues and marginalizes them” (95). Praxis’ first relationship with Willie who is the roommate of her actual love Philip can be argued in this frame; Praxis sees love as a refuge from the problems of her mundane life. At first, she really supports and takes care of Willie since she wants to have a “steady boyfriend” (93). She becomes in a way the carer of two

roommates as she does all the cooking and other housework for them although they do not ask her to do so. At that time, she felt like doing this in order to escape the reality surrounding her: “She tried not to think and worry about anything: about Baby Mary, Hilda or her mother. Willie helped” (90). Namely, it is not a complete devotion but also an act of forgetting which helps her to deal with her personal problems. As Greer argues, one of the perversions of love is altruism since it encourages women’s self-sacrifice for men. This altruism is only a deceit since it is rewarded by “security” provided by men:

It is in fact a kind of commerce, and one in which the female must always be the creditor. . . . Properly speaking, altruism is an absurdity. Women are self-sacrificing in direct proportion to their capacity to offer anything but this sacrifice. They sacrifice what they never had: a self. (170-71)

Likewise, Praxis ignores her problems with Willie because she thinks she is relieved when Willie attentively listens to her (90). Even more, she neglects her own academic career in order to help Willie be successful:

She typed Willie’s essays though, and found books for him in the library, getting there early so as to be the first in the queue when work was set. After Willie’s essays were completed and typed, she would then begin on her own. She typed slowly, using only two fingers. It was assumed by both of them that this was the proper distribution of their joint energies. He got A’s and she got C’s. (91)

Akin to Greer’s discussion of altruism, Praxis’ self-sacrifice results in her giving up her ideals and aspirations of life. It is Willie who controls Praxis’ life whereas Praxis turns into a submissive housewife doing everything to please Willie. When Willie tells that she is “a born housewife,” Praxis remembers that she was once a successful student who is now becoming a housewife (103). Willie sees her life as “one long holiday,” as housework and childcare do not count as real work, through which the text also affiliates with socialist feminist arguments against “the suggestion that housework and childcare are not ‘real work’ because they are not part of the commodity system” (Watkins 60). Women’s work is devalued but Praxis does not react against it since she has given the control of her life to Willie. It is again Willie who says he is ready to marry her if she wants. Nevertheless,

recognizing that his real aim is to have the legal right to the house belonging to her mother, Praxis does not accept his proposal. In this respect, love here does not lead to marriage but to rather subversive actions such as prostitution and incest. Upon this she finds a job at a bar, then starts prostitution and soon commits incest with her father, which makes her abandon her life with Willie and Mary whom she has really liked mothering. According to Greer, “[t]he essential factor in the liberation of the married woman is understanding of her condition. She must fight the guilt of failure in an impossible set-up, and examine the set-up” (362). Similarly, for Praxis, initial step for liberation is awareness of her positioning in this relationship. Commenting on “the ordinary domestic woman,” older Praxis says: “She seems to me to be neither spiritually exalted nor greatly loved; fulfilling no higher purpose than a mindless biological destiny” (148). Thus, she never regrets leaving them behind.

Later in the novel, Praxis decides that she wants to get married, soon after which she meets and marries Ivor and gives birth to her own children. This time, she gives up her job because Ivor does not want a “working wife” (164). Although people regard her as a lucky woman as she has now an attendant husband, two children and a house in the suburbs, Praxis feels like a doll (168). Praxis’ ideal family life shatters when her sister writes to Ivor, revealing her prostitution, soon after which Praxis abandons him, as well. The suburban neighbourhood is also distressed by sexual experimentation resulting in wife-swapping. According to Greer, changing partners in sexual experimentation is a disguise for boredom; it can change the modes of pleasure but “does not restore life” (256). Correspondingly, she encourages women like Ibsen’s male-dominated Nora who feels like “a designing doll, disillusioned about her husband, confused and embittered by her own idleness and insignificance” to leave the nuclear family behind (250). In accordance with Greer’s discussion, in *Praxis*, sexual experimentation in the neighbourhood eventually breaks the illusion of the all happy suburban family when one of the wives kills herself (176-77). Cannot

coming over her boredom with this married-with children life style, Praxis again leaves- this time dismissing her legal marriage and family.

On the other hand, love may gain a subversive quality and problematize patriarchal norms. “Love may impel us into monogamous unions but it can equally be a threat to monogamy, a reason for changing partners or engaging in extra-marital liaisons” (Jackson 102). In the same manner, in *Praxis*, love also constitutes a threat to nuclear family structure. After leaving her family, Praxis, she goes to live with her friend Irma who is now married to Praxis’ first love interest—Philip. Initially aiming to look after her children when Irma is in hospital to give birth to her next child, Praxis sleeps with Philip. Once she realizes that Philip is having an affair with an actress and declaring his love for her, Praxis again leaves—renouncing romantic love this time. As this series of failed relationships shows, Praxis failed to develop a stable identity because she chose to perform different roles in family settings, varying from a wicked mother to a working wife. Romantic aspirations are shown in this novel to be undermined through bullying, unfaithful and selfish husbands who can easily leave women alone in domesticity. However, through these shifting identities, *Praxis* remarks on the importance of agency and taking action to change the disadvantaged and oppressed positioning of women. Towards the end of the novel, Praxis—now an old woman—says:

Our idleness betrays us, and our apathy—murmuring, oh, let him decide! Let him pay! Let him go out to work and battle in the terrible world! Our brains betray us, keeping one step, for the sake of convenience, to avoid hurt, behind the male. Our passivity betrays us, whispering in our ears, oh, it isn’t worth a fight! He will only lie on the far side of the bed! or be angry and violent! or find someone else more agreeable! We cringe and placate, waiting for the master’s smile. It is despicable. We are not slaves. (205)

That is, escaping the illusionary nature of love and convenience it is assumed to provide women with is detrimental for women’s liberation.

Whileawayan Drifting and Independence

As mentioned earlier, Russ' creation of four protagonists from different continuums provides the reader with an insight to different versions of reality and a vision of sexual revolution, which is also valid for male-female relationships. As Millett argues what is crucial to achieve a sexual revolution is to bring "an end of traditional sexual inhibitions and taboos, particularly those that most threaten patriarchal monogamous marriage: homosexuality, "illegitimacy," adolescent, pre- and extra-marital sexuality" (62). In Janet's *Whileaway*, such a revolution is enacted as the conventional relationships of the worlds of Joanna and Jeannine do not exist, which is mainly because there is no male there. Therefore, eradication of male sex in *Whileaway* is a symbol for this radical change of patriarchal society that feminists in the 1970s attacked most. With such radicalism, the novel suggests, oppressive male-female relations do not exist in this society since love, marriage and family are accordingly radicalized. On the other hand, in a patriarchal society, as radical feminists such as Millett and Firestone argues, the concept of love becomes a means of emotional manipulation and plays a significant role in women's oppression as it idealizes the heterosexual relationship and consolidates male power. In a similar manner, in the worlds of Jeannine, Joanna and Jael love is depicted as "disease" and a tool to subordinate woman whereas in *Whileaway* there is, thus, no romantic love:

Love is a radiation disease. Whileawayans do not like the self-consequence that comes with romantic passion and we are very mean and mocking about it; so Vittoria and I walked back separately, each frightened to death of the weeks and weeks yet to go before we'd be over it. (79)

While in heterosexual context love is associated with the marriage and thus as a contributor to continuation of oppressive nuclear family structure, *Whileawayan* idea of love disrupts monogamy. Thus, the notion of man as the possessor of woman does not count here. Couples are free to leave since commitment is not celebrated, which is related to Robinson's discussion that non-monogamy can "serve to disrupt some of the assumptions monogamy makes about human behaviour," such as the idea that people "are inherently jealous and possessive"

(144). Besides, as highlighted by Millet, for “a sexual revolution to proceed further,” “a truly radical social transformation” is a must, and this is possible through “the alteration of marriage and the family as they had been known throughout the history” (157). Congruently, Whileawayan family structure overtly challenges the patriarchal one for several reasons. First of all, there is no monogamous marriage and there is no legal arrangement controlling partnerships (53). Thus, the 1970s’ discussion of non-monogamy as a “challenge to the oppression wrought by heterosexual relationships” is embedded in the novel (Jackson and Scott, “The Personal is Still Political” 151). At the age of about four or five, Whileawayans are sent to schools and from then on, most of the time, they are mobile and their bond with the family they were born into almost disappears. They travel all the time and do not come back; for some who want to return, there is no family waiting. The system of family and marriage is as follows:

They may marry into pre-existing families or form their own . . . by twenty-five she has entered a family, thus choosing her geographical home base (Whileawayans travel all the time). Her family probably consists of twenty to thirty other persons, ranging in age from her own to the early fifties. (Families tend to age the way people do; thus new groupings are formed again in an old age. Approximately every fourth girl must begin a new or join a nearly-new family.) (52)

Therefore, Janet’s perception of family and marriage is quite different from those of Joanna and Jeannine. Jeannine’s sole aim is to get married, because the opposite is regarded as “drifting” which is certainly not approved by her community (115). Quite the contrary, in Janet’s world, in marriage as in all phases of life, there is no stability since it is not a desirable notion. Although she does not really want to get married, she sees no other means to realize herself since the roles attributed to men and women are noted as in the following remark: “His contribution is *Make me feel good*; her contribution is *Make me exist*” (120). Existence is associated with marriage in her continuum; nevertheless, she reveals that “I’m not fit to exist” (121). While her family is happy to see she is soon going to get married, she is imbued with a melancholic desire to die; she says that: “I have everything and yet I am not happy. Sometimes I want to die” (150).

While Jeannine is depressed by the idea of marriage when experiencing it at the personal level, Joanna criticizes the romantic ideal for dominating women in her society. She complains that the lives of her contemporary women are governed by scenarios promoting love relationships in which women are positioned as passive and submissive. Referring to Rousseau's ideas of the proper education for women, Millett explores that they were influential in the reinforcement of patriarchal attitudes towards women; to illustrate, Rousseau told that:

The whole education of women ought to be relative to men. To please them, to be useful to them, to make themselves loved and honored by them, to educate them when young, to care for them when grown, to counsel them, to make life sweet and agreeable to them—these are the duties of women at all times, and what should be taught them from their infancy. (263)

That is, women's education was supported only to make them "better housewives and mothers" (Millett 75). Joanna's envisioning Janet in her world and contemplating what kind of a life she would have there, in fact, reflects such a perspective:

Janet would have gone to a party and at that party she would have met a man and there would have been something about that man; he would not have seemed to her like any other man she had ever met. Later he would have complimented her on her eyes and she would have blushed with pleasure; she would have felt that compliment was somehow unlike any other compliment she had ever received because it had come from that man; she would have wanted to please that man, and at the same time she would have felt the compliment enter the marrow of her bones; she would have gone out and bought mascara for the eyes that had been complimented by that man. And later still they would have gone for walks, and later still for dinners She would have said: I Am In Love With That Man. That Is The Meaning Of My Life. And then, of course, you know what would have happened. (30)

Joanna reveals how women, under the illusion of love, drift into traditional endings, as exemplified with the phrase "a typical family for her" (30). While monogamy is seen to secure the stability of a patriarchal setting, it also legalizes men's domination over women.

In this respect, introduction of Whileaway concepts of lesbian relationships to the 1970s' America where Joanna lives foregrounds the heteronormative monogamous relationships promoted by patriarchy. Being curious about the new life style in Joanna's continuum, Janet wants to live with a typical family, upon which Joanna takes her to live with the Wildings. This is a typical American family that is based on sex and gender roles segregation, which Laura-the daughter of the Wildings- is made to learn by the school psychologist. He tells her that "men's and women's functions in society were different, they had equal dignity. . . . Men make the decisions and women make the dinners" (67). Janet's meeting with the family will eventually shatter this structure of relations as she will initiate Laura into a lesbian relationship. In Laura's world, the contemporary American society where Joanna lives, romantic as well as sexual love is acceptable only in heterosexual relationships; any other sexual relationship is a taboo. Thus, when Janet and Laura begin their sexual relationship, they both challenge the values of their societies. What they do is a taboo in both worlds; in Janet's world because of the age difference and Laura's world because of the same-sex relationship. The novel celebrates this relationship and represents it as free of the sexual politics that governs women's lives in contemporary society and of which that the novel wants to raise a feminist awareness. Such a utopian life is nevertheless shown by the novel to exist only when men no longer hold power and women are free to set up their own institutions.

"Wife or whore, women are the most scorned class in America"

The Women's Room celebrates the radical stance of Western feminism in the 1970s which proposed that "patriarchy is inherent to bourgeois society and that sexual difference is more fundamental than class and race differences" (Krolokke and Sorensen 9). To emphasize this, "[w]ife or whore, women are the most scorned class in America," says the narrator in the opening pages of the novel (10). French discusses women's place in relationships around this remark and the text abounds with heterosexual relationships in all of which women are oppressed and victimized. Dating, romantic love and marriages are depicted as

different forms of oppression since they undermine women's sexual, emotional and economic interests. In this sense, the novel agrees with Firestone who sees romantic love as a "holocaust" and married women as "civilly dead" (149, 18). Likewise, Mira exclaims "*[l]ove, love, heavens above, we all destroy in the name of love,*" and she becomes the representative of a woman going through different stages of consciousness through her relations with men (171). For example, Mira's first boyfriend leaves her because she does not want to have sex with him and soon after this she barely escapes being gang raped at a party she goes to with her male friends. Although she is determined to stay single forever when she is younger, she soon gets married, just to protect herself against men; "[s]he had no choice but to protect herself against a savage world she did not understand and by her gender alone was made unfit to deal with. There was marriage and there was the convent" (38). The novel depicts that experiences like this make women abandon their aspirations of independence: Mira chooses to marry Norm only because she feels she has no other option, since being single labelled a young woman as a 'bitch' and makes her vulnerable to attack by men:

That a woman could not go out in public and enjoy herself dancing without worrying what every male in the place was thinking or even worse, what they might do, seemed to her an injustice so extreme that she could not swallow it. (36)

While marriage indicates the hope for a new life in a traditional bildungsroman, Mira thinks that "it was less a new beginning for [her] than a continuation" because "the external events of her life changed, the internal ones remained much the same" (38). The narrative thus shows that in real life marriage is only a legalization of the already existing heterosexual oppression.

Referring to division of sex roles and its influence on women's oppression, Millett argues that while the female infant is assigned with "domestic service and attendance," the rest of human achievement, interest, and ambition" is attributed to the male (26). This division between sexes is observed through the marriage of Mira and Norm. While Mira is trapped in domestic chores, Norm's life continues

as usual and he improves his career. Mira chooses to be a clerk-typist since her husband does not want her to take a job in the city. Her bus journeys to and from work are long, and she starts preparing the dinner as soon as she comes home. She wants to do some reading but cannot because of the noise of the TV that Norm watches. She blames herself; if she really wanted to study, she could: “But, she argued, she was so tired after eight hours in an office, two on buses, preparing dinner, washing dishes—a job Norm simply refused” (40). Arguing that home is not a sacred place as promoted by the patriarchy, Millett agrees with Mill who sees home as the centre of a system he defines as “domestic slavery” (99). Likewise, *The Women’s Room* discusses that domestic tasks play a significant role in women’s oppression. Mira has very limited time to spare for herself due to her double workload. On the other hand, she reveals that she still wants to go back to school, get a PhD and start teaching, which horrifies Norm (41). Getting pregnant, she becomes a housewife and mother to two children and dismisses her desire to pursue an academic career. She changes from being one of “the young, struggling white middle class” to being a member of “the older, affluent, white middle class” (152). Evolving into a suburban housewife with two children, Mira calls life in the suburbs a “lazy” one in which nothing interesting happens (77). She resembles the women in suburbia to women in classical Greek society, even to their slaves:

It is often noticed that women in suburbia, much like the woman in ancient Greece, are locked into the home and see no one but children all day. The Greek women saw slaves, who might have been interesting people. But suburban women have each other. (76-77)

Through the structure of relations in suburbia, French, in fact, draws attention to the fact that these women do not question their submissive status; the longer they keep silent, the more oppressed they become:

The unspoken, unthought-about conditions that made it oppressive had long since been accepted by all of them: that they had not chosen but had been automatically slotted into their lives, and that they were never free to move (the children were much more effective as clogs than confinement on a prison farm would be). Having accepted the shit and string beans, they were content. (77-78)

Even Mira, who later experiences consciousness-raising that moves her to carry on with her own aspirations, does not struggle against her husband's discouragements and ignores his absence from home thinking it is work-related; she starts to focus on her individual life only after her husband asks for a divorce, and only after recovering from her first reactions which were drinking heavily and attempting suicide. Her subsequent decision to go back to college is the initial step towards a new womanhood. The publisher's blurb advertises the novel as follows:

[*The Women's Room*] is the hauntingly powerful story of Mira Ward - the wife of the Fifties who becomes a woman of the Seventies. From the shallow excitements of suburban cocktail parties and casual affairs, through the varied nightmares of rape, madness and loneliness to the dawning awareness of the exhilaration of liberation, the experience of Mira and her friends crystallise those of a generation of modern women. (qtd. in Radstone, *Sexual Politics of Time* 103)

Mira thus becomes the representative of a woman gaining feminist awareness through which she escapes oppressive relationships. The women Mira meets at the university have problems in their relationships, as well. They are all in graduate school and at home they have traditional female roles (in terms of house-keeping and child-care), particularly those like Kyla and Clarissa who have husbands and Val who has a child. Iso and Ava are in a lesbian relationship and although it is Ava who mostly does the domestic work, their relationship is not an oppressive one. Iso comments that: "I hate discussions of feminism that end up with who does the dishes" and Mira accepts that in end "there are always the damned dishes" (62). In spite of the ever-present dishes (even in lesbian relationships), oppression is more powerful in heterosexual relationships; Val, the feminist activist of the novel, is verbally abused by her boyfriend, Kyla complains that her husband still expects her to do all the work though she has some important exams, Iso was raped by her fiancé, Clarissa is beaten and raped by her husband, Mira's new boyfriend wants her to leave her career to bear children for her.

This novel shows that French undoubtedly sees all heterosexual relationships as oppressive but she makes it clear that not all women are aware of

this: while Mira's female friends at the university look for ways to end this oppression, her former female neighbours did not. The university group have long discussions about how women situate themselves in relationships and how they can become such submissive and devoted partners. Evoking the 1970s' feminists' critiques on women's altruism and self-sacrifice in relationships, Val sees that heterosexual relationships are based on the selflessness of women mainly because women perform what is regarded as their natural job; giving priority to domestic duties they ignore their individual aspirations. Therefore, Val thinks, women are "brainwashed into selflessness" (61). The group finally agrees that both sexes should perform selflessness, suggesting that "everyone should act in both roles" (62). They also accept that it is only a "rhetorical solution" since in real life it would not work. Actually, all these women even those with a feminist consciousness are disappointed in their relations with men.

The narrator points out that the initial crucial step in ending women's oppression is to start to question male authority, which Mira's later female friends are already aware of. As Val expresses:

Because what we threaten is male legitimacy itself. . . . And when a man loses his sense of legitimacy, what he is really losing is a sense of superiority. . . . When a man loses superiority, he loses potency. That's what all this talk about castrating women is about. . . . The simple truth – that men are only equal – can undermine a culture more devastatingly than any bomb. Subversion is telling the truth. (444)

In this sense, these women constitute a challenge to traditional heterosexual relationships mainly because they question man's authority. In the end of the novel, rejecting her boyfriend's proposal and rejecting the idea of bearing his children, Mira walks alone, along the beach by the small town where she teaches. She accepts that she is beyond the norm because she defies "the laws passed by the oppressor to keep the oppressed in line" (216).

Imposed Identities

Male and female relations occupy a significant part in *Lying Down to Die* mainly as a site of tension between traditional and modern values. Delving into the childhood of Aysel and her classmates, the novel shows that they are never comfortable with the opposite sex even in the absence of sexual or emotional pressures. In this sense, the novel denotes that not only their sex but also the socio-economic background of these children are influential in male-female relations. First of all, the novel depicts that encouragement in adopting Western habits and values, which is a characteristic of the new state ideology, is evidently not equally welcomed by the citizens. Referring to Turkey in the years following the establishment of the new republic in 1923, Kasaba relates that:

Mustafa Kemal, had envisioned for Turkey an organized, well articulated, linear process of modernization through which the whole nation was going to move simultaneously and with uniform experience. At the end of this process, there would emerge a militantly secular, ethnically homogenous republic well on its way to catching up with the civilized nations of the West. (16-17)

Nevertheless, as the novel displays, the modernization process was not easily adopted by the local people, and especially not by the underprivileged.

Particularly, women's existence in the public spaces was encouraged to support the Westernizing attitude of modernization process, yet such a promotion of women's individuality along with emancipation was also regarded as the cause of "a moral breakdown of society" (White 147). This is mainly because they were still attached to Islamic values which regulated the division of spaces between sexes. The episode narrating the school show depicts how this social context is diversely experienced by people. At the school show, her teacher scolds Aysel as follows: "Aysel, don't be stiff like a board when dancing rondo. Relax" (9). Like Aysel, Hasip also displays signs of finding the dance class stressful, as seen in the teacher's criticism of his performance: "You are dancing rondo. Also, don't shake your head as if you are reading verse. You're not at the mosque. You're at the stage of a school which is the heart of civilization" (9). Aysel's father is against

her dancing and taking part at the graduation ceremony since he, like some other indigenous people, thinks that dancing Western dances like the polka and rondo is a shameful activity for both sexes (19). Similarly, the author has made Hasip's father a *hafiz*³⁴, which emphasizes the role of a religious background in making some parents perceive such a show as going against their moral and religious values. The narrator reflects that:

Among the audience there were fathers who were notable and craftsmen; they were steadily coughing to whitewash their honour polluted by polka and rondo, they were pointlessly laughing to send away all their stressful thoughts. They were ordered to *be civilised*. Well they *were acting civilised*. They were not guilty. (19)

While Mr Dündar includes these dances to follow the orders of the head office and prove his devotion to Westernization project, the headmaster considers this as an exaggeration. Moreover, being aware of the reaction of the parents, the headmaster feels uncomfortable with the situation:

The chorus is fine. Tableaux of professions are good. Folk songs are very good. The Ergenekon epic; well, is wonderful... What then? Why does he insist on polka that much? Opening to the West was ordered from the head office. Fair enough, the daughter of the state prosecutor will play the violin. Girls will perform "Flowers and Bugs" with boys. Was the polka particularly necessary? In polka, the boys will embrace the girls. They will hold hands. Yes, a broader window to the West perhaps will be opened but the whole town is up in arms as well. Some even wanted to take their children out of the school. You see, Enver the Blind persevered to keep out his daughter from the show. Now he turns his head to another side when he runs across me in the street. Also, I hear that he was calling me a 'pimp' on every hand. (11; ellipsis in orig.)

In a similar way the narrator draws attention to how the dilemmas of the parents influence their children, and she compares two different familial backgrounds: which are those who adjusted to the revolutions accompanying the establishment of the republic and those who could not. This is illustrated through Sevil and Aydın who feel comfortable and whose families have sufficient income to allow them to prepare the costumes for the show; the narrator emphasizes how

³⁴ "A title of respect for a Muslim who knows the Koran by heart" ("Hafiz").

the fathers of these children—one being the *caimacam* (district governor) and the other the state prosecutor—are supportive and glad to watch their children in the ceremony. On the other hand, those like Aysel and Hasip seem distressed during the show since their parents are not supportive of their performance. Actually, the narrator highlights that although some townspeople including Aysel's father have a deep respect to Atatürk, they still think that these revolutions are against their traditions. The generation of Aysel lives through this conflict of their parents at a different level; to illustrate, Aysel is embarrassed by her father's not letting her taking part in the show, since she regards his attitude as showing disrespect to Atatürk. Her father does not attend the show, but when she makes bodily contact with a male classmate she still feels the pressure of his possible reactions, even in his absence:

Aysel was pleased deep inside that her mother and father didn't come to the show. At first, she felt embarrassed in front of Mr Dündar. She even felt like an orphan. But, right now, there she was happy for especially her father's absence. Because acting as the bee, Aydın, the son of the *caimacam*, accidentally held her, the butterfly's, waist at once instead of perching on the violet. On top of, pressing his lips to Aysel's cheek out of confusion, he stung her sizzling. (19)

Knowing her father's attitude towards her dancing, she feels relieved that he is not watching the show. Therefore, Ayaz argues, Aysel experiences her first conflict between tradition and modernization in this school show (36).

In this respect, the novel reflects how individuals are influenced by the social atmosphere of the country. Actually, Ağaoğlu reveals that she also experienced this personal conflict that resulted from the clash of Eastern and Western values:

When the New Republic headed towards Westernization only with its super structural institutions after having rejected what is pertaining to the East for very realistic reasons, it was unavoidable that a cultural conflict, which is far beyond the generational one that is in a sense natural to societies, would occur. Our fathers, grandfathers were loaded with eastern, mystical, feudal values. It was impossible to deny those values, to internalize a new way of life, to become Western in 24 hours. We were

expected to grow up with the values which were very different from and even the exact opposite of the values rooted deep in the history of society. Actually, in my country the Westernization movement that began in the mid-19th century with the Tanzimat Decree became an official ideology applied in all super structural institutions. I grew up between Eastern and Western cultures, which are very foreign to one another. . . . Set of values, at home, in school, in social life, were different from each other. . . . In this case, the conflict, as it is seen, is between the State and society, not the classes. (*Karşılaşmalar* 36)

Likewise, Aysel's contemporaries, the first generation of the Republic living from the 1930s to the early 70s, are shown by the novel to have intensely experienced such contradictions which pervaded the towns where they grow up, and which showed itself in their personal relations. Especially, in the novel this generation is seen to be unable freely to express themselves either in romantic or in friendly conversations. To exemplify, Aydın has a lasting love interest in Aysel; nevertheless, he cannot articulate his feelings since he is afraid of being scolded by their families, teachers and even friends. On one occasion, meeting her at a school organization, Aydın ponders over the difficulty of talking to her caused by Aysel saying that her teachers would punish both of them. Aydın considers this situation as ironic since the very same teachers also promote collaboration of men and women to improve Kemalist principles; he explains that "[t]o tell the truth, I was now angry with these teachers. They tell us to be "civilized" and they also distress us" (160). Likewise, Aysel complains that even a greeting with a male friend is not tolerated in her community. Later, in her relationship with her husband Ömer, she considers their kissing before marriage as nonconformist behaviour; she feels even more of a rebel when she later cheats on her husband with her student. That is, while she is younger, her relations with the opposite sex are shaped by being a hardworking student devoted to Atatürk's reforms, her later relations with the opposite sex continue to take the form of rejection of older norms.

The text shows that the pressure and conflict Aysel experiences in her relations are not only connected to her sex since the males of her generation also feel the same thing; the novel gives a deep insight into these relationships and, in

fact, lays bare the fact that each person experiences this pressure in a different way. Yet the novel also recognizes that women are exposed to more oppression than men. Accordingly, the novel aligns with criticism towards state feminism which White argues “was concerned primarily with women’s public emancipation, but little concerned with their private lives as women” (147). It is then observed that although the state granted women the equal rights of citizenship and encouraged women’s full participation in social life with men, moral values associated with traditional norms constituted a great challenge to women’s liberation. Thus, the novel explores that what is political has deep influences for the very personal lives of women. For example, Aysel is expected to be seen by the suitors whom her parents find acceptable and should her suitors also agree to their marriage then she is expected to leave school. This is what prompts her to be seen with a male friend, hoping that this apparently dishonourable behaviour will discourage her suitors. When the family honour is considered, women are under more pressure than men, which can be observed in the letters Aysel and her girlfriends from her town write to each other. For instance, Aysel’s friend Semiha has been married off to some man whom she does not love and her wish to continue at school is not even a possibility. For girls like Aysel and Semiha, marriage prevents their intellectual development and they do not have the right to choose any alternatives. While Semiha’s educational life ends as soon as her parents arrange a marriage for her, Aysel purposely causes a scandal during a vacation in which she meets her suitor and his parents, in order to spoil her arranged marriage.

A Nonconformist Woman

Erbil’s depiction of women’s relations with the opposite sex comes to the fore whenever she depicts women’s relations with men. As Arsiya mentions, the novel “became the centre of literary attention very quickly due to its unconventional look at marriage and the role of women in society” (n. pag.). The novel envisages Nermin as a nonconformist whose perspectives on male-female relations are irreconcilable with the values of her society. While her current

society puts heavy pressure on women in terms of their interactions with men, Nermin disregards societal norms and breaks the boundaries separating male and female spaces. Unlike most people she knows, Nermin believes that she can attend men's circles and become friends with them; thus, she often goes to Monsieur Lambo's place to meet the male intellectuals she respects and she befriends those who see her as a "sister." In this context, Nermin's case is akin to the image of a woman who functions as a symbolic sister stripped of sexuality (Kandiyoti, "Women and the Turkish State," Z. Arat). Nermin feels content with her asexual socialist identity; however, the attitudes of certain men who spread false rumours about sleeping with her deter her from continuing to spend time with men. Nermin's relations with the opposite sex centre on her need to be recognized as a liberated woman who can express her intellectual capacity without being exposed to sexual oppression. As a matter of fact, marriage or any other romantic relationships were not her priority.

In addition to experiencing sexism, Nermin undergoes parental pressure concerning her relationships with the opposite sex. As mentioned before, her mother regards herself as the protector of Nermin's chastity, and she knows that any contact with men would be misinterpreted by the society and would bring shame to the family name. Actually, Nermin's initiation into marriage takes place under circumstances in which she feels the utmost pressure from her mother. Nermin decides to elope with Halit in whom she has little romantic interest, being instead attracted by his political views. Halit is a Kurdish man who was in prison for a while due to his political views and Nermin lays emphasis on the fact that in her letters to him she avoided even the slightest of sexual implications (51). Her decision to elope with him is a rebellion against her mother whom she calls the "madam warden of hymen" and discriminates against different ethnic groups in Turkey (68). Her mother discovers her plan, however, and beats her for bringing shame to their family. Attempting suicide twice, Nermin feels desperate in her sadness. When she relates this to her friend Meral, they contemplate how to escape this parental pressure:

“I’ve found it” she [Meral] cried suddenly; “I’ve found it! I’ve found it! Eureka, eureka!” She started to cavort around. “Be quite! My mom comes and spies on me through the door,” I said. She perched on the edge of my bedstead. “You will get married” she said, “You will have a sham marriage; you’ll get a divorce a few months later when you want, he’ll marry you just to save you and you don’t have to sleep with him if you don’t want to!..” “Are you out of your mind?” I said, “How will we find such a husband?” “Bedri?” she said... “Bedri?” “[. . .] he’s completely in love with you, my mom already adores you and I’ll be your sister-in-law!” She laughed loudly [. . .] “Does he consent to marry me in such conditions?” “Of course he does, he pants for it; we live at the same house for a while, and then you either elope with Halit or, have a job but well you get out of this house... .” (93)

Talking about Erbil’s short stories, Baş argues that Erbil’s women characters marry not out of love but to escape parental or social pressure (6). This situation is also valid for *A Strange Woman*; Nermin takes up Meral’s suggestion and gets married to Bedri in order to be free in her actions, and the plan seems to work when her mother lets her stay out till late hours since she is now an engaged woman. Nermin sneers at the institution of marriage and how people value it over any other male-female relationship because although people regard her engagement as a step towards the “sacred institution of marriage,” she plans to get divorced as soon as possible (95). Their marriage is not a happy union with couples with emotional involvement; for Nermin it is a way to be released from an oppressive mother and for Bedri it is a sexual satisfaction. Later, Nermin reveals that in the early days of their marriage, although he was a good company to her, Bedri only thought of his orgasm. They only achieve mutual satisfaction in their sexual activities when Nermin raises the issue of Bedri’s incestuous relation with his sister. The satisfying sexual relations they recently formed last till they move to *Taşlıtarla*. While Bedri accepts to live there to make Nermin happy, Nermin has decided to move there to live according to her socialist ideas. Bedri is soon disturbed by his life at *Taşlıtarla* whereas Nermin is determined to stay to sustain the ideals of the labour party. *Taşlıtarla* is a shantytown [*gecekodu*] where “the poor rural-urban migrants live” (Büker 54). Nermin decides to live there to be united with these people aiming to carry her political resistance to bourgeoisie ideology into effect. That is, her dedication to Labour Party and her active

engagement in politics notes that she is aware of the problems that exist in society. Relating these concerns to Nermin's being an economically and individually a liberated person, Şahin also argues that although Nermin's actions cannot be named as purely a woman's movement, they indicate feminist implications (60). Nevertheless, her commitment to party politics overcomes her interest in sexual oppression. At the end of the novel, Nermin is alone in a hotel room where she scrutinizes her marriage with Bedri and how she has dedicated herself to her ideals. Even the idea of loving him over her society repels her and she reassures herself that her first priority is always her ideals (255). Yet, as the novel depicts, Nermin cannot grow totally reconciled to her ideals since she is also disillusioned by not being able to communicate with people living at *Taşlıtarla*. Thus, she is still depicted as a strange woman who cannot conform to the society she lives in.

Results

According to Andermahr, Carter and Weldon belong to “a group of distinctly feminist writers” appearing in the late 1960s and early 1970s who lay forward “a feminist critique of the situation of women” through which “the domestic drudgery of their roles as wives and mothers” is especially attacked (78). *The Passion of New Eve* and *Praxis*, all in all, align with this remark and they present plots which disrupt the bond between biology and gender to uncover the constructedness of these roles. A consideration of the male-female relations in the previous discussion reveals that these novels also denounce all restrictive categories according to which relationships are considered valid or non-existent. At the same time, they work on the presumption that sex is not the only category through which relationships should be scrutinized; therefore, the politics of relations vary according to one's racial, religious and economic background as well as sexual identity. While marriage is criticized by feminists as an institution, there are also many lovers who “are debarred from doing so if they are lesbian, homosexual or already married” (Jackson 101). Likewise, what comes to the fore in *The Passion of New Eve* is that society approves of relationships only in

heterosexual terms while individuals not conforming to these terms, like the transvestite Tristessa are deprived of the right to form love affairs or to get married. *Praxis*, on the other hand, argues that ethnicity can also become a governing factor in a relationship, which is apparent in Lucy's case; she becomes an outcast after choosing to live with a Jewish man. According to Paul Johnson, forms of relationships such as love, marriage and family are constructed around the scripts of nature and therefore they are inscribed by heterosexuality that is fused by "invisibility" which is "the way in which it is simultaneously hidden and constantly invoked through its deployment as 'normal'" (145). What stays out of this "natural" scenario is doomed to marginalization. In this sense, both novels interrogate dominant rationales underlying the validity of relationships. Mixed-race or same-sex relationships and informal marriages constitute a challenge to patriarchal institutions since they stay outside of the dominant discourse. In fact, rather than sexual politics, identity politics may be more appropriate to the study of these novels, for the prominent idea in these novels is what Butler calls a performative act which can destabilise the repetitive chain of social reality. Relations breaking this repetition can also transform the dominant discourse. Therefore, they can become sites of resistance and agency that disrupt the authority of patriarchal discourse and hegemony of heterosexuality.

The discussion of male-female relations in *The Women's Room* and *The Female Man* undergird the dominant radical feminist literary theory of the States in the 1970s, especially the writings of Millett and Firestone, which regarded patriarchy as a system of sexual politics where male dominated women, mooting the biological difference. In these novels, all male-female relationships such as love affairs, dating and marriage reproduce these sexual politics; these politics are severely criticized by novels which show reactions taken to the extent of seeking new social orders where women are released from the tyranny of patriarchy. Feminists like Firestone thence deny the notion of romantic love in favour of non-monogamy and lesbian separatism (Brake n. pag.) As *The Women's Room* shows, it was found that even educated women with raised feminist awareness are

exposed to subordination in their relationships with men, whereas those single women or lesbians are more liberated. In these novels, what might be termed sex-class is taken as the ultimate reason for women's secondary position in the society. *The Female Man* envisages a world where no male exists and juxtaposes it to parallel worlds where women are exposed to sexist attitudes of men who manipulate every form of relationship to oppress them. The utopian Whileaway can only be gained through the dystopian experience of sex-wars through which contemporary women's [living at the time of the writing of the novel] oppression can be eliminated. Both novels approach the personal lives of women within a larger frame of social politics since each relationship can either corroborate or repudiate the patriarchal system and its institutions.

In *Lying Down to Die* and *A Strange Woman*, the analysis of male-female relationships lays bare how these relationships are suppressed by the dominant ideologies of Islam and Kemalism, which are shown to create deep conflicts in society. According to Jackson, Western feminist discourse in the 1970s accepted "the centrality of the concept of 'love' to familial ideology, to the maintenance of heterosexual monogamy and patriarchal marriage" (95). Unlike Western novels sharing this perspective, Turkish novels highlight the oppressive social context where relations between men and women are highly restricted. On the one hand, young women of the Republic adopt the mission to be an educated woman to devote themselves to the prosperity of the nation. On the other hand, Islamic tradition limits women's contact with men. In this context, as Sirman also highlights, though it grants political and material rights to women, Kemalist ideology still strengthens the Islamic promotion of women as chaste wives; she relates: "If the Ottoman debates constituted women primarily as wives and mothers in need of education, the second constituted them as patriotic citizens" (4). In these circumstances marriage is the ultimate protector of state ideology and hence an inevitable part of male-female relations.

Bearing this reinforced significance of conventional women's roles in relationships, both novels undermine an almost sacred positioning of marriage and

family structure and accordingly the national ideology in the Turkish context. Unlike their close friends, Aysel and Nermin erode traditions regulating the institution of marriage. Aysel cheats on her husband with her student and Nermin embarks on a marriage simply to get rid of parental oppression, planning to abandon the marriage soon after. These characters' reception of marriage deconstructs the ideal of the chaste wife promoted by Islam and Kemalism. In the Turkish context, the family's reputation is an important factor in shaping male-female relationships, which puts a heavy pressure on the female sex. Women are expected to have very limited contact with men until they marry (Köker 108). In this sense, both Aysel and Nermin are unconventional women since they question the fact that such social pressure is put on women while men are granted larger freedom in every aspect of life. Furthermore, these women reflect that collective group identities limit their autonomous decisions in their relationships with the opposite sex. In both of these Turkish novels, Islamic discourse impacts the main characters through parental pressure even though these young women (Aysel and Nermin) are not personally attached to religion. For Aysel, the nationalist discourse governs much of her life whereas Nermin becomes a devoted socialist. Both Aysel and Nermin abandon these ideologies by the end of the novel; they prioritize their individuality, which means a reconfiguration of their personal relations. The hotel room where both protagonists temporarily estrange themselves from social life become a space where women's private experiences which are suppressed within the national history are voiced. Irzik's following comments on *Lying Down to Die* seem appropriate for both novels:

In many modern Turkish novels, the characters are portrayed as having been condemned to lead allegorical lives. They are haunted, frustrated, and paralyzed by the sense that they must somehow be representative of things larger than themselves, bearers of meanings and destinies imposed on them by what is referred to in *Lying Down to Die* as "the hand that has remade history" (556)

As a matter of fact, "the personal is the political" is replaced by what Irzik, reading Frederic Jameson's analysis of Third World literature, calls "a certain repressive conflation of the public and the private" (564). Gaining different

meanings in both novels, this conflation creates, for Aysel and Nermin, both self-detachment and social alienation. Nevertheless, the alienation they experience as a result of the incongruence between society and self can be taken as a site of female resistance, since it leads them to question what their individuality might be when stripped of cultural impositions.

4.2. Women's Relation to Motherhood and Reproduction

From the early 1960s discussions of reproduction and motherhood gained significance and by the 1970s it had become a multifarious area containing contradictions as well as reconciliations. Feminist theoretical works of the decade are noted today for underlining a remarkable connection between women's role as mothers and their subordinated positions in society. In this sense, these works shared a criticism of Rousseau's advocacy of the idea that women naturally aspire to give birth and raise children whereas men, by nature, do not. Accordingly, Beauvoir's discussion of motherhood as a learned experience is one of the common points of these texts. Referring patriarchy and how it constructs women mainly as mothers, Beauvoir defines this as "enforced maternity" (468). She explores that from childhood onwards, women are told that they are "made for childbearing" and they hear praises for "the splendours of maternity" (473). Drawbacks related to female reproduction and its social repercussions, such as menstruation, illnesses, and the boredom of household drudgery, have been justified to celebrate this "marvellous privilege," which actually creates a discourse that manipulates women into considering motherhood as an inevitable destiny (473). Selected literary texts of the 1970s scrutinized and problematized the relational aspect of motherhood; women in these novels demonstrate the urge to have a life and identity distinct from being a mother. Nevertheless, looking at these texts it is also noted that debates on reproduction and motherhood were never unified; their arguments goes beyond praising women's maternal capacities or repudiation of it. Hansen also talks about these shifts and differences between feminists as follows: "Feminists have demanded and gained new attention for the previously ignored problems of motherhood, but they have not arrived at

consensus about how to redefine the concept or adjust the system” (5). In this sense, the selected novels show the diversity pervading the feminist theories of the time since they all treat the subject from different perspectives and in different localities. Also, while American and British novels also reflect the feminist awareness that scrutinizes issues revolving around maternity, the Turkish novels lack affiliation with this particular part of the feminist discourse, as will also be analysed in the following pages.

Demystification the Womb

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Carter’s maternal bodies appear in tandem with grotesque and abject images, through which any mythic realm that extolls either patriarchal or matriarchal notions of womanhood is rejected. For Carter, the “reproductive function” is one of these realms; it elevates motherhood into a sacred position which is in fact used by men as a ‘submission technique’ for the coercion of women. She remarks that:

All the mythic versions of women, from the myth of the redeeming purity of the virgin to that of the healing, reconciling mother, are consolatory nonsenses; and consolatory nonsense seems to me a fair definition of myth anyway. (*The Sadeian Woman* 5-6)

Concomitantly, what she aspires is to create “a process of demystification and denial” of the womb which she describes as the “most potent matrix of all mysteries” (126, 124). The womb, Carter says, is just an “organ like any other organ, more useful than the appendix, less useful than the colon but not much use to you at all if you do not wish to utilise its sole function, that of bearing children” (125). Demystifying the womb, then, helps to demystify other traditional symbols of the female body:

To deny the bankrupt enchantments of the womb is to pare a good deal of the fraudulent magic from the idea of women, to reveal us as we are, simple creatures of flesh and blood whose expectations deviate from biological necessity sufficiently to force us to abandon, perhaps regretfully, perhaps with relief, the deluded priestesshood of a holy

reproductive function. This demystification extends to the biological iconography of women. (126)

Although Carter has a tendency to demystify motherhood, she does not promote the devaluation of it. Rather, it argues that idealizing motherhood for women above other social relations can yet be another form of oppression.

In *The Passion of New Eve*, the discussion of motherhood and reproduction addresses the concerns featured in *The Sadeian Woman* and it starts with the pregnancy of Leilah upon which Evelyn's first reaction is: "How do I know it's my baby, Leilah" (27). As Evelyn then relates, his rejection of the baby is "[t]he oldest abuse, the most primitive evasion" (27); he thereby is a representative of the abusive patriarch dominating over the woman. Leilah, on the other hand, demands marriage "in a hysterical falsetto," Evelyn says, and threatens him with voodoo against his "manhood;" he also conveys that "she told [him] a chicken would come and snap [his] cock off, but [he] did not believe that" (28). At that time, he takes a conventional and essentialist view of the pregnant woman, assuming that "her pregnancy had unhinged her" and that her reaction is a hysterical one caused by hormonal changes. The narrative will, however, turn into a fantastic irony where he will indeed lose his penis—though not exactly through the attentions of a chicken but by a grotesque woman. Rather, the Mother's psychosurgery on him will complete Leilah's curse, upon which he will realize that Leilah's threats does not originate from mental disturbance triggered by pregnancy. Seeing her as an "inconvenience" to his life, he wants to get rid of her as soon as possible and physically and psychologically forces her to have an abortion. She has an abortion, suffers a haemorrhage, becomes sterile and has to stay in a clinic, most of which is paid for by money she obtains by selling her fur coats, while Evelyn uses only some of his money to help her. As a matter of fact, she becomes the representative of "abused femininity" for him (31). Although Evelyn accepts that he is responsible for her problems, he does not try to change his attitude towards her, but keeps accusing her:

why did you seduce me, in the first place, if you were so innocent? Why didn't you eat pills, or get them to put a coil of plastic in your womb, or slide a disc of rubber into your hole before it swallowed me? Why did you not find yourself a clean abortionist, the city is full of them, you fool, you whore (32)

Though acknowledges himself as a hypocrite, Evelyn sends some flowers to Leilah to ease his conscience. There is no ease for Leilah, however, who has been repressed into silence and whose right to give birth has been denied on this occasion and for all time.

On the other hand, through the Mother, Carter caricaturizes another form of suppression that exists in the radical feminist realm of Beulah—the city formed in the “simulacrum of the womb” (49). The Mother is a “sacred monster” with a “handsome and austere mask teetering ponderously on the bull-like pillar of her neck,” and a big black head which Evelyn likens to that of Marx's carved head in Highgate cemetery (56). Being one of the radical cultural feminists who ardently favoured the celebration of women's maternal bodies, Rich asserted that early cultures were matriarchal and they were fused with the solemn representations of the mother goddess which noted “her intrinsic importance, her depth of meaning, her existence at the very center of what is necessary and sacred” (*Of Woman Born* 93). However, the Mother in Carter's novel is quite different from this image since she, “in a complicated mix of mythology and technology,” is a grotesque surgeon specialized in sex-change (44). In this sense, mythic qualities of the mother goddess are overthrown by the technological advances of Beulah. Hence, the Mother does not belong to the mythic past; on the contrary, she is “a great scientist who makes extraordinary experiments” (46). Furthermore, she is not all-embracing; instead, she defines herself as “the Great Parricide,” or “the Grand Emasculator,” and Evelyn becomes “the first victim of her wild justice” when he is operated upon by her (47). Her anger and violence do not reconcile with the image of a caring and nurturing mother suggested by cultural feminists.

In this novel Carter addresses one more criticism as well: this time towards another radical stance adopted by feminists such as Firestone who yearned to

release women from “the tyranny of their sexual-reproductive roles” (35). Firestone insisted that “nothing will change for women so long as natural reproduction remains the rule and artificial or assisted reproduction the exception. Natural reproduction is neither in women’s best interests nor in those of the children produced” (Tong 75). The Mother in this novel has a sperm-bank so that women become self-sufficient and seed themselves. She wants to create a new “psycho-sexual dynamics” where “the world could ripen in female spaces without the mortal interventions of male time” (73). Radical feminists aspired to create a female culture since they believed that “[m]ale science (including social science) has been used to legitimate the ideologies that define women as inferior, and women’s role to be that of domestic labourers” (Abbott et al. 27). However, Beulah is not as free from patriarchal assumptions as radical feminists thought, since this matriarchal society has clear-cut rules based on binaries and in this place a woman is still primarily defined with her maternal capacity even by the female science. As Botescu-Sireteanu states, the novel is therefore “also a satire of the conventional utopia, mocking of utopias perfect patriarchal society and contrasting it with a dystopian, matriarchal world where women are both aggressors and victims” (123). Transforming Evelyn into a woman, the Mother’s next step is to impregnate her since she wants to “make a start on the feminization of Father Time” (64). “I’m not ready for motherhood!” cries Eve/lyn, but her/his exclamation is dismissed by the Mother who has already started her experimentations on reproduction:

Mother continued to peer into my interior with the aid of her headlamp every day and soon assured me the eggs in my new ovaries were ripe. They would allow me one test menstruation; they would impregnate me fourteen days after the flow ceased, the most favourable time for fertilisation. (74)

Although men are ignored as sexual partners through these experiments, the oppressive structure imposed by patriarchy still exists here. Biologically determined roles attributed to women are now enforced by the Mother, which dismisses the second-wave claims to release women from the burden of mothering

through reproductive technologies (as in Firestone) or celebrate maternal experience through a mythical revival of a matriarchal cults (as in Rich). In *Beulah*, a utopian feminist society turns to be a dystopia where women become the oppressors just to reinvent the patriarchy-driven essentialism of sex and gender; they change Evelyn into a woman with the evocative name of Eve and force her to undertake “psychosurgery,” making not only physical changes but a subjecting the new Eve to a series of lectures on how to behave like a woman. She is made to watch a video-tape which is prepared “to subliminally instill the maternal instinct itself,” and that includes animals with their offspring (69). Likewise, another tape shows some “non-phallic imagery such as sea-anemones opening and closings; caves, with streams issuing them; roses, opening to admit a bee; the sea, the moon” (69). While showing these organic images of the most traditional and essentialist kind, female hormones are injected daily, and it is planned that these lectures will reinforce the effects of the hormones. In addition to the above, Carter presents a mock motherhood through Zero’s wives, who are forced to act as caretakers to pigs:

When one of the sows littered, . . . the girls had to steal away a piglet from the udder, dress it up in babyclothes (for trunks full of babyclothes were kept in the women’s dormitory, ready for the unguessable but longed-for time when the girls would mother a new breed of Americans), dandle it on their knees, lullaby it and feed it warmed goats’ milk from a rubber-nippled bottle. In this way, the girls learned the disciplines of motherhood. (91)

Through this depiction of motherhood, Carter shows that Zero’s harem is a site of essentialist patriarchal suppression. In other ways, however, the disciplines of motherhood that these girls practice appear to have nothing to do with the sacredness of the womb that both matriarchal and patriarchal myths affirm. Zero urges them to pay great attention to the pigs to which he gives “a liberty he denied his wives” (91). As Eve/lyn relates, the pigs “took full advantage” of this liberty and teased the girls “unmercifully” (92). In their work for the pigs, Zero’s wives are reduced to caretakers or even servants. The word “subservience” defines their situation; “they gave in to him freely, as though they knew they must be wicked

and so deserve to be inflicted with such pain” (92). As Carter mentions in *The Sadeian Woman*, if women tolerate to be affiliated with the “hypothetical great goddesses,” they just flatter themselves into “submission” (5). Through Zero’s wives who are living in pig-shit under the tyranny of Zero, Carter problematizes both the sacredness and the naturalness of images of motherhood.

Lastly, Eve/lyn becomes pregnant after his/her sexual encounter with Tristessa. S/he escapes the tyranny of Zero, and the Mother (who is now a mad old woman) does not answer his/her cry. Therefore, at the end of the novel there is no place for Eve/lyn in either the matriarchal or the patriarchal world. She does not reject or extoll motherhood yet does not know where to go. Accordingly, the novel has an open ending where the future of pregnant Eve remains ambiguous.

Unmaternal Conduct in *Praxis*

As mentioned in the previous parts, Weldon is critical of biologically determined roles confining women to certain roles (one being motherhood) that have been attributed to women as natural instincts. She lays bare how certain experiences are performed according to norms regulated around sex and gender roles. Stepping outside these norms means thinking against the grain and becoming an outcast, which in fact discourages people, especially women in this novel, from thinking and acting differently from the normative scripts of gendered identities. Discussing Weldon’s “cultural interpretation of what is “natural,”” Faulks states that idealizations of motherhood can easily be manipulated by patriarchy:

The idealization of the mothering instinct . . . leads to economically powerless women who surrender their lives to husband and children in order to prove their natural inclinations. Certainly it is praiseworthy to protect and care for one’s children, but this sentiment easily becomes propaganda for selling products. (36)

That is, *Praxis* does not depict motherhood as an idealized experience; rather, women in this novel have problematic relationships with maternity. Drawing attention to the division between motherhood and sexuality in the Western

discourse since the Victorian era, Chase and Rogers argue that when motherhood is attributed to women, “sexuality disappears as a vibrant dimension of women’s lives” (117). The very same idea caused that “mothers who present themselves as sexual or sexy are deemed “bad” mothers” (117). Likewise, feeling ashamed of lustful feelings triggered by her husband’s sexual violence, Lucy questions her motherhood saying that a “mother must be on duty day and night” (13). She feels guilty for not repressing her sexual side. Also, unlike most mothers in her social sphere who are devoted caretakers, Lucy does not have an intense attachment to her children. After her husband leaves, her already depressed mentality changes for the worse and her communication with her children almost ends. The children cannot understand “[w]hy their mother cried, scolded, or laughed, for no apparent reason” (21). Their relationship is surrounded by anxiety as Lucy gradually dissociates herself from the outside world. Older Praxis reveals her concept of motherhood:

Children who have been hurt grow up to hurt. This I know. I knew it but was helpless in the knowledge. I shouted and screamed, attempted murder or faked suicide, in my children’s presence: conducted the dark side of my erotic nature beneath their startled gaze, careless of the precipice I opened up beneath their feet. I, who guarded them from the fleas of strange dogs, and nasty sights at the pictures, and brushed their hair with loving care. Yes, I did, and so did you, and you: paid back to them what mother did to you. (24)

What Praxis acknowledges here is that her way of mothering was not always caring and it included traumatic experiences that would not allow her to embrace her maternal role. As she further reflects, she actually handed her own “extreme of terror and horror” down to her children, which, she says, is “the ultimate standard by which they must judge the traumas of their own lives” (24). On the one hand, Praxis traces her mother’s traumatic experience of motherhood which she and her sister were exposed to during their childhood. On the other hand, she undoubtedly tries to absolve herself from the guilt she feels for her own practice of motherhood. These feelings are soon undermined by her imagination, as she compares herself to mothers in “the East:”

Perhaps I am dead, and this is my punishment? To believe I am still alive, and live as a useless old woman in a Western industrialized society? There cannot be much worse a punishment. Unless it to be live as a young woman in the East, and see your children die from starvation: or worse, watch them grow up sour, undersized and crippled by curable diseases. (25)

In this sense, *Praxis* draws attention to the importance of personal stories behind the experience of motherhood. Accordingly, in the novel, two mainstream concerns of the second-wave feminist discourse on maternity are undermined; neither an absolute celebration nor an ultimate rejection of motherhood exists since each woman's experience of motherhood is unique in its context. This is why *Praxis* points to the difficulties her mother had as a single unemployed woman whose extramarital relationship to a Jewish man had already made her a misfit in her society. Lucy does not have a job and after her husband walks out she has to raise her children single-handedly. She takes in a male lodger to have a small income and has to ignore the fact that people blame her for this. Furthermore, she worries about the children's schooling to a point which in fact "made her unreasonable" (27). If she enrolls them at a school, she has to show their birth certificates upon which she is filled with "[a]nxiety, anger and a sense of injustice:"

Close inspection of their birth certificates would reveal the girls to be illegitimate, and their true names Hypatia Parker, and Praxis Parker; the mother's name being entered as Lucy Parker, spinster. And though in the column for father was written not the humiliating "unknown," but "Benjamin Duveen, occupation, gentleman," the disgrace of mother and daughters would become known. (27)

These burdens of motherhood makes Lucy develop an "unmaternal ferocity" that alienates her from her children. Thinking retrospectively, *Praxis* reflects that: "Where did the misery come from? Women have given birth to bastards, been left by lovers, and merely laughed and carried on. Mother did not. Why not? She should have, for my sake" (50). Nevertheless, *Praxis* later forgives her mother, sympathizing with her and assuming that she tried her best to be a good mother, and instead of blaming her she tries to understand her problems. Actually, due to

her dilemmas related to maternal instincts and thus her increasing isolation from the outside world, Lucy is diagnosed as mad and hospitalized in a mental institution. Praxis remembers how people talked about Lucy's madness as "a deviation from maternal love," and saw it as a punishment for "[l]iving with a man she wasn't married to, bringing her children with no name" (55, 54). She acknowledges her mother's grief years later:

Her mother's madness, she now perceived, lay in her telling the truth. But was it madness? If a mother shrieked Jewess, bastard, pervert at her own daughter, and all these things were true, then she might be accused of unmaternal conduct, but hardly madness. (60)

Like her mother, Praxis also comes to be dissociated from maternity in later abandoning her own children. However, her situation is different from that of her mother's. For her, mothering begins when she brings home Miss Leonard's baby Mary. When she asks Willie to buy a book on baby care, Willie refuses, saying "You have your instincts, surely" (111). Praxis then tells Willie that these instincts "might be wrong," ushering in a concern of the novel. With her position as Mary's caregiver, Praxis is in fact acting independently of her instincts. Having no organic (genetic) bond with the baby, she nevertheless chooses to raise her; that is, she is not a born mother but learns to be one. She looks after Mary until she abandons everyone and everything after her incestuous encounters with her father.

By the same token, Greer criticizes the idealization of motherhood through which women are encouraged to sacrifice their life to their children:

This is the love, we were told, of the mother who flings her body across her child's when danger threatens, of the mother duck who decoys the hunters from her nest. Noble, instinctive and feminine. All our mothers had it, for otherwise they would not have dared pain and illness to bring us into the world. (168-69)

Likewise, Praxis denounces such idealization of women's self-sacrifice. Mentioning her detachment from her natural children, Praxis confesses that she and her children have disowned each other, upon which she feels nothing other than freedom:

Altogether free from the instinctive anxiety that plagues the maternal life, animal or human. It starts before the child is born—will it have arms, legs, a brain? Will it be birth-marked, deformed monstrous? Where are their teeth? Why don't they talk? Why do they steal/lie? Why can't they read? Why do they fight, why don't they fight? Are they happy? Why can't I make them happy? (121)

Regarding child-care as a burden on mothers, she perceives mothers as being also a burden to their children. Therefore, she criticises the heavy responsibility put on both sides by the child-mother bond. While men can easily shrug off their part of the burden, as in her father's leaving them behind, women are expected to cope with the situation as an integral part of their womanhood. This is why Praxis ardently advocates that nature is "on the man's side" and she reacts against it:

It seems to me that we must fight nature tooth and claw. Once we are past child-bearing age, this Nature, this friend we hear so much about, disposes of us. In drying up our estrogen, it bends our backs, brittles our bones, rheums our eyes and clouds our tempers: throws us on its scrap-heap of useless though still moving, stirring, moaning flesh. It is not *natural* to be a grandmother: it may be nice, but it is a social role, a consolatory one (133)

She claims that men, as advocates of patriarchy, use this argument of nature and the social roles attributed to it to meet their own interests. For example, while Irma has no interest in having babies, her husband pushes her to have more so that he can use them in commercials (139). He does not allow her go to work afterwards, arguing that "the mother-baby bond" is more important and that "it is detrimental to the child's emotional and mental development if the mother goes out to work" (140). Like Irma, Praxis also does not develop an emotional attachment with her own children; "[s]he could take no pleasure in them, nor they in her" (165). The novel thus shows that maternal love is not a "natural" or inevitable outcome of having a child. Praxis is shown to be a person who can love some children, in spite of her dislike of her own. This is shown by the fact that she feels close to Mary and later takes care of Philip's children from Irma. Abandoning her own children, older Praxis reflects that: "When I was young it was rare for a mother to leave her children. It was considered an unspeakable

thing to do—an unnatural crime” (177). Praxis admits that although she was a good mother while she cared for Mary and then for her two children, she never adhered to it (178).

Later, working as an advertisement writer, she uses the concept of motherhood to serve the purpose of consumerism, she writes slogans such as “god made her a woman, love made her a mother—with a little help from the electricity” (211). While she performs the role of a working mother, Irma gets involved in feminist movement of the time and tries to convince Praxis that her advertisements corroborate the attribution of biologically determined roles to women. It is only after Mary informs her that she is pregnant and will abandon her career in order to devote herself to domestic duties as she claimed in her advertisements that Praxis begins to reconsider her position as a woman contributing to patriarchal oppression in the guise of motherhood. After becoming an active member of Women’s Movement, she further tries to convince Mary to have an abortion. When this does not happen and Mary has a baby with Down’s syndrome, kills Mary’s baby, believing that it is her duty to free Mary from this burden (243). As Faulks argues, “By killing the baby, Praxis has enacted a symbolic turning point for women, freeing them to pursue independent, self-fulfilling lives” (41). Praxis tries to justify herself; the narrator reveals that:

Praxis could, and would, rationalize the deed away: she would say that logically there was no difference between contraception and abortion: that the termination of pregnancy at any stage, whether the foetus was minus nine months, six months, three months or plus one day, must be the mother’s decision. That pregnant women must somehow be relieved of the fear they felt, now that one baby in every twenty was born with some defect or other; and so on, and so on: and half believe it, and half know that all this was relevant. (244)

Believing that she murdered Mary’s baby in the name of a symbolic sisterhood, Praxis feels that she has freed her sisters from the burden of mothering. Yet the act also shows Praxis and women following her ideas to be inhuman monsters. One of the prisoners, for instance, criticizes Praxis’ murder: “First abortion, then euthanasia, then genocide. Well, that was Hitler’s way, wasn’t it? I just don’t

understand how people can harm little children. Let alone kill them” (245). In this sense, the text problematizes Praxis’ feminism which manifests itself in infanticide without the consent of the baby’s mother upsets feminism’s hegemonic tendencies which tried imposing certain values on women both inside and outside organised feminist activism. Older Praxis writing her diary after her release from prison is now conscious of many different roles imposed on women who are not permitted to pursue their own preferences. In this respect, this novel treats motherhood as one of these roles attributed to women as if it was a “natural” instinct and activity, and seeks to go beyond this essentialist discussion. It suggests that women’s relation to motherhood and reproduction should be analysed in terms of choices rather than imposition or blessing of these notions.

Futuristic Motherhood in Whileaway

In *The Female Man*, Joanna reflects that maternity is the ultimate repressive role imposed by a patriarchal society:

(Besides what about the children? Mothers have to sacrifice themselves to their children, both male and female, so that the children will be happy when they grow up; though the mothers themselves were once children and were sacrificed to in order that they might grow up and sacrifice themselves to others; and when the daughters grow up, *they* will be mothers and *they* will have to sacrifice themselves for *their* children, so you begin to wonder whether the whole thing isn’t a plot to make the world safe for (male) children. But motherhood is sacred and mustn’t be talked about.) (204)

To challenge this perspective, Russ creates an alternative world where women are released from these sacrificial maternal roles. The futuristic and utopian Whileaway includes a new technology of reproduction; here, women are not “natural” mothers. Instead, they bear their children at around the age of thirty and only according to demographic needs which also determine whether they will have singletons or twins. There are two mothers; one genotypic parent who is the biological mother called the “body-mother” and one “non-bearing parent” called the “other mother,” who has provided the other ovum needed for the production of a child (49). Chodorow’s stance towards the reproduction of mothering is relevant

here as she considers it “a central and constituting element in the social organization and reproduction of gender” (7). She argues that many people including “social scientists” and “many feminists” have postulated a “natural connection between women’s childbearing and lactation capacities and responsibility for child care” (3). Since this natural bond between is disrupted in *Whileaway*, reproduction of mothering also changes. That being said, there is no expectation of any natural and tenacious bond between the child and the mother, and reproduction is not associated with any intense emotions such as those elsewhere expected to accompany maternity. Child-bearing is not elevated in this society although it is welcomed by the mothers for practical and logical reasons:

Little *Whileawayans* are to their mothers both sulk and swank, fun and profit, pleasure and contemplation, a show of expensiveness, a slowing-down of life, an opportunity to pursue whatever interests the women have been forced to neglect previously, and the only leisure they have ever had—or will have again until old age. (49)

It is rather seen as a long post-natal vacation for women; for example, Janet mentions that: “I bore my children at thirty; we all do. It’s a vacation. Almost five years. . . . There has been no leisure at all before and there will be so little after” (14-15). Janet’s post-natal experience is quite different from those women in Joanna’s continuum where child-care means sparing little or no time for oneself and even double-work for working women; unlike them, Janet spends this period in pursuing personal interests.

In particular, Firestone regards “the seizure of control of reproduction” as a must for “the elimination of sexual classes;” therefore, women must have the “control of human fertility, including both the new technology and all the social institutions of childbearing and childrearing” (11). Akin to this discussion and more significant to the feminist message of the novel is that child-care in *Whileaway* is systematically shared by the women. The following passage illustrates how traditional motherhood and the domestic roles it attributes to women are not valid in this society:

A family of thirty persons may have as many as four mother-and-child pairs in the common nursery at one time. Food, cleanliness, and shelter are not the mother's business; Whileawayans say with a straight face that she must be free to attend to the child's "finer spiritual needs." . . . Children are cared for in groups of five and taught in groups of differing sizes according to the subject under discussion. (49-50)

The mother is no longer assumed to have natural maternal qualities; instead she is one of the members of a unit responsible for childcare. Here, another important aspect of Whileawayan life is evident. That is that all children (and they are all females), starting from a very early age, are taught to be independent, which eventually releases Whileawayan women from child-caring duties. At the age of about four or five they are sent to schools and from then on most of the time they are mobile and their bonds with their mothers almost disappear. With the dependency of children on the mother being erased, so too is any image of the sacrificing mother. In this respect, separation from the mother is an inevitable but not entirely beneficial part of identity formation in Whileaway:

Whileawayan psychology locates the basis of Whileawayan character in the early indulgence, pleasure and flowering which is drastically curtailed by the separation from the mothers. This (it says) gives Whileawayan life its characteristic independence, its dissatisfaction, its suspicion, and its tendency toward a rather irritable solipsism. (52)

Here, it is worth recalling Chodorow's argument that girls' identifications with mothers who are nurturing and caring make them develop affective relationships with others and become more dependent than boys. In Whileaway, as the sex distinction between parents does not exist and separation from the mother is part of the young child's experience, identification with the mother during the pre-oedipal phase is nullified. Instead of developing a self-connection with mothers, girls separate from them. Furthermore, Chodorow renders that since the mothering is unconsciously reproduced, it maintains the unequal treatment women receive both at and outside home; contrastingly, the epistemological and socio-political context of Russ' utopian world does not provide for this unconscious mechanism for reproducing these ideas and therefore women are no longer expected to be all nurturing and self-sacrificing. The one-sex—all-female—society of Whileaway,

has no trace of the traditional reproduction that exists in other continuums represented in the novel. The contrast is great: for example, Laura, living in 1970s' America, is depressed by the idea that she could never be a Genghis Khan, since women would never be associated with leadership roles other than that of motherhood, Whileawayan girls are free, strong and self-supporting and they are not expected to devote themselves to reproduction and nurturing.

“A secret sisterhood”

Millett argues that in a patriarchal society, the utmost duty of a woman is to be a wife and a mother, thus to fulfil her biological mission. As she puts forward, “[i]t is one of conservatism’s favorite myth that every woman is a mother” (225). Since natural phenomenon of child-bearing is followed by and easily confused with a cultural role, that is child care, domestic duties are assumed to be a woman’s natural function. Echoing Millett, French delves into the lives of middle-class housewives whose primary roles are defined as mothers. In *The Women’s Room*, French is unambiguously critical of how women are taught to be uncomfortable with their bodily experiences from childhood onwards; however, she does not extoll the maternal body because (as the novel also shows) it can also be oppressive for women. For instance, Mira was sick throughout her pregnancy “with constant nausea and stomach pain” and felt that her body was uncomfortable and uncontrollable (48). As the narrator further describes:

Pregnancy is a long waiting in which you learn what it means completely to lose control over your life. There are no coffee breaks, no days off in which you regain our normal shape and self, and can return refreshed to your labors. You can’t wish away even for an hour the thing that is swelling you up, stretching your stomach until the skin feels as if it will burst, kicking you from the inside until you are black and blue. You can’t even hit back without hurting yourself. The condition and you are identical: you are no longer a person, but a pregnancy. You’re like a soldier in a trench who is hot and constricted and hates the food, but has to sit there for nine months. He gets to the point where he yearns for the battle, even though he may be killed or maimed in it. You look forward even to the pain of labor because it will end the waiting.” (49)

According to Baghbidi, French “denounces the patriarchal construct of the female body by interpreting the reproductive cycle as seed of physical and psychological disorder” (39). In this sense, reproduction and motherhood are not elevated into a sacred position; they are rather regarded as contributory to women’s alienation from the body and the outside world.

Maternity, in the context of the novel and akin to discussions of radical feminists such as Millett and Firestone, is taken as another source of women’s subjugation where women lose the control over their bodies. The baby seizes the woman’s body and controls her personal life as it is completely dependent on her. The mother-child bond, in the novel, is explored with such negative connotations. From pregnancy onwards, Mira thought that her life was taken over by “another creature” and felt that her body which was once dominated by her husband was now occupied by the baby (49). Giving birth caused her not only a physical pain but also a mental one. During her labour, what she felt was her losing control over her body since pregnancy was not her choice. As she revealed:

I didn’t know what it is like to be pregnant voluntarily. I assure it’s a very different experience from that of the women I know. Maybe it’s joyful-sometimes shared between the woman and her man. But for the women I know, pregnancy was terrible. (48)

It should be mentioned that Mira’s negative emotions towards maternity is also a result of her sexual life with her husband; his overpowering attitudes in marriage ignore Mira’s preferences or desires. In her case, it was her husband, Norm, who decided whether they would use a diaphragm, a condom or nothing (42). Contemplating on pregnancy and labour, Mira reveals that it is “Nature” and “there is no recourse, she must submit and make the best of what she cannot change” (49-50). Yet, she adds, it also brings “resentment and rebellion against Nature itself;” thus there are women who will hate this nature and become “outlaws” (50).

Furthermore, Western feminist discourse in the 1970s scrutinizes the link between women’s mothering and housework. Firestone, Millett and Chodorow

discussed how women's capacity to give birth and breastfeed entrapped them in domesticity. Concordantly, *The Women's Room* discusses that maternal and domestic qualities attributed to women are disguised under the role of a self-sacrificing woman figure whose contact with the outside world almost ends after giving birth. The novel presents many mother figures, particularly in the suburban neighbourhood in which Mira lived during her earlier marriage; they are trapped in domesticity and even delineated as slaves devoting all their energy to their children. Like marriage, motherhood becomes a defining experience for women in the novel. Observing the women in the post-natal ward when she gives birth to her second child, Mira thinks that they were being exploited by their children. For Mira, their "selflessness" was brevity:

She listened and she heard their acceptance, their love, their selflessness, and for the first time in her life, she thought that women were great. Their greatness made all the exploits of warriors and rulers look like pompous self-aggrandizement, made even the poets and painters look like egotistical children jumping up and down shouting, 'Look at me, Ma!' Their pains, their problems, were secondary to the harmony of the whole. The same women who had moaned or cursed downstairs in the labor room had chosen to forget the pain, the bitterness. Brave they were. Brave and good-humored and accepting, they picked up the dropped stitches and finished knitting something warm for someone else, letting their own teeth rot and skimping on clothes to pay Johnny's dentist bill, laying aside their desire like a crushed flower from their first prom stuck in the back of a baby book. (58)

Although she could not totally sympathize with these women, Mira thinks that smiling at them and understanding their sacrifice made her reach "womanhood." she later refers to this bonding among mothers as a "secret sisterhood, an underground movement to which anyone could belong who had a baby" (64). Likewise talking about the woman in her neighbourhood, Mira reflects that: "The women were simply not interested in anything but children; they really felt – although they could not have articulated it – like members of a secret cult that was fascinated by children, childbirth, and childrearing" (65).

Baby-care is the most important duty for these women who are to watch over the children all the time, whereas men do not show slightest interest in helping them, through which women's victimization is once more emphasized. Mira reveals that: "Yes. It's because (men) don't care about their kids. They just don't care about them. So they're free. Women are victims. All the way through" (206). Although she accepts that children were the only pleasures of her life at that time, Mira remarks that her contact with the outside world almost ended. She describes this life as a domestic scenario that "had been written before she was even born" (69). Actually, she lives out this scenario until her husband leaves and she subsequently becomes an "outlaw" in trying to pursue the academic career which she had left unfinished to get married. Without maternal or domestic duties, she can spare time for herself and maybe this helps her to later develop a healthy relationship with her sons, as she can communicate with them and reveal the earlier difficulties she had experienced. When her boyfriend Ben wants her to bear children again Mira feels terrified, because she knows that bearing children means imprisonment in the domestic space. Instead of accepting Ben's proposal, she chooses to follow her aspirations and stay alone.

Lying Down to Die

According to Yorgun, in the Turkish context "[m]otherhood is the highest status for a woman and the more children she has the higher her value and status" (n .pag.). In this regard, although the Republican reforms promoted a liberated woman figure, they did not alter women's positioning as mothers (Tekeli 1986; Sirman 1989; White 2003). Actually, women's mothering was described as a national duty and is reinforced by "numerous newspapers, pamphlets, treatises and novels published in the first decade of the Republic (Sirman 5). In that respect, motherhood in the timespan of the novel was taken as a tool to reinforce paternalistic nationalist discourse; yet, in *Lying Down to Die*, motherhood and reproduction are adopted in a way to act against it.

To begin with, the discussion of maternity is brought into focus through Aysel's stream of consciousness where she envisages her pregnancy, miscarriage, pregnancy cravings and sex of the baby in the case of pregnancy. Revealing her intention to die, Aysel soon discloses the possibility of pregnancy:

Am I pregnant? That's right. I should already have had my period. Why have not I? Has my womanhood ended? You see, I will never know this. Still, I don't think my womanhood suddenly ceased while I was having such heavy menstrual bleeding. This is the first time my period is late. Even more, it is after sleeping with another man rather than my husband. (43)

Observing her lack of menstruation, Aysel considers two possibilities which are pregnancy or menopause. She recognizes that how so far she has been dissociated from maternity since it had never been her priority. In this respect, her not having the desire to have a child differentiates her from other women, which foregrounds her role as a liberated educated woman:

Besides, wasn't I saying "craving is a kind of woman's begging for attention from the people around her"? I had never begged for such a thing before losing my first and only child at birth. I never craved. We have a child or not, me and my husband never thought about it. We had important things to do. Now?.. Strange... Am I really pregnant? Years later, for the second time?.. ." (43; ellipses in orig.)

As seen in the above quotation, Aysel also reflects her not craving which she thinks separates her from other pregnant women. While craving and miscarriage can be significant for some women, they are not so for Aysel. Recognizing that she may be pregnant again, she now delves into these experiences, which she finds conflicting since she has just decided to die: "I am shivering all of a sudden. What if I am dying and a new life is starting in me at the same time? I am shocked. A thing to be noticed has showed up in the last minute" (43). Thinking about pregnancy, she gets closer to her body, touches herself and explores her real feelings. Whereas she mentions not knowing the identity of the father, she soon explains that it is possibly Engin with whom she cheated her husband. Actually, with this experience, she reconsiders her contact with the society, which endows

Aysel with a subversive identity since with her pregnancy she deconstructs the meaning of motherhood. That is, she is not a chaste wife contributing to the continuation of the family but an unconventional one who demystifies and subverts it through her pregnancy which materializes her extramarital sexual activity. Aysel knows that sleeping with her student was a social taboo: “no Turkish film shows the second bleeding of a lady associate professor at a student’s place, at her student’s place” (44). Likewise, she knows that if Engin is the father of her baby, she is infringing the society’s taboos once more. Thus, she does not disclose the name of the father at first whereas later she explains that she has not slept with her husband for a while— which she claims is a good thing since she now knows that the baby is Engin’s. She says, “otherwise I would not know who the father of my child is” (64). In this sense, she becomes reconciled with her illegitimate relationship and motherhood both of which disrupt the traditions of her society.

A Strange Woman

Within the novel, Nermin is depicted as a woman who has got nothing to do with giving birth or child upbringing. Her first priority is to be a devoted socialist and she does not allow any other attachment to take precedence over this. Thus, throughout the novel Nermin never considers becoming a mother, which in itself is enough to make her a non-conformist. The incident she experiences at *Taşlıtarla* shows that she has neither instinct for nor interest in motherhood. One of her neighbours asks her to look after her baby while she is away. At first Nermin is really happy to help since she regards this as an occasion to integrate with the community in *Taşlıtarla*. However, the baby defecates and starts to cry, and Nermin does not know how to handle the situation. When the mother returns, she finds both Nermin and the baby crying. Apart from this incident, the novel does not present any experience related to maternity and motherhood. In this respect, Nermin’s being a strange woman is once more underlined as she does not become a mother and thus undermines the societal expectations.

Results

As has been noted, representations of discussion revolving around motherhood and reproduction are not homogenous and in each culture different local concerns are included within these representations. With this in mind, our British novels renounce the idea that motherhood is a biologically determined role and they point to its constructedness. Both novels refuse even to represent conventional mothers who are good, caring and all-loving; in this way they refute the discussion of women as natural mothers. According to Hansen, the mother figure was denounced in the cultural discourse of the 1960s since it represented the repressive bourgeois society, and this idea was later adopted by feminists of the 1970s (5). The Mother in *The Passion of New Eve* is a castrating and domineering figure who is threatening rather than all-embracing, and mothers in *Praxis* are involved in extra-marital affairs and incest, and they abandon their children in order to pursue their own lives. In this respect, they align with feminist discourse criticizing the essentialist patriarchal views regarding women as natural nurturers.

Changing Evelyn into Eve, Carter's sinister Mother constructs him as a biological woman, attempts to impregnate him with his own seed and exposes him to a program through which she wants to code him into womanhood. On the other hand, Weldon's Praxis abandons her biological children while nurturing Miss Leonard's baby as her own. Nonetheless, these novels also include women who are not granted the right to be mothers. In *The Passion of New Eve*, Leilah retreats into silence when Evelyn urges her to have an abortion after which she develops an infection followed by sterility. In *Praxis*, Praxis tries to convince Mary to abort her baby so that she can pursue her academic career and even murders the baby to relieve Mary's burden. Praxis has taken her insistence on Mary's independence too far and has become a criminally bullying mother figure to Mary, even to the unacceptable degree of committing murder. Therefore, both texts promote the perception of reproduction and mothering as choices which women should be free to decide. Both novels dismiss extreme feminist perspectives; that is, neither the

views trying to impose maternity as a sacred and positive quality nor those which point to it as the ultimate oppression of women and thereby reject it are embraced in these novels. In both cases women are not allowed bodily integrity and personal freedom. Instead, these novels seek to reinterpret motherhood and reproduction and try not to suppress the diversity of women's experience; motherhood is not taken as a part of the feminist political agenda but rather it is seen as a social construct and a personal choice.

The Female Man and *The Women's Room* treat reproduction and motherhood as notions preventing women from realizing their full potentials as individuals. They remark that putting motherhood ahead of everything else traps women in domesticity and breaks their connection with the outside world. To prevent this, the novels suggest that a feminist consciousness should be created among women so that they do not devote themselves to the practice of mothering. In this regard, *The Women's Room* situates the problem in 1970s America through its depiction of suburban mothers whose sole function is to be carers and characters like Mira and Val who are feminist mothers. The latter group does not prioritize motherhood over other aspirations although they develop good communication with their children. *The Female Man*, on the other hand, represents a utopian world where reproduction and mothering are not related to women's subordination since there is no male and reproduction technologies allow women to produce babies only to meet the demographic needs of Whiteawayan society. Also, mothering is not a natural role as there is a systematic procedure to allocate child-care among all women so that no single woman is oppressed by the burden of child-rearing. The so-called natural bond between mother and child is shattered which in return undermines the elevation of motherhood that has been manipulated by patriarchy to subordinate women. In this sense, *The Female Man* creates an alternative to the world that *The Women's Room* aspires to have:

And there is no contest between a baby and its father – in my book anyway. A baby becomes your life by necessity, not by choice. This

arrangement is ancient: it lies curled in the heart of myth. What I do not know is if it is necessary. Can you imagine a world where neither mother nor father required the other for survival, where neither mother nor father could love and tend the baby, could get in touch with the beating engine that drives life? I can, vaguely. But only vaguely. What I can't do is envision a social structure that could contain such an arrangement without changing what is called human nature – that is, eradicating not only capitalism but greed, tyranny, apathy, dependency – oh, well. (70)

Motherhood, which has been seen as an inevitable part of women's identity through myths, religion and other social structures, is discussed in these novels as a political institution which plays a great role in women's oppression. The utopian world of Russ eradicates all power structures imbuing the world of French's novel. To restate, American second-wave feminists concentrate on patriarchy and its institutions such as religion, art, psychoanalysis which "have objectified motherhood, have disregarded female subjectivity, and have silenced the voice of the mother" ("Motherhood and Maternity" n. pag.). While criticizing the privileging of idealised concepts of the maternal instinct and the female's role in child-rearing, *The Female Man* and *The Women's Room* depict the alternatives of a world where such institutions are eliminated.

In the Turkish novels, the notion of motherhood is not projected through the lens of feminist consciousness; they instead remark on the significance of individuation and gaining autonomy over one's own life. This personal autonomy gains different meanings in the two novels. In *Lying Down to Die*, motherhood raises questions related to paternalistic nationalist discourse whereas in *A Strange Woman* it is akin to realizing socialist aspirations. Both Aysel and Nermin belong to the generation who are experiencing the freshmen years of the new Turkish Republic which imposed on both men and women the role of "patriotic citizens" (Sirman 4). Still being recognized mainly as wives and mothers, women had a special role, educating both themselves and the nation. That is, although women were expected to behave like sexless individuals, motherhood continued to be seen as an indispensable part of a woman's life. Referring to Köker's studies on the construction of womanhood in Turkey, Sirman explains that:

As described in numerous newspapers, pamphlets, treatises and novels published in the first decade of the Republic, the new Turkish woman would continue to have children and to be a wife because it was her duty to the nation. The new woman was a thrifty, enlightened, professionally trained housewife who, cognisant of the needs of the republic only used consumer goods produced in Turkey and who experienced heterosexual friendship only with her husband. (5)

Although they devote themselves to the Kemalist ideology and thus become educated, neither Aysel nor Nermin valorises or idealizes motherhood in their lives. Aysel is a Kemalist intellectual and Nermin is a devoted socialist, and both women feel disappointed and restricted by these ideologies. While Nermin never considers having a child, Aysel mentions the possibility of pregnancy as a result of her sexual affair with her student; both women- Nermin being a childless woman and Aysel with her extra-marital sexual affair- become unconventional within their social spheres. Thus, both novels represent a deviation from the paternalistic discourse of early Republicanism.

4.3. Relationships among Women: Is Sisterhood Powerful?

In the 1970s, relationships between women gained utmost significance in the feminist movement, and the notion of sisterhood discernibly influenced the feminist discourse of the time. As Michie also relates, “[f]eminists have proposed a family of sisters based on their presumed psychological, biological, and cultural identity to and with each other” (3). In this sense, sisterhood claims that although women have different lives from each other, they are united around certain concerns. Referring to *Sisterhood is Powerful* (an anthology of women’s writing that presents a uniform group identity), Morgan states that women’s experiences also represent “different forms of consciousness:”

It is also the first movement that has the potential of cutting across all class, race, age, economic, and geographical barriers—since women in every group must play essentially the same role, albeit with different sets and costumes: the multiple role of wife, mother, sexual object, baby-producer, “supplementary-income statistic,” helpmate, nurturer, hostess, etc. To reflect this potential, contributors from those different groups speak in this book—and frequently disagree with each other. (xviii)

In this sense, sisterhood seeks to create a group consciousness to enhance the relationships among women so that they can recognize oppressive patriarchal mechanisms governing their lives. Actually, in the 1970s “Sisterhood is powerful” became a renowned slogan promoting the urgency and strength of female bonding in creating a political awareness among women. As Morgan explores:

Women’s liberation is the first radical movement to base its politics—in fact, create its politics—out of concrete personal experiences. We’ve learned that those experiences are not *our* private hang-ups. They are shared by every woman, and are therefore political. (xvii-xviii)

Looking at the feminist critical and historical works of the decade, sisterhood appears as a powerful notion; however, its reception in different cultures is quite variable, as well. Actually, while the American novels studied in this dissertation regard sisterhood as an alternative path to cope with patriarchal oppression, British texts challenge and de-emphasize it and in the Turkish context it is not even recognized or referred to within a feminist consciousness.

Gang of Women

Butler argues that “the insistence upon the coherence and unity of the category of woman has effectively refused the multiplicity of cultural, social and political intersections” (*Gender Trouble* 19). Likewise, *The Passion of New Eve* treats sisterhood as limiting rather than powerful since it excludes those who are not inscribed in the existing discourses of sex and gender. Within this frame, relationships among women are scrutinized in *The Passion of New Eve* mainly through the discussion of separatist groups of women who are noted by their sameness to each other. The first group is the one Evelyn meets in New York which consists of radical activists seeking to obliterate the traces of patriarchy; for example, they blow wedding shops and destroy newspapers with marriage announcements. Evelyn is annoyed by “the menacing gleam of their leather jackets as [he] was of the crazed muggers who haunted the garbage” and he complains that “the Women practiced humiliation at random and bruised machismo takes longer to heal than a broken head” (13). For Evelyn, these

militant feminist cause nothing but more chaos in the city which is already permeated by social upheaval. It should be recalled that this view belongs to Evelyn at the beginning of the novel, and that he is an unreliable reporter, being a sexist, misogynistic and abusive man. Yet taken as a whole, the novel itself depicts feminist activists as provokers of separatism who use violence as needed. In seeking to eliminate patriarchal institutions through anger, these women activists of New York become oppressors and exclude women who do not embrace their strategy of separatism, which thus becomes scarcely differentiated from patriarchal oppression.

Within this frame, Kristeva's discussion of the separatist celebration of sisterhood is written into this novel, and severely criticized in the form of the militaristic group of women that Evelyn encounters in the desert. Kristeva explores that:

Then there are the more radical feminist currents which, refusing homologation to any role of identification with existing power no matter what the power may be, make of the second sex a *countersociety*. A "female society" is then constituted as a sort of alter ego of the official society in which all real or fantasized possibilities for *jouissance* take refuge. Against the sociosymbolic contract, both sacrificial and frustrating, this countersociety is imagined as harmonious, without prohibitions, free and fulfilling. ("Women's Time" 27)

Yet, she adds, "the very logic of counter-power and of counter-society necessarily generates, by its very structure, its essence as a simulacrum of the combated society or of power" (28). Beulah is depicted as what Kristeva calls a counter-society; that is, a society in which women are in power yet become oppressors, which turns feminism into an "inverted sexism" (27). Taking Evelyn a prisoner, they captivate him in Beulah. Evelyn sees that these "desert matriarchs" have a sacred community ruled by a mother goddess who is not all-embracing. They have solidarity among themselves yet they do not react against the Mother when she rapes Evelyn. As a matter of fact, these women have dedicated themselves to the Mother and every night they go to military training which Eve is encouraged to join (75). The Mother's "totalitarian rule" is not questioned by them and thus

they do not protest against the compulsory sex change performed on Evelyn. The Mother and her followers, in fact, long for the endurance of mythical qualities associated with woman and allow no room for difference which is akin to Barthes' view of myth as functioning to freeze history at the moment of its deployment. Relating this to women in Beulah, Pitchford argues that:

In this, it is fundamentally suited to hegemonic purposes, as hegemony's interest is to preserve things as they are, while resistant groups such as feminists fundamentally desire change. The Women are operating (as is Carter) at a moment of intense contestation, of the fragmentation of political visions; in this context of the war of dreams, their attempt to fix gender under a single representation removes it from the struggles for new alliances that will determine the new shape of power. (138)

Beulah is then criticized for its hegemonic attitude towards its population of women which is in fact only another depiction of patriarchal binary logic.

Another female subculture where female relations can be analysed is Zero's harem where animosity and rivalry among women overcome the female solidarity. When Eve/lyn with her newly gained female body is prisoned there, she thinks that:

His wives, with their faces of children, who so innocently consented to be less than human, filled me with an angry pity. When I saw their skins were often greenish due to the beatings he inflicted on them, I was moved by an anger they were too much in love with him to feel. My anger kept me alive. (104)

Eve/lyn tries to warn them about Zero's oppression and violence yet they do not want to escape from him. Also, they are jealous of each other and compete against each other not to lose Zero's attention. Furthermore, these girls hate Tristessa who feels like a woman but is neither welcomed nor accepted by them. Thus, Carter shows that a collective female group identity is not always flawless since any resistance to or difference from group uniformity is not well received. Within this context, Carter's discussion of sisterhood as another hegemonic discourse of female identity is akin to Butler's view of the category of women as "normative" and "exclusionary" ("Contingent Foundations" 16). That is, recognition of the

innumerable differences between women is noted as seminal to feminisms and feminist theories.

“The Daughter of God, reborn”

The type of sisterhood which tries to collect all women under a shared oppression, is not promoted in *Praxis*, either. The text undoubtedly points to the importance of female solidarity but it does not encourage the imposition of a collective group identity on all women; each woman in this novel has a unique experience of similar problems. In a similar manner, the relationships between women are shown to be manifold and the narrator shows how women may help each other without expecting anything in return whereas they can also betray each other and leave their female friends alone. Praxis experiences diverse effects of female relations which cannot be defined as entirely powerful or ineffective. For example, older Praxis feels content that she contributed to the liberation of a younger generation whom she calls “New Women” although they no longer remember the women like Praxis who fought for women’s liberation: “In the meantime, sisters, I absolve you from your neglect of me. You can do what you can. So will I” (17). At the same time, when asked to look after Irma’s children when she is in hospital giving birth again, Praxis sleeps with her husband. Realizing what she has done, Irma says: “I thought you were my friend, . . . I really did,” which does not seem to move Praxis at all; she merely says that she loves the man (193).

Complaining that “women don’t say ‘We’,” Beauvoir was highly critical of women’s inability to collect and act together against oppression (18). This was adopted and frequently used by the feminists in the 1970s, as well. Greer for example called for the necessity of a female friendship: “She must know her friends, her sisters, and seek in their lineaments her own. With them she can discover co-operation, sympathy and love” (23). Different from those views, Weldon represents another instance of the failure of female friendship putting forward that personal interests sometimes surpass the notion of female bonding.

Lucy became a member of the Mother's Union where she "voted for the expulsion of a young farmer's wife, mother of three, who was discovered on the desertion of her husband to have been bigamously married, although not to her knowledge at the time" (31). This is, in particular, a sharp criticism of Lucy who also suffered from the same repression. For Lucy, her personal requirements take precedence over any perceived sisterhood, and the Mother's Union indicates a hope for a new integration into society, which is evidently something she has missed since living mostly as an outcast due to her illegitimate marriage and children. Actually, the vicar makes her attend the church and join the union in return for his enrolling her daughters to the school and handling the paperwork related to their birth certificates. Lucy votes to please the vicar thereby reducing the probability of his revealing these family secrets. In showing the reasons behind her hostile behaviour the narrator avoids blaming her for her unfair, even cruel, treatment of the farmer's wife.

It should be asserted that Praxis herself goes through different experiences regarding her relations with women, among which her initiation into sisterhood is remarkable. Then she gets acquainted with women's movement and consciousness-raising through which her understanding of relations among women undergoes a radical change. When Irma invited Praxis to all-female groups for the first time, Praxis was reluctant to attend them:

A meeting of all women! She felt she would be finally relegated, down among the women. A woman past her prime, taking comfort from the company of other rejected, ageing women. There was to her something blackly depressing in the notion of any all-female group, which must lack the excitement and pleasure of mixed company. (215)

At that time Praxis thinks "that to be a wife and mother is the highest purpose of a woman," whereas Irma wants Praxis and other women to recognize "that their miseries are political, not personal" (226, 215). Praxis goes to Irma's consciousness-raising group because she does not want to stay alone after work. Actually, after her abandonment by her husband, this job allows Praxis to endure since it is this job that sometimes prevents her thoughts of suicide. In addition, it

is the start of a new and fulfilling future for her. She starts writing editorials for the Women's Movement, becomes a famous feminist and makes good money out of her editorials: "She was a convert: she wished to proselytize. She wished all the women in the world to think as she thought, do as she did, to join in sisterhood in a happier family than the world had ever known" (233). Through these lines, however, the text does not celebrate the concept of sisterhood; it rather problematizes it. While Praxis becomes a devoted Women's Libber, she expects every woman to share her ideas of a happy female solidarity. Such views of sisterhood are criticized by later feminists who noted that sisterhood "under the search for cohesion" suppressed "differentiation" (Tolan 77). For Praxis, sisterhood becomes a "religious experience" and at one point even regards herself as "the Daughter of God, reborn" to save womankind from patriarchy (233). She eventually kills Mary's baby to free her from the burden of mothering and thus she thinks she will contribute to sisterhood. This is actually a denouncement of radical ideas on sisterhood which does not pay enough attention to individual choices in the name of protecting women's collectivism. Praxis through infanticide does not contribute to Mary's freedom but deprives her from the right of mothering.

In other respects, Weldon does not completely undervalue the notion of a sisterhood that prioritizes female bonding, yet she problematizes it. Praxis defends her mother against the possible charges raised by a utopian sisterhood. She notes that she was living in a different era, which shaped her personal perspectives and choices, and wants the newer feminist ideology to acknowledge that "[w]e cannot be strong all the time; I comfort myself with that notion. We can't stick to our principles, act as we ought, fight for our causes, not nonstop, all our lives" (35). In a way, Praxis absolves those women who cannot or do not devote themselves to the concernment of the relations among women:

We must surely be prepared to take shifts in our fight for utopia or, failing that, to hand over entirely the burden of our conscience to those who are younger, fresher and less afflicted by experience than ourselves. Then, our task done, we can sink back with a clear conscience into selfishness and apathy. (35)

Consequently, Praxis notes that: “I ought to rejoice the girl who stood upon my toe in the bus. I ought to be glad, for her beauty, her freedom, her dignity, her pride. But I don’t; I’m not” (35). While a collective female identity would dissuade her from being irritated by another woman, Praxis perceives this woman only as a person who injured her and she has a clear conscience about this, affirming that she has contributed to her liberty: “I ought to be thankful, and take some credit myself, for the fact that she will never have to live in such a prison of shame and hypocrisy as the one in which my mother found herself” (35). Older Praxis is not an activist anymore and not a fervent adorer of the movement. Instead, she values the female friendship but criticizes the movements trying to impose a uniform identity. She appreciates the help she gets from her female friends and does not accuse them for not doing more than they did:

I think we owe our friends more, especially our female friends. I might have been justified in feeling angry with Irma, for not helping me when I needed help, and with Colleen because the help she offered was limited by her desire not to inconvenience her husband. But I was not angry; I assumed, along with everyone else, that a man’s convenience rated more in the great scheme of things than a woman’s pain. (147)

Praxis acknowledges that not all women have same problems; on the contrary, their grief, unhappiness and oppression change according to where and how they live.

Sisterhood of Js

The narrative of *The Female Man* calls for the necessity of a sisterhood that includes women of all backgrounds, dismissing any cultural or socio-political differences. In this respect, the fantastic story line gives a realistic representation of the 1970s women’s libbers who were trying to unite women against a shared oppression. The novel presents many women with different attitude to feminism and some of them are not even aware of their oppressed and underprivileged status. There are some who have problematic relationships with the patriarchy but do not have the courage or motivation to take action while some others are ardently fighting against it. In this respect, the novel shows that all women should

act together to end women's oppression because their sex is the ultimate cause of their oppression which can be eradicated through a feminist revolution which is possible only through an organizational activism. Thus, the novel praises the sisterhood and accentuates the consciousness-raising that will initiate into feminism those who are not yet aware of their oppression and keep silent against this oppression.

Sisterhood in this novel, then, appears as a powerful notion which undermines different localities to promote the unity of women against men. As the novel points out, although they have the same genotype, the four Js live in completely different socio-historical contexts. Nevertheless, Russ gathers them around the category of sex and fortifies women as a universal class that needs to be released from male tyranny. Braidotti argues that feminism "liberates in women . . . also their desire for freedom, lightness, justice, and self-accomplishment" (159), and Russ argues that this liberation can be accessed through a collective organization of relationships among women. In this respect, Joanna's resolution to become a devoted feminist and Jeannine's growing awareness of women's oppression are possible only through their interactions with Janet whose personality was shaped in an all-female community, and with Jael from a dystopian world where men and women are in a war. Janet's world is the hope of a world where things could be otherwise. She cannot act against men because there are no men and her identity is thus constructed free from gender roles. Jael is the one who shows the other Js the necessity for action and unity under a single aim- to overthrow patriarchy. In the novel her dystopian world of anger and violence constitutes the first towards a utopian world. Jael collects the other Js to create a community like Kristeva's counter-society in which woman hold the power and become oppressors. While Kristeva does not favour the formation of a counter-society, Russ does not blame Jael for her anger and use of violence in a world where women are abused, oppressed, and raped by men. As Teslenko argues: "The eventual slaughtering of all men is regarded as a necessary

purge which will finally exonerate this community and make the Utopian Whileaway possible” (144).

Joanna can be taken as a fictional character who acts as a mouthpiece for the author (Joanna Russ) who is very conscious of the status of women in her contemporary society; accordingly, the parts narrated by Joanna reflect the concerns of feminism in Russ’s time. The characterization of Joanna, then, can be seen as a consciousness-raising act through which the narrator gives clear cut statements about the fact that inferior, weak and negative images of women are in fact just constructed realities. The men that Joanna and the other Js meet produce debasing comments about women, manifesting how the agents of patriarchy hinder women from realizing their own desires. If a woman insists on the potential for a different and a better life, she is labelled as “bitchy, castrating, unattractive, neurotic” (117). The novel thus seeks justification for the radical feminists’ yearning to disrupt patriarchal power through female bonding. Jeannine’s entrapment in patriarchal ideology and Joanna’s continuous exposure to sexism are seen as the justification for the overthrow of patriarchal institutions by force. Joanna encourages women, saying “Remember: we all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, we will all be free. I swear it on my ten fingers. We will be ourselves” (213). The closure of the novel invites all women to be aware of what society is doing to them and to see how women are stripped of their potentials or freedom to choose an alternative life. The novel shows that obtaining this alternative life is possible through the employment of separatism which “asserts a revolution of women alone, for a revolution of men cannot be trusted to succeed” (154). At the end of the novel, Joanna, calling for a sisterhood, dedicates her book to all women, everywhere, and pays respect to the international community of feminist writers who favoured female solidarity:

Go, little book, trot through Texas and Vermont and Alaska and Maryland and Washington and Florida and Canada and England and France; bob a curtsey at the shrines of Friedan, Millet, Greer, Firestone, and all the rest; behave yourself in people’s living room. (213)

Sisterhood: From Suburban Domesticity to Feminist Consciousness

What lies at the heart of *The Women's Room* is aspiration for a sisterhood that would help women to become more liberated. Different groups of female subculture are found in the novel to delineate a shared experience among women. Referring to the feminists of the 1970s, Tong remarks that “[d]ubbed “radical feminists,” these revolutionary feminists introduced into feminist thought the practice of consciousness-raising. Women came together in small groups and shared their personal experiences *as women* with each other” (48). Tong’s remarks about these female relations is prominent in French’s novel, which shows that even among the suburban housewives who are depicted as unaware of the political nature of their personal relations there is a prominent amount of sharing, which made them see that they all have similar problems. Thus, the novel explores the strengths and weaknesses of different female groups—suburban housewives, middle class mothers, educated intellectuals and all-female societies—through the device of having the protagonist join each of them as a member, at different times of her life.

Within radical feminist discourse, the process of consciousness-raising is described as “one in which personal experiences, when shared, are recognized as a result not of an individual’s idiosyncratic history and behavior, but of the system of sex-role stereotyping. That is, they are political, not personal, questions” (Payne 280-81). Personal problems are thus transformed into a feminist political struggle. Likewise, Mira’s consciousness-raising with feminist friends enables her to revise her relations with other women and men, through which she is able to overcome her disillusionment and despair she has experienced till then. Even before becoming a feminist, Mira had noticed the importance of female bonding and how influential it is. In the post-natal ward, Mira observes how the other women there all experience the same things: “They talked about babies, children, rashes, colic, formulas, diets, fretting” (56). Most of the time, they talked about their children and domestic duties and as the narrator reveals, these women never express that “they were pleased or displeased” with their lives (57). “They did not

complain, they did not insist, they did not demand, they did not seem to want anything” (57). At that time, Mira felt that she shared much with those women and names this experience as “a secret sisterhood” of mothers (64). She observed that:

They felt united by their profound and delicate knowledge; tacitly, by a smile or a nod, they told each other that this was the most, no, the only important thing in life. Outsiders seemed to them cut off from the beating heart of things. (65)

The narrative argues that these women actually need consciousness-raising to question whether they are really content with their lives or not. In this way, this “secret sisterhood” can be publicized and discussed within the political level to lead a feminist revolution. Thus, Mira becomes the representative of this awareness through which female friendship can be more influential:

The unspoken, unthought-about conditions that made it oppressive had long since been accepted by all of them: that they had not chosen but had been automatically slotted into their lives, and that they were never free to move (the children were much more effective as clogs than confinement on a prison farm would be). Having accepted the shit and string beans, they were content. (77-78)

This is why the narrative shifts between different female subcultures, Mira belongs to both groups; women in the first group see their problems on the personal level while those in the second group see the problems of women as a political issue. The novel, in this regard, foregrounds the success of sisterhood and encourages women to form a female bonding in order to fight against patriarchal oppression.

Additionally, Gamble argues that “[a]t its most extreme, the concept of sisterhood merges into that of separatism” which promotes the separation of spheres in which women “operate within their own their own distinct set of institutions” (*Feminism and Postfeminism* 298). Val joins a separatist female group after her daughter has been raped. When one of her friends asks her how it

is possible to live without men in a world where men “control the foundations” such as business life and academia, Val says that:

‘I’ve dropped out of that that world. I belong to all women’s groups now. I shop at a feminist market, bank in a women’s bank. I’ve joined a militant feminist organization, and in the future I will work only in that. Fuck the dissertation, the degree, Harvard. They’re all part of the male world. You can’t compromise with it. It eats you alive, rapes your body and soul . . .’ (477; ellipsis in orig.)

Separatist underpinnings are yet problematized in the novel and the dangers of separatism and activism are presented through the death of Val who, with some other women activists, is killed by the police in a protest to free a woman found guilty of murdering her rapist. Although the reasons for such activism are sympathetically represented, they are not promoted: even some of Val’s close women friends blame her for joining this protest. As Loudermilk suggests “[a]ctivist politics in this novel . . . are always fanatical and always punished” (49). Although Val’s separatist activist politics and her death are not elaborated in the novel, it can be suggested that women like Val are doomed to be isolated and tagged insane within the timespan of the novel’s narration and perhaps also of its production. Yet it was brought forward into the feminist agenda of the 1970s when activist strategies were demanded by collective female groups. While Val was not able to bring her personal experience to political action at that time, the text underscores the hardships of those feminists who aspired to discuss their personal problems on the political arena, and it evidently regards sisterhood as a significant part of the less controversial feminist activity of consciousness-raising.

Aysel and Yearning for Individuality

Sisterhood as a notion that may create a uniformed female group is not prominently discussed in *Lying Down to Die*. It may reveal how female relationships among different female subcultures are shaped, however. As the novel shows, in the period covered by the narration Turkey was going through a change in terms of economic and socio-politic values; in such a context collecting women under the category of sex was impossible. The episode of the school

ceremony may be seen as a space where such diversity is recognized; the difference observed in women's physical appearance marks their difference from each other. Those wearing hats and *jilbabs* or just scarves indicate different economic, social and cultural contexts, while attitudes towards the show and different levels of complacency with the seating arrangements or refusal to sit in the same room as men are accordingly variable.

When Aysel's relationships with other female characters are analysed the influence of this diversity on women's personal relations is clearly understood. Aysel's experiences show that socio-economic-politic differences are so intense that a shared oppression cannot be named and Aysel mostly feels dissociated from other women. A shared sex does not mean a shared politics, and friendship is shown to be more fragile than political and cultural allegiance: Behire ends her friendship with Aysel when she learns that she is reading poems by the left-wing writer Nazım Hikmet. Aysel later feels a similar dissociation from women who are not intellectuals or educated, calling a friend who reads celebrity gossip magazines "wanton," for instance (172). Similarly, the narrator reflects how Aysel is different from her younger sister Tezel in terms of personal relations. While Aysel devotes herself to the State ideology and is emotionally and psychologically influenced by her extramarital sexual activity, Tezel is an easy-going person who does not care what other people think about her affairs with married men. In such circumstances, a feminist concept of sisterhood or female friendship is shown to be of no concern to Aysel, who cannot feel close to other women who have different experiences from hers. Rather than a collective group identity, differences between these women's lives come to the fore in the novel. All these women are remarkable for their distinct social backgrounds which prevent the formation of a collective female uniformity.

Rather than sexual identity, it is socio-politic background that creates group identities in this novel. This is why Aysel feels closer to those whose economic standards are closer to hers. For example, Aysel has a very close friend named Semiha with whom she exchanges letters. These letters indicate that they

share emotional attachment which is more on the personal level and the text does not politicize this relationship. Likewise, while young Aysel was unable to afford costumes for the school show, her mother gets help from the woman next door; in addition, she mother protects and supports Aysel in the face of her father's anger. Yet Aysel's concern with being a free individual is prioritized over any collective female identification. Hence, she alienates herself from women with whom she does not share the same ideals. As one of her dreams reflects, she feels particularly alienated from women who give importance to their appearance, or who are associated with domesticity.

A Comrade Rather Than a Sister

As in *Lying Down to Die*, argumentation regarding sisterhood does not occupy a noticeable place in *A Strange Woman*. Looking at the female relations in the novel, it can be said that the novel does not promote the commonality of women and hence it does not call for the formation of female solidarity. Rather, women in this novel are noted for personal lives that are quite distinct from each other. For instance, Nermin never creates strong bonds with other women around her and the number of women whom she has close contact is quite limited. The two women she is attached to are her mother Nuriye and her friend Meral. But she is in a constant fight with her mother because she is conservatively religious woman who tries to impose her own values on her daughter. Yet she protects her too: on discovering Nermin's plan to elope and getting angry with her, she nevertheless keeps it secret from her father. In this respect, although Nermin's relation with her mother is shaped by how different they are, they have a nurturing and supportive connection which is enacted only in urgent cases. As for Nermin's close friendship with Meral, it is enacted in fairly conventional ways with the sharing of secrets and seeking of advice from one another. In this relationship too, though, their differences rather than similarities are reinforced and even Nermin recognizes that they have different points of view.

Later in the novel, Nermin's relationship with women is mostly shaped by her socialist consciousness which configures her entire life. Her notion of sisterhood thus is not limited to female solidarity; it is rather a socialist understanding of sisterhood, associated with being a comrade and working together with men and women to promote socialist consciousness. In this sense, the novel is reminiscent of the ideas highlighted in Rowbotham and Figes who foregrounded the significance of the class awareness among people. Nermin wants to create a connection with women in *Taşlıtarla* not because they all share the same sex but because she wants to raise class consciousness. Actually, Nermin's life in *Taşlıtarla* which she starts to live according to socialist ideas serves to show Nermin's difference from other women in the district. While women in the neighbourhood have a close connection with each other, they mark out Nermin as a stranger to them, which inevitably draws attention to the social, economic and cultural differences between them. For example, when Nermin moves there, the women already residing there immediately notice the quality of her furniture; while the residents can hardly afford the basics of daily life, Nermin already has all domestic appliances these women have dreamt of and could never afford. No matter how hard Nermin tries to form a connection with them, she is not integrated into their society, and when she raises the issues of the existence of God in a discussion she becomes an outcast and is never welcomed there again. Saying "Forswear, sister Nermin, forswear, otherwise you are smitten!" the woman leaves, never to visit her again (234). Although Nermin tries to reduce the class distance between her and the others, these women recognize her as different from themselves, not only because of class differences but also due to her cultural and religious values.

Results

After analysis of each novel, what comes to the fore in *The Passion of New Eve* and *Praxis* is the problematization of the notion of sisterhood; both novels deliberately disclose its flaws and limitations. Rather than organizing women around sexual difference, these novels display the prominence of cultural,

racial, economic variations. *The Passion of New Eve* and *Praxis* adopt sisterhood to dilute the uniformity revolving around women's oppression. The idealized female solidarity becomes an illusion since other variations mentioned above are, as well as sex, become influential in creating different consciousness. The novels show that sisterhood, then, may also become a form of oppression since it marginalizes those who do not entirely agree with every aspect of the group's existence. In both novels, there are characters that are enforced to accept the ideology favouring female bonding regardless of their personal choices. Evelyn is turned into a woman and made to accept feminine qualities which the separatist community of the Mother deems appropriate whereas Praxis murders someone else's baby in the belief that this is a sisterly mission to liberate a woman from the duty of mothering. Sisterhood, then, is employed to remark upon the multiplicity of identity markers existing among women, and these novels show that arguments about women's situation that are based only in relation to each other tend to employ "a rather stagnant hierarchy of oppressions based on oppositions such as white/black, heterosexual/lesbian, intellectual/community-based (Jones & Guy 1992) which reflected self/other distinctions" (Holmes 239). In this sense, these novels are aligned with reflections highlighting a turning from sisterhood to fragmentation, recognizing the existence of other markers such as black, lesbian, and working class (Mitchell and Oakley).

The Female Man and *The Women's Room* align with the feminist discourse promoting sisterhood and they discount cultural and socio-political gaps in order to enhance it. In fact, they share the radical feminist claim that "women—due to their primary social attachment to the family and reproduction—constitute a class and economy of their own, based on the unpaid work in the home, the productivity of motherhood, and their function as a workforce reserve" (Krolokke and Sorensen 9). Therefore, creating a bond among women to raise consciousness related to the patriarchal subordination of the female sex is a prominent theme in these novels. Both novels abound with parts where conversing female characters share personal issues which are further debated by women on the political level as

a way to eliminate their difficulties. Furthermore, in both novels, separatist feminist strategy grants women more liberation to realize their aspirations and become free of patriarchal oppression and they share Holmes' argument that "[c]reating women-only spaces made it possible for women to more clearly define themselves, their needs and interests" (243). To this purpose, biological difference is the common frame uniting women of different backgrounds; the title of *The Women's Room* becomes a metaphor for similarities among women and in *The Female Man* Jeannine, Joanna, Janet and Jael are depicted as four versions of one genotype. For these writers, a perceived unity of women is an important step for the feminist revolution; through this perceived unity those who are not aware of the causes of their problems are awakened into consciousness. The prominent arguments in these novels centre on the idea of the political nature of women's solidarity, which aligns them with the following argument of the 1970s:

Women function as a caste because we class-climb or class-descend *via* our men, and because, in our inter-class and intra-class functions, we still take our definitions *from* men—and those definitions are always that of appendages. Thus the ruling class woman has no real power herself—she is merely the exquisitely decorated property of a man rich enough to have one slave who does absolutely nothing. Other people do things for her, and they are, of course, poor black and brown and white women. Nevertheless, it is still the “job” of the upper-class woman to “supervise” these tasks: the menu-planning, endless shopping, genteel hostess routine—which is just a diamond-studded variation of the usual female role. (Morgan xxvii)

Accordingly, in spite of its disturbing similarity to the essentialist homogenizing of patriarchal representation of women as all alike, these novels represent all women as having a single identity based on sexual difference.

Compared to the British and American novels studied here, sisterhood does not appear as a feminist concern in the Turkish novels. Collective activities organized by women's associations do not exist in the political agenda of the novels. In terms of the relationships among women, this sample of Turkish literature is more individualistic and seeks less collectivism. The main characters in *Lying Down to Die* and *A Strange Women* strive to create individual identities

released from the markers of collectivist ideologies, which regulates both same and opposite sex relationships. Different contexts create different consciousness which the novels present as more important than sexual difference. In this respect, women from similar contexts are more likely to create friendships based on shared personal problems, as we see in both novels, where female characters develop such bonding based on sharing experience and counselling. Nevertheless, as they grow up, they are represented as growing up separately and individually, with personalities that change in different directions and they lose touch and sometimes live away from each other, which is the opposite of living in a collective solidarity

CHAPTER 5

WOMEN'S WRITING

One of the remarkable aspects of the 1970s was the intense interest in women's writing which was understood to have been silenced, underrepresented or neglected by the male-dominated literary area. In her 1972 essay, Tillie Olsen commented that:

It is the women's movement, part of the other movements of our time for a fully human life, that has brought this forum into being; kindling a renewed, in most instances a first-time, interest in the writings and writers of our sex. (6)

In fact, Olsen's lines brightly illustrate the substantial link between women's liberation and literature and how influential their collaboration would be in terminating women's oppression. Thus, a tangible effort to place women's writing in literary history and to create a female tradition among women writers—an inspiration incited also by Moers and Showalter—was prominently recognized. As Eagleton highlights, Showalter may be the first to emphasize the point that tracing the history of women writers constitutes “an important political challenge” in asking “Where are the women writers? What has aided or inhibited their writing? How has criticism responded to their work?” (“Finding a Female Tradition: Introduction” 2). Such an interrogation brings “the determinant of gender” to literary criticism and uncovers the constructedness of literary tradition (2). Feminist literary theory, including multiple perspectives which cannot now be defined as unified, concerned itself with representation and language and how they were used by women writers. As a matter of fact, concepts such as a female literary tradition, feminine writing, feminist writing, women as writers and readers, and women's relations to literary production were much debated in this decade.

The attempts to define women's writing and feminist narrative strategies that are found in the novels analysed here underpin the novels' (and the novelists') uneasy contact with strict categorizations. The novels selected for this dissertation evince an extraordinary multiplicity and versatility in their unique ways of representing the concerns they share with the feminisms of the time. Nevertheless, they mete out some shared pursuits and approaches in their deployment of narrative dynamics. In *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics*, Felski's definition of feminist fiction includes "all those texts that reveal a critical awareness of women's subordinate position and of gender as a problematic category, however this is expressed" (14). All six novels included here, with different ways of practicing similar concerns, eventually bring forth an interest to canvass the construction of woman as "the second sex" and challenge the status quo and, especially, fixed definitions of gender. As a matter of fact, experimenting and playing with the language, form and genre they adopt, these writers inaugurate a protest against the male norm so that hegemonic inscriptions of culture, history and literature are disrupted and hence re-evaluated. They also share Lanser's hypothesis that "the female voice—a term used here simply to designate the narrator's grammatical gender—is a site of ideological tension made visible in textual practices" (6). In this way, they can participate in and present alternatives to the existing authorial discourses.

Analysing the shifts and phases in women's writing in Western context, Waugh identifies three phases "characterized by a rhetorical "dominant"" which nevertheless do not fall into strict periodization (191-92). Waugh's analysis provides an initial step to differentiate the women's writings studied here into three cultures in the 1970s, although they all overlap in certain discussion of these three phases. For instance, the Turkish novels can be named as belonging to Waugh's "pre-theorized and ambivalent" phase (even though she places this phase in the sixties). Ağaoğlu and Erbil frequently revealed their ambivalent positioning as women writers and particularly Ağaoğlu rejected being called a woman writer. Also, they do not share Western feminism's interest in the history of women's

writing and in creating a tradition among women. Waugh's next phase is named "writing as a woman;" it seeks to combine "the collective with the personal voice" (192). In this respect, *The Female Man* and *The Woman's Room* can be named as belonging to this phase, and as practices of the 1970s' emphasis on the slogan "the personal is political." The third of Waugh's phases is the encounter of feminism with postmodernism, poststructuralist theory and "the proliferation of difference" (192). In this phase, women writers self-consciously adopt the parodic and the fantastic "to masquerade and monstrosity" (192). Carter and Weldon thus fit in the frame of this third phase, especially as they challenge any authoritarian discourses of subjectivity. The following pages will discuss these differences in further detail

More specifically, in the following parts, I will analyse the writers' styles and ways of representation in our selected novels. In the earlier chapters, common subjects adopted from feminist theories were analysed to point how these themes were treated differently by women writers. This chapter, then, will focus on how these writers explored these themes through their unique ways of using language and representational tools. More specifically, I will concentrate on narrative techniques, genre, and style to discuss what is distinct about each writer. As these novels also adopt similar strategies, I will focus on what is more remarkable for and in each writer's text. These remarkable features are identified as the following: the significance of a double-gendered narrator in *The Passion of New Eve*, the first-person interruptions of an older Praxis in *Praxis*, *The Female Man* as a science fiction text, the confessional mode in *The Women's Room*, the juxtaposition of personal and national histories in *Lying Down to Die*, and the change of style and language in different contexts in *A Strange Woman*. As in previous chapters, even texts from the same locality will be explored separately, which will be followed by a section going over the results obtained from the analyses of the novels.

5.1. Significance of the Double-gendered Narrator in *The Passion of New Eve*

The Passion of New Eve presents a complex narrative structure within which Carter plays with existing genres, styles and traditions. One result of such a narrative is an ambiguous text which resists classifications and problematizes the very essence of language itself. The fluidity of sex and gender is correlated with the fluid and ambiguous nature of the text itself. In an interview with John Haffenden, Carter expressed that in *The Passion of New Eve* “there is a careful and elaborate discussion of femininity as a commodity” (“Angela Carter” 86). Also, in her “Notes from the Front Line” Carter refers to the novel as an “anti-mythic novel” which she accepted “as a feminist tract about the social creation of femininity” (38). In this sense, Carter was deeply interested in something that the 1970s feminist theorists valued greatly; what Carter did in this novel was a careful and conscious organization of her interest in constructedness of femininity, which as Gamble notes, makes *The Passion of the New Eve* Carter’s “most developed ‘feminist’ novel” (*The Fiction of Angela Carter* 90). Yet the novel, as seen in previous chapters, does not take side with only one kind of feminism; in fact, the fantastic plotting of realistic standpoint does not leave place for clear-cut analyses since it is a multi-layered narrative allowing a multiplicity of ideas. Nothing is one thing in this novel; Evelyn becomes Eve, Tristessa (who is taken as the ideal image of femaleness) turns out to be a man, Leilah becomes Lilith, Mother goes mad, and Zero (who sees himself as the ultimate representation of masculinity) is impotent; as Lee argues, in this novel “centers fluctuate” (245). Likewise, the text itself also fluctuates and shatters meanings enclosed in language itself; incomprehensible speeches, grotesque descriptions, cyclical time and fantasy pervade the narrative. According to Lee, it is this indeterminacy which makes the novel itself into what Rachael Blau DuPlessis describes as “a feminist writing practice:”

One may assert that any female cultural practice that makes the ‘meaning production process’ itself ‘the site of struggle’ may be considered feminist. These authors are ‘feminist’ because they construct a variety of oppositional strategies to the depiction of gender institutions of in

narrative. A writer expresses dissent from an ideological formation by attacking elements of narrative that repeat, sustain or embody the values and attitudes in question. So after breaking the sentence, a rupture with the internalization of the authorities and voices of dominance, the woman writer will create that further rupture . . . breaking the sequence – the expected order. (34)

This study agrees with Lee's argument since it is this textual and thematic indeterminacy that allows Carter to create what Majorie Garber describes as the "third term;" that is, "a mode of articulation, a way of describing a space of possibility" (11). In such a space, new subjectivities such as transgendereds, transsexuals and transvestites can be represented and previous meanings related to binary thinking can be reconsidered. Within that frame, in this novel the instability of sex and gender becomes a narrative strategy to open up a space to voice hitherto silenced subjectivities. More specifically, this chapter's analysis of *The Passion of New Eve* will delve into the influence of a double gendered narrator in disrupting the essentialist definitions of sex and gender and creating a duplicitous discourse, which eventually functions as a powerful feminist narrative strategy.

To begin with, in this novel, Carter's employment of a sex-change operation becomes an influential narrative tool to problematize the reading process in raising questions against biologically determinist views promoting that one's identity is inherently based on one's sex, which is very much praised by critics such as Gamble, Lee and Punter. This is mainly through the indeterminacy of the narrator whose sex is destabilized and who highlights the instability of meanings attributed to sex itself. The narrator starts the story as follows: "The last night I spent in London, I took some girl or other to the movies and, through her meditation, I paid you a little tribute of spermatozoa, Tristessa" (1). The first-person narrative seems to belong to Evelyn who relates his sexual fantasies, his abusive relationship with women, and the atmosphere of a New York rendered chaotic by feminist and civil protests. Nonetheless, the narrative gets structurally and semantically complicated when Evelyn is surgically turned into a woman by the Mother and it becomes evident that the preceding pages were (as they

continue to be) Eve's, not Evelyn's, retrospectively narrated story. As Lee argues, in these opening pages, "neither Tristessa nor Evelyn 'exists' except in Eve's memory; each is re-created by Eve, who soon makes her presence known" (245). Although this presence is not an apparent one, it functions to destabilize readers very early in the reading process. For instance, in the opening pages, when talking about the unnamed girl he went to cinema with before leaving London, Evelyn relates that: "She kept a hieroglyph of plastic in the neck of her womb, to prevent conception; the black lady never advised me on those techniques when she fitted me up with a uterus of my own, that was not part of her intention" (5). At that stage of the narrative no explicit information is provided in relation to who the black lady is and why she advised him on contraception; her identity is later disclosed in chapter five where she is revealed as the Mother who changed Evelyn into a woman. Yet this quotation through the phrase "my uterus" and advice on the contraception is one the earliest destabilizers as also is the use of a name—Evelyn—that in 'real' life is used by both men and women. Thus, the retrospective first-person narration of a character experiencing a sex change and early clues of this incident confuse the reading process; the one who is paying tribute to Tristessa in the opening page is not a simply identifiable narrator, it is an Evelyn as he is remembered by Eve.

Actually, destabilization the sex change process creates in the text is influentially reinforced through the use of an extradiegetic and a homodiegetic narrator. As Eve is both a narrator and a character in the story she tells, it sometimes becomes impossible to detect the gender of the speaking subject. That is, the speaking "I" is unstable throughout the narrative. Especially, from time to time, whether the speaker is Evelyn, or Eve with Evelyn's consciousness who is also aware of her newly given female body is uncertain. Lee argues that in the novel "[t]here is no marked change of 'voice' between the parts of the novel that concern Eve and Evelyn" (244). Lee's observation seems right especially in the style of the first five chapters where the narration of Evelyn's male consciousness is not distinct from the rest of the novel. Nevertheless, talking about the text and

the narrator is complicated within the whole narrative because gendered categories of discourse are further disrupted through focalization of other characters such as Tristessa. All in all, the novel actually criticizes the mimetic and rigid representations of language itself as they function to reinforce essentialist definitions of sex/gender and to locate innate never-changing qualities in people. For instance, in the first chapter the narrator reflects the inadequacy of language and symbols: “Our external symbols must always express the life within us with absolute precision; how could they do otherwise, since that life has generated them?” (2). She highlights that symbols and what they signify are taken as fixed and stable since “the nature of our life alone has determined their forms;” but, she says, “[a] critique of these symbols is a critique of our lives” (2). Actually, with this utterance, the narrator starts the interrogation of such fixed signification systems and it is worth noting that she makes this comment when discussing the discrepancy between Tristessa’s idealized, suffering, erotic femininity on the cinema screen and her male body:

Tristessa. Enigma. Illusion. Woman? Ah?

And all you signified was false! Your existence was only notional; you were a piece of pure mystification, Tristessa. Nevertheless, as beautiful as only things that don’t exist can be, most haunting of paradoxes, that recipe for perennial dissatisfaction. (2)

Since Evelyn later meets Tristessa in real life, when he becomes Eve, and discovers that Tristessa in fact has a male body while feeling like a woman inside, the narrating Eve knows that the conventionally associated meanings of sex and gender are nonsense. Therefore, in-betweenness of Tristessa and Evelyn generate a critique of binary language and thinking system that exiles those beyond the norm.

Confusions in narrative voice and focalization are well observed in attempting to use pronouns in referring to both characters and the narrator. While at first reading, in the first five chapters the narrator can be described as “he,” later it becomes difficult to decide whether and when to use “he” and “she.” Particularly through the scenes where Evelyn is given a sex-change surgery and

he claims he does not feel a woman although he has a female body, the narrative and language are more disturbed. To illustrate, when the Mother asks him after sex surgery and “psycho-programming:” “How do you find yourself?” Eve/lyn responds that: “I don’t find myself at all” (72). This Shakespearean/Hamlet instance of wordplay actually creates a lexical confusion. Within the retrospective narration of Eve, Evelyn is made to refer to Eve as a separate person; she is a stranger to him. Accordingly, the narrative temporarily changes from “I” to a third-person focalizing Evelyn and Eve from outside as two different people:

I would say that, at this time, I was literally in two minds; my transformation was both perfect and imperfect. All of New Eve’s experience came through two channels of sensation, her own fleshly ones and his mental ones. But at length the sense of having been Evelyn began, in spite of himself, to fade, although Eve was a creature without memory; she was an amnesiac, a stranger in the world as she was in her own body – but it wasn’t that she’d forgotten everything, no. Rather, she had nothing to remember. (74)

The paragraph below soon notes the shift back to “we” from Eve, which is significant since it is fused with changes of narrative perspective and focalization, which complicates the reader’s process of identifying whether the speaker is Evelyn or Eve:

Every night, at midnight, they came out of the trapdoor in the sand for their military training and as soon as she was fit to hold a gun, Eve was encouraged to join them. . . . We were prepared for anything. When they marched past after these sham fights, their bodies streamed with blood and their skin hung in shreds from torn limbs. Sophia told me that Columbus and his companions had been attacked by female archers when they first set foot on the soil of the New World. . . . But Eve proved unhandy with weapons, so they laughed at my botched shots and mocked me: ‘Just like a man!’ (75-76)

Here, it is again noted that the speaking subject calling him/herself “me” refers to Eve as, again, a different person; the memories of Eve identify Evelyn and Eve as different, even as having memories themselves. Therefore, to whom the narrator refers to with “we” or “they” is not explicit; actually, a systematic alternation is detected as the entire passage goes like this: “they . . . she . . . Eve . . . them . . .

we . . . they . . . their . . . me . . . Eve . . . they . . . me.” Nevertheless, within the last sentence, the use of “me” and their teasing Evelyn for being “just like a man” disrupts this systematization. In this respect, Eve as the narrator does not allow her own narrative to be unitary, but making it apparently contain Evelyn’s narrative, while not clearly indicating when or how this semantic ‘diegetic’ shift is happening. That is, although “I” remains on the same level of Eve’s retrospective narration, she merely refers to her past self in the third-person. As his/her understanding of his/her sexed subjectivity is shattered, the conventional gendered language is unable to represent the speaker’s double-gendered identity and it is thus also shattered. Accordingly, the tone of the narrative from chapter five (in which Evelyn’s sex change and following psycho-sexual programming take place in Beulah) to chapter nine (when Eve meets Zero and his wives) evokes a sense of tension and distress since Evelyn is in a constant struggle to adapt to the female body and experience which changes ontological and epistemological categories which he was familiar till then.

Undoubtedly, the problematization of language which marks it as a theme as well as a discursive tool, becomes more apparent when Evelyn meets Zero and his harem. The wives’ language does not have “one human word or sound” and Zero himself “had almost abandoned verbalisation as a means of communication” (83). Although they all know English, they are not allowed to use it since Zero strictly punishes who attempt to use it. In this sense, non-verbal communication and muted/whispered language, combined with Zero’s veto on the use of words, artificially creates a mystique around Zero and his almost absolute control over the women. While he has language, they (he wishes to imply) do not, which is actually relevant to what Lacan calls “The Law of the Father,” and by manipulating their access to verbal language he is creating a world beyond his wives’ control, and a world of wives who cannot communicate in his own terms (words). Therefore, they roar, howl and bark like animals. In this respect, Zero controls these women not only physically but also by preventing their access to meaning as he creates an incomprehensible language. Eve/lyn hears the voices of

Zero's wives as "Thin, sharp, female voices [that] babbled discordantly above [her/him] – the Women? Women, anyway, though they spoke no language [s/he] understood" (82). Nevertheless, the wives create their own communication in secret as they speak as quietly as possible, not to annoy him, upon which the narrator comments that: "A rule they interpreted as a perpetual whispering; if Zero did not hear them, it was as if they had not spoken" (84). That is, the jargon of non-verbal language that the wives use among themselves also keeps Zero out of their communicative circle, so two mutually incomprehensible worlds are being created here.

Here it should be noted that Carter is interested in these power relations between word or non-words and gender (the male word, the female non-verbal utterance) and explores them in other fictional and non-fictional works. To enumerate, in "Notes from the Front Line," language, she says, "is power, life and the instrument of culture, the instrument of domination and liberation" (43). In this respect, French psychoanalytic works such as those of Cixous and Kristeva are influential in Carter's works. In these works, it is often detected that such mystic realms, where some characters are rendered dumb, silent or using non-human language, allow the creation of alternative spaces that break away from the constraints as well as the power of patriarchy. In this respect, Zero's community seems like such a place where the patriarchal language and contact with ordinary people are abandoned; yet it only recreates patriarchy with its all power relations. As, Cixous points out in "The Laugh of the Medusa" access to language is the initial step of gaining autonomy and power. Zero, as a man, is in power, women are marginalized and oppressed and those like Eve/lyn are double marginalized since they do not fit in either categories. Neither Zero's nor the wives language are accessible for Eve/lyn and actually s/he fears that the wives will betray her/him to Zero in sign-language if she attempts to verbalise her knowledge about the real world. In this respect, the incomprehensibility of this mystique world is in accordance with her growing sense of disconnection from her older, male self and her inability to adapt to her new female self. S/he expresses that: "Even my

memories no longer fitted me, they were old clothes belonging to somebody else no longer living” (89). His/her double sexed consciousness which also beyond the representation of ordinary language is similarly repressed in Zero’s micro-patriarchal world; both as a “he” and “she,” Eve/lyn cannot be defined with one single category thus s/he is marginalized both for the girls and Zero.

As a matter of fact, Carter creates through language and/or narrative shifts, spaces which exist outside discursive meanings and practices that constitute hegemonic relations, which is reinforced in chapter nine, where Eve/lyn meets Tristessa. Evelyn, as still alienated from New Eve is attracted to Tristessa whom s/he then believes to be the perfect ideal of a woman. Though the distressful tone of the previous chapters are replaced with a melancholic and romantic tone, there is still a sense of indeterminacy and ambiguity concerning language and the self; Eve/lyn reflects that: “The abyss of myself, of emptiness, of inward void. I, she, we are outside history. We are beings without a history, we are mysteriously twinned by our synthetic life” (122). The narrator’s struggle with language notably increases when Tristessa’s maleness and his accordingly indeterminate being are exposed. Accordingly, the difficulty the narrator experiences in focalizing himself after he becomes New Eve is now reflected in focalizing Tristessa. Likewise, the narrator her/himself struggles with indeterminacy in relation to how to refer to Tristessa: “So *he*, *she* (emphasis added) was lifted as on a wire, the mimic flight of the theatre, from the tomb *she’d* (emphasis added) made for herself; *he* (emphasis added) looked about him with the curiosity of Lazarus” (139). As the use of pronouns indicate, both genders can be used for Tristessa. Such existences definitely go beyond the ordinary thinking, as Eve/lyn reveals, “Tristessa had no function in this world except as an idea of himself; no ontological status, only an iconographic one” (126). In this respect, both Eve/lyn and Tristessa are exiled from the mono-gendered dominant discourse due to their multi-gendered ambivalences. Like his/her transgendered body, Tristessa’s identity is ambiguous and thus beyond conventional uses and normative aspects of language, as Eve/lyn knows:

He, she – neither will do for you, Tristessa, the fabulous beast, magnificent, immaculate, composed of light. . . . You produced your own symbolism with the diligence of a computer; you had subjected yourself to such an arid metamorphosis – the desert, the continent assimilated to the irrational and absurd beauty of this living creature locked in her glass mansion, like an allegory of chastity in a medieval romance. (140)

Thus, after learning of Tristessa's maleness, Eve/lyn's uses of pronouns are quickly interchanged. Even in one sentence, "he" is replaced by "she:" "How much he must have both loved and hated women, to let Tristessa be so beautiful and make her suffer so!" (141). Actually, these doubled-gendered characters challenge the hierarchical discourses through which categories of man and woman are constructed and hence delegitimize history that reproduces these discourses. According to Johnson: "The transvestite or transsexual who refers to the history of its pre-transgressive past ensures the legibility of a subjectivity which truly subverts the hegemonic binarism of heterosexuality and its commonly polarized model of gender identification" ("Unexpected Geometries" 178). This is actually justified in the novel as both Eve/lyn and Tristessa are not only exiled but also severely punished by people they encounter such as Zero and the boy-Colonel who later kills Tristessa; they cannot be defined by their language and the new insights and meanings they bring with are not welcomed in hegemonic discourses. Towards the end of the novel, Eve/lyn reveals that "I know, now, that Mother is a figure of speech and has retired to a cave beyond consciousness" (180). S/he expresses how her/his journey ended: "A miraculous, seminal, intermediate being whose nature grasped in the desert" (181). Thus, throughout the novel, instability of sex and instability of language are correlated, which eventually creates place for articulation of such seminal and silenced beings. That is, the ambiguity of sex and duplicity of discourse create openings for new meanings and possibilities where things are not what they seem to be. Fixed and stable definitions which claim to represent reality are disrupted and replaced by a magic realist mode, unreliable narrators, and grotesque and bizarre experiences.

5.2. Alternating Narratives: the First-Person Interruptions of Older Praxis

Like Carter, Weldon also plays with the existing genres and narrative styles, and this has resulted in her novels being pronounced as inhabiting an intersection of feminism with postmodernism. Blymiller, for example, claims that alongside women writers such as Carter, Drabble, Lessing and Winterson, Weldon was considered “a lively feminist writer who spoke the previously unspeakable about authentic female experience in language that transformed the novel genre” (94-95). Critics such as Barreca, Kenyon, Walker, Krouse and Dowling further praise Weldon’s use of language, satire and humour in bringing forward feminist implications. Drawing attention to Weldon’s multivoiced narration, Faulks acknowledges that “[a]n ironic authorial voice appears in the majority of the novels, with different effects” (6). This dissertation has found that such an intrusive narrator constitutes a decisive narrative strategy in *Praxis*, as well. Correspondingly, the following pages explore the interplay and juxtaposition of two narrative voices: a third-person narrator relating Praxis’ life from childhood to old age and an older Praxis appearing as a first-person narrator relating her own experiences.

It is often argued that characters with flaws are characteristic of Weldon’s novels where female protagonists after a series of mistakes such as submissively adopting the idealized images of womanhood created by patriarchy realize the source of their oppression and become rebels (Faulks 4-5; Ellis 354). Likewise, in *Praxis* characterization and plot construction are reinforced by narrative intrusions to disclose the illusions of patriarchy and how women also contribute to maintenance of these illusions. Women described by the third-person narrator are oppressed and lack agency since they idealize essentialist definitions of womanhood; further they are often unaware of their oppression and thus blind to alternative opportunities existing for themselves. Praxis, Irma, and Colleen, for example, leave their personal aspirations to meet the expectations of marriage and motherhood imposed by their male partners. Their ignorance and self-sacrifice are not harshly criticized by the third-person narrator who just relates their events. In

this context, the intrusions of the older Praxis as an authoritarian narrator are of great significance to the novel, because they function as a commentary on such actions. This can be seen in the following extract, where, quickly going over her experiences and informing the reader about events which have not yet happened (such as Praxis' murdering Mary's baby), the first-person narrator problematizes conventional arguments about marriage and motherhood that centre on nature—that is, essentialism:

It is nature, they say, that makes us get married. Nature, they say, that makes us crave to have babies. You must breast-feed, they say. It's natural. Best for baby. Eat raw carrots, yeast tablets, sea salt, honey and so on. Natural. Eschew white sugar, chemical salt, artificial sweetness, preservatives. Unnatural.

It's nature that makes us love our children, clean our houses, gives us a thrill of pleasure when we please the home-coming male.

Who is this Nature?

God?

Or our disposition, as laid down by evolutionary forces, in order to best procreate the species?

...

What I am saying is, I am useless. I do not mind dying. I have given up. I, little Praxis Duveen, bastard, adulteress, whore, committer of incest, murderess, what else? Hand me your labels. I'll wear them for you.

But as for the rest of you, sisters, when anyone says to you, this, that or the other is natural, then fight. Nature does not know best; for the birds, for the bees, for the cows; for men, perhaps. But your interests and Nature's do not coincide.

Nature our Friend is an argument used, quite understandably, by men. (132-33)

Praxis' narratorial intrusion here uncovers the sex-based oppressions which the other women in this novel do not question at all. It thus highlights how such systems of dominance and subordination are constructed and maintained in society and how they have been internalized by women through history. Head observes that in Weldon's novels such as *Praxis* using both a first- and a third-person narrator becomes a technique that displays "the discrepancy between a woman's sense of self, and the world's perception of her" (99). This is, he says, a "kind of feminist technique-as-discovery that elicits the reader's sympathy for the individual's motivation whilst slowly invalidating the external, hostile view" (99).

Likewise, *Praxis* unravels the working of the labels and categories attributed to women that were created to rationalize and justify man's oppression, and she absolves Praxis's mistakes such as her abandoning her children, and infanticide.

In this context, while the third-person narrator detaches herself from Praxis and neutrally tells her story as a naive and inexperienced young girl who is in a constant change, the first-person narrator provides the details and personal accounts that reveal the political nature and paramount influences of these personal experiences. In this sense, even rather short passages are descriptive, which Krouse conveys as follows:

a few lines about contraception indicate not only the experience of numerous individual characters but also reveal the helplessness and hopefulness of a whole generation of women, social attitudes, sketch life in London in the 1950's, treat a subject often ignored, and provide humor.
(6)

Through the juxtaposition of these two narrators, the women characters' mistaken behaviour is foregrounded; the non-judgemental narrative forms a contrast to those of a critical narrator whose position in such a context generates a satirical commentary that reveals the patriarchal illusion which traps women in so-called natural roles. *Praxis* thus portrays the frequently-mentioned concern of the 1970s that, as long as these women are unaware of their oppression and keep silent, it is impossible to have a feminist revolution (Greer 1970; Figs 1970). This is very directly addressed, with the narrator: "WHY DOES IT TAKE SO LONG? Why do we stay so stubbornly blind to our own condition, when our eyes are not only open, but frequently wet with grief and bewilderment?" That is, as she says, it is women's "passivity" that "betrays us" (205). The narrator makes it explicit that unless women stop trying to meet men's expectations and sacrificing their lives to make men happy, they will not be emancipated. She also very directly and briefly summarizes how women's treatment of each other in some cases is also influential in women's oppression:

We betray each other. We manipulate, through sex: we fight each other for possession of the male—snap, catch, swallow, gone! Where's the next? We prefer the company of men to women. We will quite deliberately make our sisters jealous and wretched. We will have other women's children. And all in the pursuit of our self-esteem, and so as not to end up old and alone. (206)

As seen thus far, most of the time, these intrusions are didactic and function to lay bare what is not revealed by the third-person narrator whose statements do not comment on women's actions but just describe them. In this novel, clichés about women's nature and essentialist definitions are frequently problematized and subverted through multiple perspectives. That is to say, Weldon's aim is "didactic and libratory [*sic.*]: through both humor and revulsion, and through what happens to Praxis, Weldon asks readers to reflect on women's roles outside the novel construct" (Blymiller 116). The powerlessness and oppression of women are assertively and repetitively mentioned in these interruptions. As Barreca also explains, "Weldon humorously but unrelentingly exposes the myths that have helped keep women in their place" ("It's the End of the World" 175). Here, it is important to note that first-person narrator speaks as a woman who was once oppressed and yet unknowing of the cause of this oppression. Later, turning into a devoted feminist, she relates her own reflections with an angry voice; as Praxis acknowledges, "[a]nger was better than misery" (226). She tries to express her disillusionment with the movement itself also: "My erstwhile sisters, my former friends: I did what you wanted, and look at me now!" (15). She feels frustrated since she has been forgotten by her feminist friends. While the third-person narrator is relating Praxis' murdering Mary's baby she is detached and does not pass judgement on her. In contrast, Praxis as the teller of her own story is angry and frustrated, and this frustration is aimed not only towards patriarchy but also at the Women's Movement itself. The narrative thus resists taking sides with any ideology that dictates rigid roles for women. As Reisman also argues: "Challenging entrenched beliefs and making readers uncomfortable enough to think critically about their positions, Weldon is deliberately provocative, and . . . this provocation is a narrative and political

strategy for Weldon” (664). The following comments of Dowling are relevant here, as well. She explores *Praxis*’ position in a group of novels in which “the traditional realist discourse” is replaced by “experiments in narrative disorganization, permitting a view of woman as perpetually itinerant and incorrigibly ‘other’” (84). For Dowling, such works are what Catherine Belsey defines as “interrogative” in that they distract “the unity of the reader by discouraging identification with a unified subject of enunciation” (75). Actually, for Weldon herself, art “is invention and distillation mixed: it is fundamentally subversive” (Haffenden, “Fay Weldon” 305). Likewise, neither the narrative dynamics nor the protagonist is stable in this novel which is itself thematically and formally subversive. As illustrated in the novel, Praxis continuously changes herself; she becomes a mother to someone else’s daughter, prostitutes herself and becomes a suburban housewife; then she abandons her own children, sleeps with her friend’s husband, becomes a working mother, joins the women’s liberation movement and becomes a devoted feminist. She does not create permanent bonds with any of these roles; actually, shifts in her identity are correlated with different names she is called such as Praxis, Patricia, Pattie or Pat. As Blymiller also argues: “Appropriately, Weldon uses a picaresque, or episodic, structure to tell this story, but the protagonist does not remain static as in traditional picaresque. Instead, she changes so many times that the reader wonders whether the character is the same person” (116).

Furthermore, these changes in Praxis’ life are narrated with almost no change of tone through the third-person narrator. Even oppressive and abusive experiences Praxis and other women have been exposed to are presented in a tone that makes them appear to be normal or everyday experiences; for instance, when sacrificing her life to satisfy her boyfriend’s expectations neither Praxis nor the narrator questions her actions. Serious events (incest, baby killing, etc.) are conveyed in the same tone as is used in reporting submissive acts as a wife and a mother. All of these events are frequently interrupted by the first-person narrator to point out their oppressive structure and how things could be otherwise. The

first-person narrator thus undermines any sense of reliable objectivity and fixity of experiences and the language relating them:

HOW MUCH IS FICTION, and how much is true? There can be no objective truth about our memories, so perhaps it is idle to even attempt the distinction. We are the sum of our pasts, it is true: we are altogether composed of memories: but a memory is a chancy thing, experience experienced, filtered coarse or fine according to the mood of the day, the pattern of the times, the company we happened to be keeping: the way we shrink from certain events or open our arms to embrace them. (76)

Accordingly, Weldon supports her argument that men use nature to maintain their privileged status in society. Language is shown to be the medium through which this power is legitimized: “That was in the days when men were prepared to generalize about women, and women would not argue, but would simper and be flattered by the attention paid” (195). Praxis, who is described as silently and passively adapting herself to the roles assigned to her by patriarchy, expresses herself as a narrator in an assertive tone to lay bare the influences of these enforced roles. Through shattering the authority of language, what is nature and reality is also shattered, which is reflected through the adoption of changing narrative voices. Even the authorial voice of the first-person narrator is problematized; in her first interruption in the novel, the first-person narrator reveals her identity: “I, Praxis Duveen, being old and scarcely in my right mind, now bequeath you my memories. They may help you: they certainly do nothing to sustain me, let alone assist my bones to clamber out of the bath” (15). Here, the identity of the narrator is important; since she is the one to whom other women characters in the novel are in some ways related. Therefore, her comments are not only about her personal choices but about some common experience shared by all these women. Yet she does not claim to represent womankind but some other kind of communal experience which is diversely lived by other women. Remarking on her old age, bad health and memory, and a possible madness which could be hereditary, Praxis undermines her own narration, as well. She wrote her own story whose “manuscript is carefully sorted and safely between plastic folders” (250), yet she does not claim to tell the whole truth since she despises her own

experience, saying that: “I have thrown away my life, and gained it. The wall which surrounded me is quite broken down. I can touch, feel, see my fellow human beings” (251). Thus, she absolves herself from her previous experiences and does not have more to say. As Barreca also argues, “Weldon’s moral framework is based on the concept of situational morality, validating the multiplicity of experience against a drive for a unified vision” (“It’s the End of the World” 181). The very same idea is reflected through the narrator’s following statement: “if everything is inexplicable, anything might happen” (21). In this sense, although she interrupts the narrative with a didactic purpose, she does not claim to be a source of advice to women or to represent a panoptic female experience; she emphasizes that this is her own manuscript. That is, Weldon “allows the complexity of human motives to stand rather than making final neat judgements about her characters” (Krouse 19). As Praxis writes her own story, she reconstructs her experience as a woman, this time asserting her own voice in contrast to that of a Praxis who was a voiceless woman accepting the roles she had been cast in by her society.

5.3. “What if Literature:” *The Female Man* as a Science Fiction Text

In the 1970s, especially in America, feminist science fiction evolved as a remarkable subgenre of stories which infused feminist perspectives with the conventions of the previously male-dominated science fiction genre. Joanna Russ, along with other women writers such as Ursula K. Le Guin and Marge Piercy, took an active role in this appropriation of science fiction to voice concerns centring on feminism. Russ related her growing interest in science fiction in the following lines:

When I became aware [in college] of my “wrong” experience, I chose fantasy. Convinced that I had no real experience of life, since my own obviously wasn’t part of Great Literature, I decided consciously that I’d write of things as fantasy, that is, science fiction. (*How to Suppress Women’s Writing* 127)

Science fiction thus enables Russ and other women writers to express women's experiences which were elsewhere represented from male perspectives or not given enough attention. In "The Image of Women in Science Fiction" (1972), Russ defines science fiction as "*What If* literature:"

All sorts of definitions have been proposed by people in the field, but they all contain both The What If and The Serious Explanation; that is science fiction shows things not as they characteristically or habitually are but as they might be, and for this "might be" the author must offer a rational, serious, consistent explanation, one that does not (in Samuel Delany's phrase) offend against what is known to be known. (79)

She also argues that like other genres, much of twentieth-century science fiction also relates power to masculinity and reproduces images of women as powerless stereotypes (84). Thus, she concludes, while "[t]here are plenty of images of women in science fiction, [t]here are hardly any women" (91). Therefore, she consciously experiments with the genre to speak out against oppressive mechanisms of patriarchy. In this frame, Russ' novels are metatextual as they demonstrate "a body of criticism of the science fiction field" (Mendlesohn viii). To enumerate, Russ explains that science fiction should be "the perfect literary mode in which to explore (and explode) our assumptions about "innate" values and "natural" social arrangements" ("The Image of Women in Science Fiction" 80). It should interrogate "our ideas about Human Nature, Which Never Changes" and to this purpose it should speculate "about differences between men and women, about family structure, about sex, . . . about gender roles" (80). This is the background against which one may explain how and why *The Female Man* both adopts and surpasses the conventions of science fiction; it does this in order to expose how things could be otherwise.

To begin with, *The Female Man* challenges the boundaries of the traditional novel form through disrupting the novelistic plot, setting and epistemology itself, experiments which were not welcomed in 1970s America. Wood, for instance, thought that the novel was "flawed" since she saw it as "short on plot, confusing in its shifts of point-of-view, [and] occasionally heavy in the

social theory” (13). Another critic, Lester del Rey refused to label it a novel and claimed that it seemed “neither controversial nor important, but merely rather pitiful;” he preferred to call it a “truly schizophrenic book” which promoted hatred towards mankind (168). These criticisms are actually responses to Russ’ conscious attempts to challenge rigid phallogentric narrative structures and discourses; she even goes so far as to make the narrator of *The Female Man* predict these kinds of criticisms against the form and content of the novel:

Shrill . . . vituperative . . . [. . .] maunderings of antiquated feminism . . . [. . .] needs a good lay . . . this shapeless book . . . [. . .] twisted, neurotic . . . [. . .] no characterization, no plot . . . [. . .] hermetically sealed . . . women’s limited experience . . . another of the screaming sisterhood . . . [. . .] a woman’s book . . . [. . .] feminine lack of objectivity . . . [. . .] the tired tricks of the anti-novelists . . . [. . .] the usual boring obligatory references to Lesbianism . . . [. . .] trivial topics like housework and the predictable screams of . . . those who cuddled up to ball-breaker Kate will . . . [. . .] the inability to accept the female role which . . . the predictable fury at anatomy is displaced to . . . [. . .] sharp and funny but without real weight or anything beyond a topical . . . just plain bad . . . we “dear ladies,” whom Russ would do away with, unfortunately just don’t *feel* . . . ephemeral trash, missiles of the sex war . . . a female lack of experience which. . . . (140-41)

This passage is an excellent example of Hogeland’s claim that in texts aiming to raise a feminist consciousness, “[t]he authorial voice interrupts the narrative to present an ironic pseudo-critique of the novel, a criticism that encapsulates and parodies of men’s criticism of women’s writing, men’s criticism of women themselves” (*Feminism and Its Fictions* 45). With the frequent use of ellipses, the narrator reveals her awareness of the shapelessness of the book and the inappropriateness of her arguments for the time in which the narrative is set. For Russ then, feminist writing as well as feminist concerns constitutes itself outside the normative ways of representation.

Russ further argues that since literature is reflective of male culture, most of the traditional plots of Western literature are created for male protagonists, and include women only in terms of their relations with men (“What can a Heroine Do?”). Such women protagonists are actually “depictions of the social roles

women are supposed to play and often do play, but they are the public roles and not the private women” (5). Therefore, “these very familiar plots,” do not work for women since they merely retell old myths about women (4). In her attempt to find new ways to write about women, Russ suggests that a female writer can choose a “lyricism” formed “*around an unspoken thematic or emotional center*” and dismiss “chronology” and “causation” (12). Therefore, she suggests that science fiction can give the writer more opportunity to imagine new spaces to scoff at old myths written on women—as she does in *The Female Man*. Here, the traditional plot line evolving linearly and following a chain of cause-effect relations is replaced by a loose structure where the track of events is blurred, and where the creation of alternative realms of time and space contribute greatly to this disruption of a conventional plotline. According to Russ, “the abrupt changes of scale (either spatial or temporal)” are indispensable aspects of science fiction (“Towards an Aesthetic of Science Fiction” n. pag.). Accordingly, in this novel, the narrative has quick time, place and voice shifts between the four worlds that are themselves settings for different time-periods.

Actually, before the narrator introduces the utopian Whileaway, she contemplates the concept of time and the possibilities of a different world:

there must be an infinite number of possible universes (such is the fecundity of God) for there is no reason to imagine Nature as prejudiced in favor of human action. Every displacement of every molecule, every change in orbit of every electron, every quantum of light that strikes here and not there—each of these must somewhere have its alternative. It’s possible, too, that there is no such thing as one clear line or strand of probability (*The Female Man* 6-7)

In this respect, deployment of parallel universes becomes a powerful narrative strategy that in highlighting the idea that there is no single truth and thus everything can be changed. Therefore, use of parallel universes is important since it all tolerates time travel “without offences against causality” and let writers “play dress-up, and still claim they are not writing fantasy” (Jones n. pag.). Likewise, the narrator in *The Female Man* claims that time travel does not create a

“paradox” since “the Past one visits is never one’s own Past but always somebody else’s; or rather, one’s visit to the Past instantly creates another Present” (7). Postmodernist understandings of time, truth and self thus imbue the novel; with each new decision a new reality occurs. That being so, the narrator’s contemplation of time problematizes the linearity of experience which is not fixed and static while still being represented as such in realist traditions. Alternatives are thus always possible, and, as she suggests, Whileaway could be another “name for the Earth ten centuries from now” even though it has a different past and present (7). In this frame, Janet’s appearance in Joanna’s world is shocking for Joanna’s milieu because it shatters people’s understanding of reality. When she explains that she is coming from “another time,” the narrator adds in parentheses that “[w]e had rejected *probability/continuum* as unintelligible” (22). Parallel universes with different spatial and temporal dimensions acknowledge the probability of alternative realms where women’s supposedly natural oppression can be reconsidered; four women from four different worlds represent a minimum of four to the power of four possibilities for women’s experiences in an essentialist malestream culture.

Nevertheless, these alternative realities are not directly given to the reader; instead, they complicate the reading process. As critics such as Lefanu and Cortiel have already discussed the act of reading and authoring is of great significance in Russ’ works. According to Cortiel, for instance, her “intense engagement with authoring and active reading” is the thing that differentiates Russ from conventional science fiction genre; as she says, “Russ does not write for quick consumption. Subtle hints will disclose whole new layers of (albeit shifting) meaning” (39). Accordingly, in this novel, which universe characters travel to is not easily detected since the novel has abrupt changes of localities due to time travel. This is actually an influential textual strategy through which experiences of four Js are juxtaposed. Characters live between worlds, they observe and witness each other’s lives without the acknowledgement of each other. Joanna and Jael, for example, observe and narrate the first sexual encounter between Janet and

Laura as they enter Janet's body and thoughts; how and when this happens are not explained though. Furthermore, time travel is made more complicated through quick shifts in narrative voices and the existence of a fictional author. Actually, characters take over the narrative in different parts of the novel and sometimes it becomes impossible to distinguish who is speaking. Although they sometimes introduce themselves using "I," most of the time narrative proceeds without any direct hints about noticeable changes of voice. Even before Jael appears as a character, her ghostly existence in the narrative anticipates her future appearance:

I'm not Jeannine. I'm not Janet. I'm not Joanna.

I don't do this often (say I, the ghoul) but it's great elevator technique, holding your forefinger to the back of somebody's neck while passing the fourth floor, knowing he'll never find out that you're not all there.

(Sorry, But watch out.)

You'll meet me later. (19)

Among these characters, Joanna is the one who functions as a fictional author who makes significant interruptions in the narrative. Joanna makes her presence known both as an author and a character saying that "don't think I know any of this by hearsay; I'm the spirit of the author and know all things" (166). Also, she does not hesitate to address the reader and comment on her work: "Live merrily, little daughter-book, even if I can't and we can't; recite yourself to all who listen; stay hopeful and wise" (213). Joanna's metafictional comments "ironically" disrupt "literary conventions of narrative omniscience, particularly those of science fiction or genre fiction" (Cortiel 42). Furthermore, the existence of Joanna as a fictional author with monologues, comments, and direct addresses to the reader has a didactic purpose. Russ herself will bring attention to the type of didacticism that science fiction may contribute, in "Towards an Aesthetic of Science Fiction" reminding readers that "didactic fiction does not always tell people something new; often it tells them what they already know, and re-telling becomes a reverent ritual, very gratifying to all concerned" (n. pag.). Likewise, in *The Female Man*, she brings together realities of both her own society and other worlds to retell the

working of patriarchy and thus to make the female reader become aware of her own positioning in a sexist society.

Joanna's existence as a fictional author is then strongly related to consciousness-raising; she describes her world as "our Earth" and she is re-telling, or re-presenting it to the reader in such a way as to underscore the existence of alternative possibilities; "if you follow me," she says, the vision experienced in *Whileaway* is possible (7). The three other worlds in this novel are accordingly constructed in order to provide the readers with a better understanding of the world outside the novel. The following monologue of Joanna, for example, is a satirical attempt to unveil and accentuate the double-standard and oppression women are exposed to in her contemporary world:

"Do you enjoy playing with other people's children—for ten minutes? Good! This reveals that you have Maternal Instinct and you will be forever wretched if you do not instantly have a baby of your own. . . .

"Are you lonely? Good! This shows that you have Feminine Incompleteness; get married and do all your husband's personal services, buck him up when he's low, teach him about sex (if he wants you to), praise his technique (if he doesn't), have a family if he wants a family. . . .

"Do you like men's bodies? Good! This is beginning to be almost as good as getting married. This means that you have True Womanliness, which is fine unless you want to do it with him on the bottom and you on the top (151-52)

Lack of the closing quotation marks may also indicate that the sentences used here are only some examples of many similar situations. In this sense, Joanna the narrator brings the personal to the public stage and illustrates that what she experiences is not her problem only but something that many other women experience and suffer from, too. Russ renders that "the protagonists of science fiction are always collective, never individual persons (although individuals often appear as exemplary or representative figures" ("Towards an Aesthetic of Science Fiction" n. pag.). In parallel with this idea, in *The Female Man*, voices of four Js sometimes become so identical that the speaking "I" cannot be determined as in the following example: "I said goodbye and went off with Laura, I, Janet; I also watched them go, I Joanna; moreover I went off to show Jael the city, I Jeannine,

I Jael, I myself” (212). Although they are portrayed as different people, these women in fact represent a collective notion of womanhood. That is, they are to stand for everywoman since they are united through sex and gender, as the text makes explicit in the final pages: “Jeannine is Everywoman. I, though I am a bit quirky, I too am Everywoman. . . . Jael is Everywoman. . . . I Jeannine, I Jael, I myself” (212). The idea of being a woman and the availability of possible changes for a woman, which is depicted here with four women travelling among four worlds, displays the urge towards a change in consciousness and behaviour through a collaboration of women. Through time-travel and characters’ moving beyond their worlds, “the message spreads through space and time, and the literary utopias operate on the level of form as well as content, opening out beyond their bounds rather than reinforcing a limited, traditional insularity” (Johns 188). In this respect, it is not *Whileaway* that makes the novel utopian, but the vision it provides to women who can change the world by resisting patriarchal ideology and its norms. Thus, the novel encourages “a movement *toward* utopia in a journey of changes we ourselves create day by day in the process of living” (Bammer 100).

In such a context, the problematization of language appears as a strong tool for Russ; phallogentric language as well as previously mentioned topics such as narrative and society is not stable in the novel. Science fiction again provides the writer with a space in which she emphasizes how language can gain new meanings in new socio-historical and political settings. As Bammer states, “to question of change on the level of language” is a common approach used in feminist utopias (99). Similarly, in *The Female Man*, words gain new meanings in different universes. For instance, Janet puts an emphasis on that “Evason is not “son” but “daughter.” This is *your* translation” (18). “Son” does not indicate a sexed identity in *Whileaway*, it simply means “child.” Likewise, when given a fashion magazine, she reveals that “I know the language but not the context” (64). This is because, unlike in *Whileaway*, the logic and language in this patriarchal world are binary and hierarchical, and they categorize sex according to male or

female, dismissing anything that does not belong to these categories, and presenting woman as what man is not. Whileaway is a sexless and genderless society; therefore, it is free of the episteme of patriarchal language which favours the male over the female. In contrast, in Joanna's world, to be a woman is to be deprived of privilege and power men are granted:

I knew beyond the shadow of a hope that to be female is to be mirror and honeypot, servant and judge, the terrible Rhadamanthus for whom he must perform but whose judgment is not human and whose services are at anyone's command, the vagina dentata and the stuffed teddy-bear he gets if he passes the test. This is until you're forty-five, ladies, after which you vanish into thin air . . . leaving behind only a disgusting grossness and a subtle poison that automatically infects every man under twenty-one. (134)

She believes that nothing can put her "above this or below this or beyond it or outside of it" and she is bound to live within the title of "forever feminine" (134). Within several subsequent pages, Joanna is stuck in the limitations of language where things are categorized either as male or female. Like the society she lives in, language is gendered and hierarchical where the male is superior to the female. In her frenzy, Joanna reflects that:

You will notice that even my diction is becoming feminine, thus revealing my true nature; I am not saying "Damn" any more, or "Blast"; I am putting in lots of qualifiers like "rather," I am writing in these breathless little feminine tags, she threw herself down on the bed, I have no structure (she thought), my thoughts seep out shapelessly like menstrual fluid, it is all very female and deep and full of essences, it is very primitive and full of "and's," it is called "run-on sentences." (137)

For Joanna, the remedy is to be the female man since to "resolve contrarities" is only possible by uniting them (138). Although this new becoming definitely requires a new consciousness that is freed from sexist language, she can only define herself as a "female man;" language as reflective of society is binary and limited. As Myk also argues, Joanna's defining herself as a female man highlights "the linguistic impossibility to identify as a woman without subscribing to the term's inherent essentialism" (94). That is why the lesbian Laura "[s]ays over and over to herself Non Sum, Non Sum, which means either *I don't exist* or *I'm not*

that, according to how you feel it” (59). Jael also states that “It is I, who you will not admit exists. . . . I, I, I. Repeat it like magic. That is not me. I am not that. . . . NON SUM, NON SUM, NON SUM!” (195). In her dystopian world, alternative names for man and woman are “Haves” and “Have-nots;” and women are fighting against this underprivileged otherness. Laura is a lesbian in 1969 America and Jael is a cyborg living in a dystopia; that is, they cannot be defined by the language of heterosexual logic. That is why Jael is “The Woman Who Has No Brand Name” (157); what deviates from the norm cannot be expressed in speech that is constructed upon and reaffirms man as its centre. Joanna later becomes a lesbian and accepts that this means social as well as linguistic marginalization. These women resist both the roles assigned to them and the binary language of patriarchy, because both collaborate in the oppression of women.

As a matter of fact, both adopting and playing with the science fiction genre, Russ calls for women to develop an awareness of the allegedly naturalized roles that are assigned to them in their own societies, and to see the adages reinforcing these roles, in order to change the world they live in. As also highlighted by Mendlesohn: “Rupture, or the refusal to go along with the storying of the world, is the core of Russ’s work” (vii). Contrasting familiar experiences with unfamiliar ones, the text eschews phallogocentric thinking, language and society and it imagines what would happen if these things were different. Science fiction, then, provides Russ with a space to elaborate on ‘what if’s and new visions and thus she aims to create stories not “about men *qua* Man and women *qua* Woman” (“What Can a Heroine Do?” 18). She re-envision discourses that are free of misogynist cultural assumptions, understanding that if women are to write they should abandon the old myths that are inscribed in the forms of conventional language.

5.4. “This Novel Changes Lives:” *The Women’s Room* and the Confessional Mode

In her 2006 introduction to *The Women’s Room*, French reproaches the ubiquitous trivialization of women’s work, which is the very reason that it is also

omitted or not given enough attention in literature. In this sense, *The Women's Room*, she says, is one of the few novels which "treat women's work seriously" (xiii). The novel then assiduously makes women central and relates the unjust acculturation of gender roles in which women are always dominated by men. Thus, it breaks "the major taboo in art," by showing that "the male is not, by nature or desert, superior to the female" (xv). Challenging this "core" governed by men is, for French, the very work of feminism. This is the reason why *The Women's Room* was marketed as a life-changing novel³⁵; after all, a change in perspective and consciousness was the purpose of the novel. In her afterword to the novel, Susan Faludi mentions the influence of the novel on its female readers through an anecdote:

I well recall returning home from college my freshman year to the flushed and fuming presence of my mother, who had just finished *The Women's Room*. She felt, she said at the time, as if French had taken up residence in our living room and transcribed every detail into a novel. Then she realized that the similarities were no coincidence, because what had happened to the wife across the street and the one next door to her. They had all been had, or let themselves be had, and she was filled with the sort of anger that is peculiarly bracing, the kind of fury that fuels small and big changes. (521)

Aspiring to create such important changes in women's lives³⁶, *The Women's Room* was written in the confessional mode which became quite popular in the mid-70s. The intense appeal of this sub-genre was also observed in this novel as well as Erica Jong's *Fear of Flying* and Lisa Alther's *Kinflicks*, all of which concentrated on women characters and became bestsellers. Talking about these "women-centred" novels' alliance with feminism, Coward notes that they shared "the practice of consciousness-raising – the reconstruction of personal histories

³⁵ The book was published in 1977 with a cover announcing that "this book will change lives" (Wilson 47) and in 1978, Fay Weldon's statement that "the kind of book that changes lives" (Hanne 37).

³⁶ In an interview by Ayşe Düzkan, Duygu Asena mentioned that she liked Marilyn French's style and Düzkan also related that she and her friends became feminists through *The Women's Room* (n. pag.). Thus, French was successful in her aim to create feminist consciousness among women and changing their lives.

within a group of women” (222). Accordingly, *The Women’s Room* develops through the growing consciousness of Mira Ward who gradually gains feminist awareness and thus redeems the roles of a submissive housewife and self-sacrificing mother confined in her domestic space. Actually, consciousness-raising and the confessional mode provide both the theme and the general structure of the novel.

A retrospective first-person narration is generally the defining characteristic of confessional modes which thus gain an autobiographical nature (Coward 222; Radstone, *Sexual Politics of Time* 19; Loudermilk 39). In parallel to this idea, the narrator in *The Woman’s Room* is the protagonist who is narrating her own story, even though a third-person narrative voice is used at first, and it is only at the end of the novel that the narrator and the central protagonist are transparently revealed to be the same person. The novel opens with a narrator who is distanced from Mira:

Mira was hiding in the ladies’ room. She called it that, even though someone had scratched out the word ladies’ in the sign on the door, and written women’s underneath. She called it that out of thirty-years of habit, and until she saw the cross-out on the door, had never thought about it. (1)

Rather than a first-person narrator, the text—at this time of the narrative—is imbued with the omniscience of a third-person narrator who is observing Mira from the outside. As a 38 year-old female student at Harvard, Mira feels alienated from herself and her environment, and she is depressed:

She arrived in the corridor a little late. No one was left in the hallway, lingering, loitering outside the classroom doors. The blank eyes, the empty faces, the young bodies that ten minutes earlier had paced its length, were gone. It was these that, passing her without seeing her without looking at her, had driven her into hiding. For they had made her feel invisible. And when all you have is a visible surface, invisibility is death. Some deaths take forever, she found herself repeating as she walked into the classroom. (3-4)

It is after these lines that the narrator starts using “I” and decreases her distance from Mira. Self-consciously referring to the reader, she directly reveals her stance towards Mira:

Perhaps you find Mira a little ridiculous. I do myself. But I also have some sympathy for her, more than you, probably. You think she was vain and shallow. I suppose those are words could have been applied to her, but they are not the first one that spring to my mind. I think she was ridiculous for hiding in the toilet, but I like her better for that than for the meanness of her mouth, which she herself perceived, and tried to cover with lipstick. Her meanness was of the tut-tut variety; she slammed genteel doors in her head, closing out charity. But I also feel a little sorry for her, at least I did then. Not anymore. (4)

The narrator’s sympathy towards Mira becomes noticeable as she reveals how her feelings towards her changed. Remarkably, even at this early stage we are repeatedly made aware of the present tense of the narrating voice and of the fact that this narrator was also familiar with and judging Mira in the past time of this remembered scene. Immediately, she shifts the narrative to herself saying that she sees no difference between herself and Mira: “There’s Mira with all her closed doors, and here’s me with all my open ones, and we’re both miserable” (4). Soon after this passage, she says that she now often walks on the beach and thinks about Mira and the other women she met at Harvard in 1968, again positioning herself in the past with these characters. Acknowledging her acquaintance with Mira, she contrasts herself to Mira who, she said, lived in a fairy-tale and “had no notion of reality” and she admits that she now feels “a little superior” to her (4, 5). Unlike Mira who is insecure and inexperienced, the narrator situates herself as more mature, self-confident and superior to the protagonist. From these opening pages onwards, the focalization shifts between the first-person narrator and Mira; yet she does not reveal her identity and speaks as if she is one of the women who once knew Mira. Within these initial pages, the narrator reveals that when she remembers Mira, her “belly twists with a little contempt;” nevertheless, she confesses that she is very much like her and other women and asks the reader whether she finds her familiar, too. She claims that: “You know her: she’s that blonded made-up matron, a little tipsy with her second manhattan, playing bridge

at the country club” (8). The narrator also refers to Martha whom Mira will later meet at the suburban neighbourhood; at this moment, she still refers to herself as a distinct person from Mira. That is, the narrator thus familiarizes herself with other women who may have similar problems and notes what kinds of things they all shared. Relating herself to Mira and other women who were dominated and silenced by men, the narrator argues that “we observed and believed what people said about us” (9). Frequent uses of “us” and “we” are noted from then on and the narrator hints that she is a person whom Mira knew both in the suburbs and at Harvard:

I hear Martha’s³⁷ voice often as I walk along the beach. And others’ too – Lily, Val, Kyla³⁸. I sometimes think I’ve swallowed every woman I knew. My head is full of voices. They blend with the wind and the sea as I walk the beach, as if they were disembodied forces of nature, a tornado whirling around me. I feel as if I were a medium and a whole host of departed spirits has descended on me clamoring to be let out. (9)

Seeing herself as a “medium” between the past and the present, she decides to “write it all down” (9). Yet she still conceals herself saying that she is not a writer but a teacher of grammar and composition. What she will do is to “put down bits and pieces, fragments of time, fragments of lives” (9). Thus, she says she will write about Mira and answer “How did she manage to get herself, at the age of thirty-eight, to hide in that toilet?” (10). Consequently, the narrator begins to present fragments of the lives of Mira and the women she knows, through which she reinforces the commonality of women’s problems and explores how they can gain awareness of these problems.

As the novel presents Mira’s increasing awareness of gender roles and oppressive mechanisms of patriarchy, the narrator’s resemblance to the protagonist discloses itself and the distance between the two decreases. Yet it is only at the end of the novel that they are revealed to be the same person:

³⁷ Mira’s friends from the suburbs

³⁸ Mira knew Lily from the suburbs, and she met Val and Kayla at the university.

She [Mira] finished her dissertation, and when it was accepted, took her divorce money and went to Europe and travelled around alone for eight months, breathing it in, sucking it up. Then she came back and tried to get a job, but the market had dried up and nobody wanted to hire a woman over forty even if she had a Harvard degree, and so she ended up at this little community college near the coast of Maine, and she walks the beach every day, and drinks brandy every night, and wonders if she's going mad. (514-15)

That is, it is revealed that it is Mira herself who has narrated selected fragments of her life aiming to illustrate the changes she experienced because the walking the beach and events mentioned in it are referred to as the narrator's life before. Joannou describes Mira's being both a narrator commenting on events and a character in these events as a "double function" which enables Mira to "meditate on suburban life, motherhood, loneliness, men, the situation of women in the university, and the situation of women in general" (119). As a matter of fact, the novel goes through the shifting commentaries on Mira the protagonist who is going through life-long consciousness-raising experiences, and the narrator Mira for whom the consciousness-raising she experienced is (similarly) her life, and her retrospection over that life. The text thus accentuates the process of an ordinary woman gaining feminist awareness and makes this change visible through juxtaposing two different perspectives (first-person and third-person) on the same self.

Therefore, throughout the narrative, the omniscient narrator makes self-referential comments; she includes her commentary on women's experience which is made through focalising on Mira as she used to be, on herself as she now is and on the reader. In this respect, the various women's groups that Mira meets in different phases of her life also illustrate the process of consciousness-raising, through which different instances of women's oppression—that are mentioned in the previous chapters—are foregrounded. In this respect, while Mira the protagonist becomes the embodiment of women's private problems that are normally concealed and treated as non-existent, Mira the narrator gives explanatory notes related to the political implications of these problems.

Highlighting the significance of knowledge in women's confessional writings, Joannou enunciates that:

The teleology of the confessional narrative is politically inspired and is analogous to the structure and organisation of the consciousness group. A woman writer, like a woman participating in a consciousness-raising group, selects from the possible events in her life those which appear to illustrate her philosophy and to make her into the woman whom she now is. (107)

Accordingly, while writing her life, Mira selects passages from her childhood, school years, dates, a near-rape experience, marriage, motherhood, interactions with other suburban housewives, divorce, going back to university, and meeting a group of women with feminist awareness. For example, in the opening pages of the novel, Mira is back at university as divorced woman and a mother to two children. The narrator first reflects Mira's thinking that "the ladies' room for which she had to climb three flights of old stairways] was in an inconvenient location" and was added later to the building (3). She was actually told that the school was originally designed for men and there were even places where women were not allowed to go. While Mira at that time only wondered why this was the case, she did not think on it any further. That is why the narrator, who is now a more aware woman, feels pity for her: she indirectly reports Mira's crushed acceptance with the question "[w]omen were so unimportant anyway, why would anyone bother to keep them out?" (3). Apart from the "ladies" or "women's" room's inconvenient location, Mira has experienced many instances where women are deprived of the privileges of men. Later, when talking about her suburban life, Mira notes many women whose lives are continually oppressed by their husbands. The narrator discloses that "the relation between men and women was economic," adding "[e]conomic and political" (132).

While the narrator can directly voice the problem, the women characters she includes in her narration cannot do this. Referring to one of these women, she says that "Bliss had no fancy words for any of this: she would have had difficulty in expressing it abstractly" (132). Bliss, like Mira the protagonist in those earlier

days, is in fact, an example used to reveal an ordinary American woman who is not aware of the real cause of her desperation and who unquestioningly acknowledges the authority of men:

What she said to herself was, you have to play it, and you have to play it their way. She recognized the master class, she recognized its expectations from a woman. She played the game by the rules that had been laid down long before she was born, laid down, as far as she could tell, in ancient times. There was only one thing Bliss wanted: to win. (132)

The narrator argues that men always win mainly because women are economically dependent on men and thus the only way out is marriage and care for children. That is, education, professional life, marriage, laws, and all economic and political institutions collaborate in the creation of a privileged male culture. In such a context, the confessional mode makes “private knowledge a public truth for women readers” (Blaha 44). Talking about consciousness-raising and confessional writing’s aim to underline women’s economic, public and private oppression, Waugh highlights that “[c]onfession was part of an attempt to forge, for the very first time, the political solidarity of a woman-centered culture organized to subvert the patriarchal structures (political and economic) of the liberal state” (200). Through the confessional mode, French shows how Mira is able to acknowledge the political nature of her oppression only after she meets Harvard women who are educated and more independent than her former friends.

Among these women, Val’s role is particularly important for the consciousness-raising of the novel. While Mira and other women claim that they are “disgustingly apolitical,” Val insists on being political: “you’re political. You aren’t very active, I confess. But one reason you’re not more active is that the political concerns around here [Harvard] are too mild, too detached from your own radicalism to interest you” (442). Despite other women’s reactions to her argument, Val claims that they are all political since they are threatening the male culture and its institutions:

We're all rebels against the pompous, self-aggrandizing, hollow white male world and its delusions of legitimacy; we all sympathize with illegitimates of every sort because we all feel illegitimate ourselves; we're all antiwar, anti-establishment, anticapitalism (443)

At this moment, these women become aware of the political nature of their very personal problems, although up until then they had not known that they were challenging patriarchy and its institutions. They disrupt men's "superiority," "potency" and accordingly "legitimacy" (444). "Subversion is telling the truth," says Val, to reassure these women whose consciousness she changes forever. This is also related to what Felski explains as the distinctiveness of the confession mode:

Whereas the rise of the novel occurs contemporaneously with the emergence of the ideology of romantic love and the idealization of marriage, which provides the basis for most of its narratives, the feminist confession proceeds from the recognition of the redundancy of this model and its oppressive implications for women. (116)

Thus, along with second-wave feminist goals of the 1970s, the text works to disturb the conventional, traditional, idealized and accepted representations of heterosexual relationships and denounces them as domineering and oppressive.

All in all, the female protagonist's gaining knowledge related to herself and her world is at the heart of the sort of feminist bildungsroman that constitutes a consciousness-raising confessional novel; as she acquires more insight regarding her autonomy, she becomes dissociated from patriarchal society. Interrogating one's sexed identity is then the initial step towards making political sense of one's problems. Maroula Joannou, Anna Wilson and Rosalind Coward particularly remark upon the connection between women's confessional writing and developing an understanding of sexual matters. As Coward highlights, such texts aim to find answers to the question of "what is female sexual pleasure?" (225). In the novel we can see aspects of this in the protagonist's decreasing alienation from her body which is associated with her developing acquaintance with herself and which is thus taken as an indication of liberation. Akin to this discussion, in

the beginning of the novel Mira distracts her gaze from a drawing of female genitalia beneath which “Cunt is Beautiful” has been scratched (2); she is timid and a stranger to her body. Wondering whether or not the picture is female genitalia or not, the narrator reveals that “[s]he wasn’t sure because she had never seen her own, that being part of the anatomy that did not present itself directly to the vision” (2). Later, her masochistic masturbatory fantasies (which are directed, as the narrator highlights, through various cultural channels such as literature, films and psychology, and her early sexual encounters) make Mira resent sex and decide that she must be frigid. It is only later in her relationship with Ben that Mira—now divorced and independent- enjoys the pleasure of sex. Reaching sexual satisfaction with Ben, Mira is able to see that she is not frigid; the problem is not hers but her ex-husband’s insensitive and self-centred sexual activities. Through this relationship, Mira feels that she is discovering “a new dimension” (342). Through the four pages in which their love-making is narrated, Mira actually confesses how she felt in her earlier sexual life: debased, humiliated, submissive and ignored, whereas she now feels like “a goddess” (345). Her early experiences through which she gained knowledge of sexuality and her being oppressed due to sexual difference are correlated; younger Mira without an awareness of this dimension of sexual politics and the later, narrating, Mira (who does have this awareness) are juxtaposed by the narrative form of the confessional to underline her consciousness-raising. As Coward notes, the experiences the female protagonist goes through bring “knowledge and possibly wisdom” (224). Likewise, in *The Women’s Room*, Mira looks over her life and relates it with a raised consciousness.

All things considered, it can be suggested that consciousness-raising not only functions as a narrative tool but also constitutes the aim of the novel. The confessional form, its realistic language and the plausible events that are related are useful ways for the writer to demonstrate the changes the protagonist experiences throughout the novel. Although the novel was criticized for its realistic mode and anti-male stance, it was also welcomed by critics such as

Hogeland, Wilson and Joannou who praised French for being able to convey a feminist consciousness to the reader. Defending the novel's use of realism and its criticism of men, Hogeland argued that for non-feminist reviewers:

feminist realist fiction can be credible only insofar as it critiques women and not men—only insofar as it upholds a prefeminist understanding of women's oppression as personal and not political or participates in antifeminist victim blaming. If, as the reviewers argue, men can't be that bad, then the problems of women's inequality must rest solely with women. These reviews thus work to contain feminism's critique of the political relations between men and women by delegitimizing any negative depiction of men. ("Men Can't Be That Bad" 289-90)

That is, the novel aspires to reflect that some men are really that bad and they cause women serious problems, which justifies its negative descriptions of men. Furthermore, the novel's women-centeredness in terms of character and audience it addresses to aiming to create consciousness-raising inevitably makes the novel included in feminist discussion. As Lauret sums up:

Because it made many of the ideas of American Second Wave feminism accessible in popular form to a wide audience of uninitiated readers, *The Women's Room*, in spite of its later feminist detractors who dismissed it as a political and literary misconception, was and still remains one of the founding texts of the modern Women's Movement. (48).

In this respect, *The Women's Room* aligns with the American feminist literary criticism that promotes the idea that literature should present role-models that will encourage women to be more independent and accomplishing self-realization, and thus escape the oppression of men (Register 238). That is, this novel creates a site of resistance to the status quo, and for the very same reason many critics praise and promote the novel against negative appraisals that attempt to disqualify the novel as a literary work. As Wilson also argues, the novel's contribution to feminist criticism is attributed to "its redemption of the mainstream as arena of struggle" (69).

5.5. Narration of Aysel's Story within National History

Ağaoğlu is given credit for her social realism, integrating history with fiction and giving prominence to women's perspectives within this historical frame. As Parla observes, Ağaoğlu is a writer who effectively told the personal history of a Republican woman in a plain and impressive way (186). *Lying Down to Die* is particularly noted for its fictional presentation of the period between 1968 and 1987 which shows parallels to the historical period of the time in Turkey. Throughout the novel, Aysel's story is intermingled with the history of a nation which experiences deep conflicts in its transition from old traditions deeply affiliated with Ottoman values to a secular modern state ideology. The novel delves into the national history through the eyes of a female protagonist whose subjectivity presents and generates a contestation of the dominant discourses regulating national policies and personal identities.

In Western literary studies, one twentieth-century concern of the historical novel is "the challenge to the metropolitan centre," as a result of which the question "Whose history?" has been frequently asked (Sage, Greer and Showalter 320). Official and national histories are taken by Western feminism as representing the nations' male culture and superiority. In *Lying Down to Die*, such an interrogation of history—though not specifically towards patriarchy—is detected as well; the novel's exploration of the female protagonist's consciousness inevitably invokes a questioning of the historical context. In this frame, the incorporation of official history with objective documentation into the narrative is an important textual strategy in *Lying Down to Die*. Throughout the novel, historical events that actually happened in Turkey at the times indicated by the novel are employed within the fictional frame to explore the socio-political context of the narrative. Samples of documentary and of the characters' reporting of important events construct the novel's historical verisimilitude. To illustrate, the novel inserts excerpts from *Ulus*—a newspaper published in Turkey between 1935 and 1953. The fictional character Mr. Dündar, as a patriotic teacher devoted to national ideology, is observed dutifully reading *Ulus*, and chapters relating his

interest in *Ulus* provide the reader with historical knowledge related to the novel's setting. As Ervin also explores, presenting characters reading newspapers, as in this example, contributes to the historicity of the novel (37). The newspaper extracts are directly inserted into the novel with dates, specific numbers and the names of institutions that really existed in Turkey at that time. Hatay's proclamation of independence, the national wrestling team's beating Finland, and Atatürk's deteriorating health and death in 1938 are all conveyed through excerpts from the newspaper. References to prominent names in Turkish history, such as Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, İsmet İnönü, and Nazım Hikmet, further supplement the documentary nature of the novel. Moreover, Erdal İnönü also appears in the novel as a fictional character whose gentle and polite personality inspires his high school fellows. With such realistic characters and events, the novel's urge to highlight the experience of the Turkish nation and individuals is evident.

As far as Ağaoğlu's social-realism is considered, the novel's interest is not limited to an apparently transparent conveying of things as they were. Rather, it opens a new space for an interrogation and a problematization of the past. The novel could be used to support Hutcheon's argument that literature's increasing interest in historicism can be attributed to postmodernism's impetus to think critically, even though this novel is neither chronologically nor in terms of its contents, postmodernist. Hutcheon claims that postmodern historical writings emphasize that "both history and fiction are discourses, human constructs, signifying systems, and both derive their major claim to truth from that identity" (93). In this respect *Lying Down to Die* shares postmodernism's re-figuration of historical truth. Individual frustrations, alienations, the individual experience of conflicts resulting from ideological beliefs, and personal anxieties which are not exposed in historical reports are enclosed in this narrative. A scene that has been identified as crucial to other aspects of this novel's feminism also provides an excellent illustration of this: locked in her hotel room, Aysel contemplates the past and its tools of reconstruction:

Oh my teacher Dündar! Oh my newspapers, high schools, district governors, fathers, brothers. My sometimes German-looking, sometimes American-looking soldiers, children-faced community centres, my “*A Turk is worth the world*”s, my anthems, statues, German aunts and “*Tout va tres bien Madame la Marquise*” songs! A little bit of everything that floating in the air. And the war is over, dear merry friend! Let us sing pleasantly the day of the great victory... Is this what it means to love your country? To love your country, your people more than yourself? (249-50; ellipsis in orig.)

As well as her personal stories, national ideologies reinforced by anthems and sayings are of significance in Aysel’s identity. Saying “To love is to know. The best I learned, though, is to utter “sayings”” (250), Aysel expresses that how she and other people she has knew were brought up with patriotic feelings which in fact shaped their whole lives. It is important to realize that here the past is processed through Aysel’s memories and that clashes between her memories and the records of official history constitute the depiction of her consciousness.

While the official history highlights the Republican ideal, patriotism, nationalism and the unity of the nation through anthems, folk songs and plays, the nation is actually divided between different ideologies. Aysel’s first-person narration is also interrupted by a third-person narrator who relates her past, and each of these interpolated chapters is given a title indicating its theme. The very first interruption is, for instance, the chapter called “The Lights of the Ideal Shone” which is a line from the Anthem of Republic. The chapter depicts Aysel’s primary school preparing for a school-leaving or “graduation” ceremony (8). While some of the lyrics of the anthem are given in the narrative (since students are trying to sing it), some lines are omitted. The anthem as a whole celebrates the Turkish nation’s recovery following the independence war and the Republic’s defence of the nation’s freedom. Other songs reported as occurring in this ceremony are the national anthem, the tenth year anthem, epics, folk songs and “Atatürk’s Address to the Turkish Youth.” They all praise Turkishness and thus function as apparatuses to reinforce the dominant political ideology. Nonetheless, the chapter actually presents an ironic picture of Turkey which is fragmented into different economic, religious and political stances. The nation presented in the

Anthem of the Republic is free of anxiety, poverty and oppression whereas the society presented in Aysel's memory constitutes a challenge to this representation. For example, Hasip, the son of a *hafiz*, cries at night because he has been given the role of a dung beetle dressed in black, because his father did not let him participate in the ceremony's Western dances (they are against his religious beliefs). Aysel also feels distressed and almost an outcast because of not being able to afford appropriate costumes and because of her father's revulsion towards the very idea of her dancing with boys in the ceremony. The nation is seen to be not united but various and even alienated from each other, as indirectly depicted through the image of the "children's disparate shoes that are yellow, black, plastic, stout leather, buskins, *kundura*³⁹; old-new" (14). Unsurprisingly, a sense of chaos imbues the ceremony: the curtain does not open and close appropriately, the school building was formerly an old Armenian house, the children's costumes are not ready or ill-fitting, the lyrics are forgotten, and the local people are restless and ill-at-ease because men and women will be sitting in the same hall. This is in contrast to the idea of order, success, unity and prosperity that the ceremony tries to convey, in accordance with the orders of the state. The chapter closes with the narrator's following remarks:

Thank God! Many things were accomplished. Many things were not accomplished either but Mr Dündar, and the students of course, believed wholeheartedly that the nation had come out of every battle smelling of roses: Anyhow, whatever, we are Turks, the Republic, our bosoms a bronze shield... . (24; ellipsis in orig.)

The narrator's ironic closure to the school ceremony also depicts the naivety of these characters who are different from each other and not treated equally yet believe in the sense of freedom and harmony that the national ideology, however faultily represented, promotes. In this regard, manipulating one of the famous slogans of the time as "the hand that remade history is making you," the novel interrogates the ideology of the early Republican era. As Ağaoğlu explained in one of her interviews, such a questioning of the social context and such

³⁹ Ottoman-Turkish for word "rough-cut shoe"

disillusions are indispensable in the creating of a rupture in the consciousness of individuals, a rupture which eventually enables one to enlighten herself (“Adalet Ağaoğlu ile Söyleşi” n. pag.). Lying down to die is, then, Aysel’s moment of enlightening rupture.

Actually, it is this rupture that portrays the individual stories within national context and social reality. As seen in the case of Aysel’s friends, people are involved in diverse and opposing ideologies. Semiha is put into a compulsory marriage at an early age, Ali befriends leftist intellectuals, Hasip pursues religious studies, Ertürk attends military school, and Aysel attends university and becomes a leftist intellectual. As Gündüz relates, Turkish historical novels centre around events that create tension and anxiety and are based on these writers’ political stances (279-382). Ağaoğlu herself grew up in the era depicted in her novel, an era regulated by the state’s modernization project and which was associated with left-wing politics; “nationalism based on slogans,” and the “wrong practices of 12 March and 12 September” (Çelik 118) are thus frequently observed in her writings’ engagement with the Westernisation project and the modernization process. Likewise, in *Lying Down to Die*, while these anxieties create a sense of veracity, the narrator’s relating of the characters’ emotional responses and how each of them was influenced by them brings her individual characters to life. They—Aysel and her contemporaries—all become alienated and disillusioned by their own beliefs and marginalized by other ideologies, which is illustrated through diary entries and letters. For instance, one of the letters between Aysel and her friend Semiha exposes how Semiha felt when her parents did not allow her to pursue education after primary school: “While reading [your letter], believe me I cried sobbingly, too. Both for the death of our Great Leader and for my own destiny. . . . For me, life is over” (56). While the official history relates the death of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the history of an ordinary female is voiced through Aysel’s consciousness. Whereas her urban female contemporaries are at school, Semiha is secluded at home not to attract the attention of men and she is deprived of every liberal right, and thus resents her hopelessness. Lyotard’s following

remarks where he argues that dominant historical knowledge is the totalizing discourse of some particular people which exiles and silences other people is relevant for this part of the study:

the meaning of history (i.e. all phrases pertinent to the historico-political field) does not only show itself in the great deeds and misdeeds of the agents or actors who become famous in history, but also in the feeling of the obscure and distant spectators who see and hear them and who, in the sound and fury of the *res gestae*, distinguish between what is just and what is not. (171)

The memory of the female protagonist, in this novel, then opens up a space for these “obscure and distant spectators,” and the novel from time to time correlates individual stories with news of the nation. The following lines show how personal histories and official news are intermingled:

When Aydın went to café Tilla in Büyükkada for the first time, America had not published the *White Book* yet. (111)

When Aysel read the fine arts page of *Ulus*, the price of onions and potatoes were 24 *kuruş*⁴⁰ per kilo and leeks were 16 *kuruş* per kilo. (184)

Sugar entered our country. And before that . . . roosevelt boots and montgomery jackets.
That was how the feet of the oldest son of Rıza from Çayeli who worked in the İstanbul Glass Factory met strong boots” (247)

As Yaltır argues, “subjective insignificant pasts” are given here “in an objective manner within a documented form of history writing,” which generates “a striking effect of conflict” (80). Thus, the legitimacy of documentary, journalism and history is disrupted, which also enables the representation of the ordinary, underrepresented, or voiceless people in history.

In this respect, Aysel’s story is of significance since it creates resistance to official history which claims that women were given all the rights and were therefore equal to men; what Aysel experiences in her milieu shows the opposite.

⁴⁰ “A Turkish monetary unit worth one hundredth of a lira” (“Kuruş”).

As mentioned in previous chapters, referring to the ideal Republican woman, Sirman notes that she [the new woman] “was to take her place in the public life of the republic as an educated social woman” (5), and differences between men and women were meant to have been eliminated because for them dedication to nation was of utmost importance. In similar ways, the novel also refers to state’s encouraging women’s liberation through political regulations such as encouraging female student’s right of education. Nevertheless, the novel shows how even in Republican circles women’s liberation faced negative reactions. For instance, Aysel’s father, who was formerly an admirer of the New Republic and felt a deep attachment to İsmet İnönü- the prime minister of the time, cannot feel sympathy towards its encouraging women’s education:

I can’t say the Republic did any harm to me. If I had to speak badly of it, I couldn’t. I was a gendarme under İnönü . . . But there is also one thing with the Republic that does not suit me. I can’t exactly express it, allowing my daughter to go to school, to the city regardless of its remoteness and closeness, to let my daughter out there in city and to let people talk behind by back (49)

Likewise, he does not allow Aysel to take part in the school ceremony but Aysel participates in it anyway, without his consent. He does not allow her to pursue her education after primary school, but she attempts suicide in response, and so he allows her to go, and later she puts on ugly clothes to defer the suitors her father is presenting to her. Namely, she is deprived of the very liberal rights which the state claimed to be granting. For her, liberation and contributing to the nation’s modernization are not easy tasks; though given rights, she cannot enact them. Her father’s traditional views of a woman’s place make her wear a headscarf during the summer holidays and force her to comply with his religious views, while her brother’s ethnocentric nationalist views prevent her from listening Western music. The moment Aysel feels proud to be a woman also becomes the moment she feels that her femaleness is disdained. When her brother leaves home to escape the police (who are searching for him because of his engagement in right-wing nationalist politics), her mother is restless. Claiming that she can find her brother to comfort her mother, Aysel momentarily feels like a mature woman with self-

confidence. Yet she is disillusioned when her mother then refers to him as “her only son, her only hope” (206). This makes Aysel feel “an irremediable resentment” and think herself as “an object forgotten in odd corners of the house” (206). She promises herself to show everyone that she is a person; she pursues higher education and becomes an academic. Nevertheless, she continues to be alienated from other women due to her political and intellectual identity, and to be alienated from men because she represses her sexuality in the effort to love them in a sisterly manner, and eventually she is also alienated from her body and self which she has ignored and even suppressed in order to achieve the image of a modern intellectual woman.

As Birlik explores, Aysel’s “is a life lived at the expense of her ‘self’ as she devoted herself to the incorrectly understood ideals suppressing her sexuality and bodily self” (514). In this respect, the novel’s use of modernist techniques such as interior monologues and stream of consciousness are important tools in depicting the subjectivity of the female protagonist. During 07.22 and 08.49, Aysel locks herself in the hotel room to die and, in the opening pages Aysel as the narrator presents the setting; she is at that time conscious of her action, the place and the time. Yet soon her remembered revelations begin to dominate the narrative; the point of view is altered between first-person and third-person and it is interrupted by newspaper extracts, diary entries and letters. Unlike the historical consciousness that is stabilized by documents, Aysel’s subjectivity is unstable and unreliable, and this is emphasized by her references to sleepiness, by her forgetting simple things such as what she wrote a minute ago, and by her dreams and memories of older dreams. This is reminiscent of Foucault’s comment that:

History becomes “effective” to the degree that it introduces discontinuity into our very being—as it divides our emotions, dramatizes our instincts, multiplies our body and sets it against itself. “Effective” history deprives the self of the reassuring stability of life and nature, and it will not permit itself to be transported by a voiceless obstinacy toward a millennial ending. It will uproot its traditional foundations and relentlessly disrupt its pretended continuity. This is because knowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting. (154)

In the same way, Aysel's memories uproot the traditional historical knowledge as they create a new narrative space. As time passes, Aysel loses her sense of the present time whereas the past is well-remembered and fixed: "The room is getting hot. The sun must have been born behind the curtains. I wonder what time it is. Eight, nine, and maybe ten..." (25; ellipsis in orig.). She has difficulty in articulating her thoughts in words: "I do not know what I think. I am confused. Different words are tiring my brain. They are not forming a sentence by coming up side by side" (102). The sense of linear time is disrupted by her dreams and streams of consciousness as a result of which her sense of self is also disturbed: "For a moment, I do not know who and where I am, what to do" (297). The hotel room becomes the space in which she reconsiders her nation, her self and her sexuality which she suppressed; she gets naked which can be interpreted as her attempt to get in touch with her own personal history. The novel's ruptures in history, narrative and consciousness are thus correlated through the subjectivity of the female protagonist.

5.6. Different Contexts, Different Narratives: Use of Style and Language in *A Strange Woman*

Pointing to Erbil's experimental and innovative narrative techniques, Halman remarks that her "most daring innovations had been in the domain of language" (152). Likewise, in *A Strange Woman*, Erbil is noted for the experimental aesthetics with which she depicts her female protagonist's rebellion against the hegemonic ideologies of her time, within which she feels alienated from men and women. Nermin's frustrations with her marginalization eventually disclose a criticism of society, which is depicted through Erbil's special uses of form and language. What is noted in much in this novel is the change of narrative dynamics within the novel which is comprised of four parts named "The Girl," "The Father," "The Mother," and "The Woman." The experiments in narrative techniques and form consolidate Erbil's description as an avant-garde writer.

In "The Girl," which can be named as a gynocentric narrative since it focuses on women's writing about female experience, Nermin appears as a young

woman who is interested in literature; she writes poems, and befriends the male artists and intellectuals of her time at several famous pubs. For Nermin poetry provides a way out and a mode in which to express her oppression in and alienation from her culture. Her detachment from the traditional values attributed to the female sex marginalizes her in both men's and women's circles. She is considered as inferior and secondary to the male and different from other women; that is, she is a strange woman for her milieu mainly because she tries to exist beyond her conventional role as merely a sexual and reproductive figure. Nonetheless, because literary production is also considered to be male-centred in her world, she cannot find a place there, either. This is actually very similar to discussions of Western gynocriticism of the 1970s. Talking about Western feminism's increasing enthusiasm in the female literary tradition of the 1970s, Eagleton argues that in criticism of aestheticism "the male-dominated tradition" is considered as "the reference point for women's writing" ("Finding a Female Tradition: Introduction" 5). Likewise, in one instance, Nermin gets excited at the opportunity that an important male poet may read her poems, but at the same time, she is infused with an anxiety of recognition, wondering whether he will appreciate her poems. Their meeting turns to disappointment since he debases Nermin and her poems. Reading her first poem, he asks: "Are you a worker?" (17). Wondering whether he is ridiculing her or not, she answers the question and then reads two of her poems that focus on women and their problems. Referring to the line "Our daughters are kept from going into a war with tears in their eyes. Will that always be so?" from "The Sonnet of Fallen Women," he scornfully asks "Do you want to go to war?" (17). Nermin tries to tell him that the war in her poem actually indicates that "the women who are deprived of all kinds of fights will turn into a kind of army constituted of fallen women;" she thinks "It is weird he did not understand it" (17). Lastly, she reads "The Blood" which she wrote about the panic she felt on experiencing her first menstruation, and the male poet cannot understand what the blood refers to in her poem. She reveals that she wrote the poem in the abstract form so that her reference to menstrual blood would not be understood and she misleads him by saying she symbolizing the fear of war

(18). Her struggling with poetic form in order to at once express and hide the female experience once more acknowledges the woman's discomfort with and suppression of the female bodily experience, and an awareness that it is to be hidden from the dominant discourse. Eventually, she receives the following remark: "Good job, your poems are good but you are too young to be a poetess" (18). Nermin reveals that:

He was being kind but he didn't like them at all. God knows how he mocked me. "Write without stopping, write and put it somewhere, never quit writing." I am now disappointed by poems which are my only refuge, only relief. There is no longer meaning in life, I can die. (18)

The male poet also says that he will bring some books for her, but Nermin is once more disappointed since she has already read all of these books. This part, then, shares the 1970's Western feminism's interest in how women's literary productions were either suppressed or debased within a male discourse.

Drawing attention to how male critics and writers debase women's writing, Gilbert and Gubar argue that, due to the anxiety of women writers and their struggle to transcend male aesthetic strategies, women's writing is "palimpsestic" in the sense that "surface designs conceal or obscure deeper, less accessible and less socially acceptable levels of meaning" (73). That is, women writers both confirm to and subvert "patriarchal literary standards." In this respect, Erbil's chapter that uses the language of the male challenges the hegemonic patriarchal ideology. "The Girl" is in the form a diary titled "year book 50-51" and is narrated by Nermin within the rules of grammar and syntax. Nevertheless, the diary form maintains a space for Nermin where she can voice her dissent from the traditional values attributed to women and restrictions of her society. While in real life she struggles with oppression from her parents, societal norms in general and the men whom she meets and respects, in writing she is free to articulate her marginalization without any restrictions. Her reminiscences present a view of society that if a female does not conform to a stereotype, she cannot be accepted as normal. Living in a strictly segregated society, women's

space and not crossing the boundaries of this space are consequential. Thus, she is frequently called a “slut,” “bitch” or “prostitute” by both men and women and she feels isolated from everyone. She is living in a world where the male is the dominant category in social life, history and the literary world and in such a context women exist only as secondary to men. As Tankut also noted:

While she is concretely experiencing the oppression of being a woman, she cannot internalize being a woman. It is quite normal: Knowledge is monopolised by men; anything learnt is through them, and without any questioning. (“Neden Tuhaf Bir Kadın” 69-70)

Nevertheless, Nermin employs male language and knowledge to subvert them. Her diary reveals the taboos, hypocrisy and double-standard of her society. For instance, while culture strictly demands a woman’s virginity till marriage, sexual abuse, rape and incest are not admitted or voiced and all mention of them is suppressed, as in the incestuous relationship between Meral and Bedri. Meral cannot reveal her brother’s raping her mainly because she thinks she will be blamed and treated as a damaged woman because she has lost her virginity, however unwillingly. Nermin’s narrative, in frequently referring to her hymen as something trivial and to be got rid of, subverts the ethics of male-formed culture.

As the novel proceeds to the next chapter—“The Father”—which is narrated by Nermin’s father who is about to die, the narrative dynamics conspicuously change as the formal uses of language break down. Interior monologues of the father dominate the chapter; flash-backs, free associations and stream of consciousness take over the language as Mr Hasan, a retired old man who worked on ships for 50 years, reflects over his past life and family relations. The linearity and reality of the first chapter no longer exists; in addition, local idioms, regional accents and particularly the dialect of the Black sea region are inserted into the text. While in the previous chapter the questioning subject was Nermin, here it is the father. Mr Hasan reveals his resentment towards Nermin’s socialism and atheism which he refers to as “uneasiness” and “being loveless” because she cannot compromise with other people (122). In fact, Mr Hasan is

proud of himself as he is a defender of Atatürk and the Republic, and he experienced the aftermath of the War of Independence and the following economic and political struggles of the nation. Nevertheless, he is criticized and belittled by Nermin who is now engaged in socialist politics. Inserting his voice into the narrative, Erbil creates a multi-layered text where no voice is dominant and no discourse is elevated over the other.

Erbil's highly praised innovative technique clearly reveals itself when documents and information related to Mustafa Suphi, one of the founders of the Communist Party of Turkey, are inserted into Mr Hasan's narration. Actually, Mustafa Suphi firstly appears as a fictional character whom Mr Hasan knew about through his brother, who was haunted by Suphi's death. Mr Hasan, especially in a fourteen-page long interior monologue under the title of "Mustafa Suphi," reflects his own obsession with this death. "Who killed Suphi?" is frequently asked throughout the chapter which does not provide any explanation. Somewhere in his monologues, the names of the communists who were massacred with Suphi are mentioned, without explanations. This section is followed by a part called "Documents, information or comments about Mustafa Suphi" which gives official information about Mustafa Suphi.⁴¹ In an interview, Erbil said that in her first edition of the novel she left the discussion of Mustafa Suphi open-ended, since in real life it was never concluded:

I examined the case of Mustafa Suphi in 1971 and left the discussion open-ended; I added any new findings in every new edition. This is because while at first this bloody event was taken as Mustafa Kemal's doing, the information I gradually obtained changed my mind; it traced back to the unionists. I still don't think that the case of Mustafa Suphi is completely clarified. I am not satisfied with this. Therefore, this novel, in Sûha Oğuzertem's words, is "an unfinished novel. ("Leyla Erbil Röportajı" n. pag.)

⁴¹ In her 2001 preface to the novel, Erbil writes that she made changes in later editions of the novel to add her new findings about Mustafa Suphi (9). She also states the probability of new changes to bring the case of Mustafa Suphi to the surface. This is because she says, "my previous generations who are supposed to know more than me about the case have not dealt with the case at all" (9). This, I believe, enhances Erbil's innovative style which she uses mainly to interrogate historical authorities.

In such an open-ended chapter, there is no authorial voice, and this allows for the equally authoritative (or non-authoritative) representation of different discourses. Characters in this narrative are all outcasts as they belong to certain groups that are generally suppressed by the dominant discourse, the father is a worker, Mustafa Suphi is a communist in exile, and Nermin is a woman member of the Labour Party. Mr Hasan reflects that:

I will tell you, whatever you do God's will be done; that is your Marx's and Engels' will be done. That is, they will cut off the head of a cock that crows before it is time; that is Suphi's!.. They belittle me, don't respect me, never did. (170; ellipsis in orig.)

Thus seen, all dominant ideologies are interrogated in this part and actually what is remarkable about this chapter is that it creates a critique of all political stances which seek to predominate over other views.

“The Mother” is narrated by Nermin with the use of “past time with –miş” —a tense in Turkish that is used to refer to an indefinite past or to indicate that the speaker is just reporting an account of events he/she has not witnessed but heard through somebody else; it is also popular in the narration of stories and tales. In this novel, the use of this tense creates a dreamy and surreal context in which Nermin narrates the *mevli*⁴² after Mr Hasan's death. As Nermin's mother throws the guests out, a sense of disorder invades the house; Nuriye verbally and physically attacks the guests whose noise increases the existing tension. While in the first chapter, it was Nuriye who was always conscious of codes of conduct, this time it is Nermin who warns her mother: “Mommy, for shame! Look at what you're doing” (198). Nuriye's response is significant since it is the first time she is shown to be acting against the society:

Leave me alone, let me spill out my feelings against this hungry, elite woman, the wife of this military attaché, I used to respect this man, I heard that he was calling us “Dirty Lazs,” saying that we changed the smell of the neighbourhood, that our house was too stinky to pass due to the smell of tallow (198)

⁴² Islamic memorial ceremony

She calls her relatives “hypocrites,” reproaching their past behaviour, and she gossips about their family life which she has underestimated until then. The neighbours leave, only the relatives are left; yet the chaos has not stopped; instead it is intensified and the narrative is broken. The dialect of the Black sea region makes itself more visible while irrelevant and unconnected speeches from various people are intermingled. While the guests chant religious verse, the piano starts playing anthems by itself; a surreal context then pervades the chapter. Guests break the portraits and paintings that hang on the wall. The mother brings in a bag full of various birds which start flying in all directions. Dances, shrieks, and nonsensical behaviours enhance the dream-like atmosphere of the scene:

Suddenly thousands of birds leap out of the bag: quails, pintails, dotterels, . . . skylarks fly. Mallards, . . . guinea fowl, grouse, pintails begin flying over our heads. Selâmi wildly repel hawks sleeping on Asım Ömer’s nests, dancing people begin circling, screaming and opening their arms and legs. “Lieder is the commander in-chief, Lieder is the commander in-chief.”⁴³ “May you get no benefit from it, may you get no benefit from it!” Haji Salih, Recep Temel Sofuoğulları, and Molla attack me. Meral, Captain Sabri, Hilmi Musa, and Civelek Ahmet protect me, my mother dives into the bag asking “Where is your dad, where’s your dad?” Not finding him, she falls to the ground on her knees, ashen-faced (203-04).

The use of language which is in harmony with the surreal, dream-like atmosphere of the house brings forth a space for a critique of social pressures and how they influence family life. A woman like Nuriye who hitherto always conformed to societal expectations now expresses her anger with this oppression. The resulting sense of freedom then breaks the order in her life which was well-controlled until then. The narrative form generates a surreal context that exposes reality in a different way.

“The Woman,” which is narrated in the third-person, relates the hours Nermin spends in a hotel room after being abandoned by her husband. This chapter delves into Nermin’s inner life, this time to reflect her questioning of her

⁴³ This is from “The Tenth Year Anthem;” only the beginning of the fifth line is inserted into the novel. The piano plays it repeatedly not finishing the song.

own self as an educated, leftist and more mature woman, which consequently interrogates her sexual and political identity. As an experienced member of the Labour Party, Nermin moved to a shantytown district to educate ordinary people and raise a Marxist class-consciousness there. Yet what she experiences there is only disappointment since she is a stranger to these people who are living in poverty and despair and who are aware of her relative superiority that is manifested in her piano, her well-equipped house and her education. Her dissociation from her body and marriage, and her disappointment with party politics, create a rupture in her sense of reality. Her scrutiny of her past life is interrupted by imaginary dialogues and hallucinatory sexual fantasies with famous leftist leaders. Erbil's experimental style evinces itself here very clearly in her manipulation of the titles of the first and fourth chapters. The first one is "The Girl" while this one is "The Woman." In Turkish, the differentiation between these two words is important since it indicates a change in virginal status with the use of "woman" being generally associated with sexual experience and thus with pejorative meanings (Paker 275; Durakbaşa, *Halide Edip* 15). The title of this chapter is therefore significant since Nermin is now a woman left by her husband, disappointed with sexual life and frustrated with society in general. Yet she identifies fully with her unconventional life and womanhood and her sexuality is realized only after Bedri leaves her and with her recognition of the inadequacy of party politics. While the girl in the beginning of the novel seeks to be asexual, the woman in this part of the novel becomes more aware of her sexuality. She negates her asexual leftist identity with her sexual fantasies about famous communist party leaders.

As seen thus far, in each part of the novel Erbil uses a distinct style and form which attracts attention to her experimentations with narrative dynamics. Each part opens up an interrogation of different stances that have been suppressed, marginalized or underrepresented. What characters keep hidden or do not articulate is acknowledged with a rupture in form and language. Monologues, free associations, reminiscences, dreams, surreal language and hallucinatory

expressions take over the conventions of writing to enunciate the constraints that characters experience in their milieu.

5.7. Results

A remarkable difference of the British novelists selected in this study is the fact that they do not favour a unified mimetic female experience; instead their manipulation of the formalities of novel writing creates a subversive space in which they explore subversive identities. Carter and Weldon problematize the category of woman as a unified and collective notion through transgressive characters and they challenge realistic representation through multiple, intrusive, ambiguous and unreliable narrators. In this respect, they share Kristeva's interest in "the instability of language, meaning and subjectivity" (Eagleton, "Locating the Subject: Introduction" 339). That is, although they share the feminist concerns of the 1970s that were made public in theoretical books such as Greer's *The Female Eunuch*⁴⁴, they problematize their essentialist perception of sex/gender system to promote politically correct feminist identities. They reject idealization of the female experience and feminist utopias privileging women; instead they are sceptical of all hegemonic ideologies including those of feminism itself. Waugh argues that in her fiction, Carter "deployed postmodern performativity and fantasy in the service of a realistic and broadly rational but never "correct" feminist politics" (195). This is also true for Weldon; both writers resist blindly identifying with ideologies, and therefore feminist politics as well as patriarchy are also problematized. The Mother's clan in *The Passion of the New Eve* portrays a satirical picture of radical feminists' aspirations to enact feminist utopias and *Praxis* criticizes the sisterhood's suppressing of individual choices for the sake of group collectivism. Although they share the concerns of the feminist movement, they do not privilege it since it can become mainstream and hegemonic in its own way, especially by marginalizing those who stay outside it. In this sense, the use

⁴⁴ Greer in *The Whole Woman* (1999) argues that postfeminism with its emphasis on the gender-performance had a negative influence on feminism's achieving political goals.

of multiple narrators in both of these novels functions as a commentary on existing ideologies and lays bare their predominating agendas.

Todd argues that British feminist criticism is distinct from the American one mainly because its compromise with Marxism's critique of ideology and psychoanalysis's rejection of, in Kaplan's words, "the possibility of authentic mimetic art" (966):

Even in the 1960s and 1970s British feminist criticism was influenced by French deconstruction and psychoanalysis that called into question literary constructs like the subject or the idea of the humanist self, constructs which American feminist criticism found entirely unproblematic." (Todd 142)

Likewise, British novels dismiss the representations of authentic female experience and resist speaking on behalf of all women. They share Mezei's linking of poststructuralist with feminist narratology to "shed light on the elusive or decentered subject" (10). Rather than coherent identities, ambiguous and ever-changing characters pervade these novels; Eve/lyn is a double-gendered person, Tristessa is a transvestite in the guise of a woman, and Praxis consciously performs various identities from that of a prostitute to that of a devoted feminist. The self is discredited and "woman" is not a stable category in these novels. Thus, they align with Michèle Barrett who argues that "an emphasis on women's experience, or the fact of female authorship, or indeed a concern with the female body, is not enough to make a work of art feminist" (230). Barrett expresses her discontent with feminism's considering women as "a dispensable category" although she acknowledges that "an emphasis on women . . . must at least be a *necessary* condition" (228). Although these novels centre on women, they also highlight that sex is only one of the constituents of social construction; therefore, the tendencies of patriarchy, capitalism, socialism, Marxism and feminism to monopolize individual experience are all under scrutiny.

The American fictions selected for this study, on the other hand, reinvigorate the feminist politics of the 1970s as they seek to inspire a collective

identity for women. As Rosenfelt states, “women writers in the United States have had positions of extraordinary influence in [the women’s liberation] movement, their works [are] often read, not always with happy results, as political statements, even as political directives” (268-69). In both *The Female Man* and *The Women’s Room*, the women characters’ encounters with and participation in the women’s movement and feminist consciousness are presented as indispensable steps in women’s liberation. Joanna’s meeting with other three Js and Mira’s acquaintance with Val and other women at the university mark a turning point in their lives. Thereupon, these novels, like many other second-wave feminist writers and publishers, considered that “literature was a political tool—it could be used to raise the consciousness of individual readers, to spread knowledge about feminist philosophies, even to incite social revolution” (Loudermilk 11). In this respect, these novels show strong parallels with the prescriptive and gynocritic tendencies of feminist literary criticism in the 1970s in America.

In her study of American feminist literary criticism, Register highlights that since it is traced back to the women’s liberation movement, it “values literature that is of some use to the movement” (236). Accordingly, she says, a feminist novel reveals at least one or some of the following items: it should “serve as a forum for women;” “help to achieve cultural androgyny;” “provide role-methods;” “promote sisterhood;” and “augment consciousness-raising” (236). Both of the novels studied above centre on authentic female experience and try to reflect it through the lens of women living in a world predominated by men. In this sense they reflect the argument that feminist criticism should erase the male prejudice in literature through encouraging fiction writing that reflects authentic female experience, a point which was also addressed by such critics as Millett, Morgan and Fetterley. Both *The Female Man* and *The Women’s Room* focus on women characters that were once oppressed and silenced yet gain courage to express themselves in a patriarchal culture. As Firestone argues: “It is only after we have integrated the dark side of the moon into our world view that we can begin to talk seriously of universal culture” (189). These novels highlight that, for

such integration, the existing social system should be changed since the present one only debases the female world. Furthermore, both novels promote the image of assertive, self-supporting, and independent women to create role-models for female readers; thus they again fit into Register's definition as they "instil a positive sense of feminine identity by portraying women who are 'self-actualizing, whose identities are not dependent on men'⁴⁵" (Register 238). Mira and Joanna reconsiders their lives as women who are expected to live as submissive, dependent, incompetent stereotypes; once they have the courage to step out of these imposed images they are enlightened with the possibility of alternatives.

The Female Man with science fiction, and *The Women's Room* with a confessional mode, adopt the viewpoints of omniscient narrators who explore women's place within the politics of relationships. Their narrators Joanna and Mira are also the characters in their novels, and they expose the sexist society's oppression of women through commenting on their personal experiences. While doing this, both writers call for urgent the interaction between their women characters; at least one character guides other women into feminist politics. This is why Russ creates the four Js whose collective action completes the puzzle to enact a change in an ordinary woman's life. Similarly, if she had not met Val, Mira would never have heard of feminist activism. Therefore the promotion of sisterhood is highly significant in these narratives, which again correspond to the feminist movement in America aiming to raise "a feeling of *sisterhood*, a new sense of community among women" to overcome "group self-hatred, the animosity that many women feel for others of their sex as a result of isolation, competition for male attention, and belief in female inferiority" (Register 238-39). That is, they seek to demonstrate women's oppression by juxtaposing private experience with larger political implications through a character that experiences a consciousness-raising that unravels the sources of their subordination; the female protagonist gains awareness of the need to collaborate with other women and to

⁴⁵ Register is quoting Martin p. 33.

participate in activism when necessary in order to be a liberated woman. Consequently, these novels function as the practice of consciousness-raising because they “interpellate their readers as feminist reader” (Hogeland, *Feminism and Its Fictions* 45). They also therefore fit Fetterley’s definition of feminist criticism as “a political act whose aim is not simply to interpret the world but to change it by changing the consciousness of those who read and their relation to what they read” (viii).

The noteworthy thing about the Turkish women writers studied in this dissertation is their concern with the use of socio-realism to depict women’s consciousness. It is also important to realize that in challenging patriarchy they rely on the dynamics of aesthetics rather than on feminist politics. Waugh argues that in the Western context “novels that predate the women’s liberation movement and that seem indifferent to feminist politics can be seen to engage with such issues” to resist “that intellectual form of ideological “bullying⁴⁶” (whether patriarchal or matriarchal) that favours the abstract (201). When *Lying Down to Die* and *A Strange Woman* were written, feminist politics were not popular in Turkey and women’s liberation in fact never took place, and both writers were suspicious of the term feminism. Again they share the strategy Waugh describes as “to interrogate a grand narrative and to reveal it as wanting *from the woman’s point of view*” (201). In this respect, both Ağaoğlu and Erbil’s novels scrutinize Kemalism, socialism and Islamic discourse and they examine women’s relations to these grand narratives. They observe women’s experience in a realist background where problems are situated in the historical, socio-political context. In these novels the Second World War, the cold war between capitalism and socialism, and the oppression and imprisonments brought with military coups, are to be taken as constituents of a political background against which not only women but also men are infused with a deep sense of psychological alienation (Narlı 42). That is, in the Turkish context (since the 1960s), fiction was an indispensable tool to reflect the intriguing and complex relationships between the

⁴⁶ Waugh takes this expression from Doris Lessing’s *The Golden Notebook* (1962).

individual, the socio-historical and the political. As Ecevit relates, “Turkish fiction usually follows a realist line; its main tendency has always been towards the social” (83).

What is innovative for Aġaoġlu and Erbil, in such a context, is that they re-envision the social reality through female protagonists. They lay bare the female knowledge that although both sexes are under the pressure of cultural norms, women are under more oppression since they are deprived of the very liberal rights they were granted yet not able to benefit from. Women’s writing becomes a space where the hypocrisy of societal norms and institutions are acknowledged; a repressed sexual identity manifests itself through a manipulation of narrative dynamics where stream of consciousness, free associations and dreams possess the formalities of language and narration. These Turkish novels are the forerunners of a gender-sensitive narrative focusing on a female protagonist, which increases its visibility later in the 1980s and their aftermath.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This dissertation attempted to explore local differences in feminisms comparatively studying British, American and Turkish feminist literary theories and practices of the 1970s—a decade when feminism not only manifested itself in different branches of theories shaping the understanding and studies of the feminisms of the following decades but also inspired an extensive recovery and study of women’s writing since then. It was a time when women’s interest in literature as readers, writers and critics flourished, eventually enabling emanation of an immense body of feminist scholarship. In this respect, frequent attribution to feminist theories in the 1970s as “universalizing” and “totalitarian” due to the oblivious position they take towards issues such as racism, queer studies and capitalism was reconsidered in this study in order to contemplate the local differences lying under this hegemonic tendency of the feminist strands of the decade. Although the feminism expressed in these three cultures shared many common points, there were considerable differences in terms of the way these concerns were dealt with and represented. Integration of the Turkish context in this comparative study also provided an analysis of its difference from the “Western” context where it was found that the timelines of the British and American feminist movements are very close and show remarkable parallels. In the 1970s, Anglo-American literary theories and novels had a palpable interest in analysing women’s experience, while in Turkey feminism was not a priority. In this context, my comparative study of feminist literary theory and practice in selected cultures is a multi-faceted one that includes information related to the following: a comparison of feminist theories from three cultures, a comparison of feminist theory and literary practice in each culture (how novels reconcile with

and diverge from feminist theories of their culture) and eventually a comparison of the feminist literary practices of the three cultures.

To begin with, delving into theoretical texts written in these three cultures, Chapter 2 reported what kind of common points they rendered; these included focussing on issues of the female body, sexual difference, marriage, the family unit, motherhood, women's writing, tools of representation (discussions of the female experience and female art) and alternatives to the male world. Despite this shared content which also guided the organization of my analytical chapters and the universalizing tendencies embedded in them, feminist theories were found not to present a unified treatment of these concerns. Nevertheless, local differences were not on the agenda of the Western feminism of the time because creating a population of politically active feminist women was seminal then. Regionally-based distinctions between feminisms can nevertheless be deduced. British feminism's openness to interaction with Marxism, psychoanalysis and French deconstructionist theories constitutes the main line which distinguishes it from American feminism's interest in socio-historical criticism. Henceforth in the British context, factors such as class and capitalism were, besides sex, focuses of attention whereas American feminism was dominated by radical feminist politics concentrating on sex roles, sexism and anti-patriarchalism. This difference makes itself more noticeable by the blatant way in which American feminism of that period ignored class, ethnic and racial differences in order to create a common consciousness of sexual difference among women. As for the Turkish context, obviously politicized and theorized feminist discussions were visible only later in the 1980s. Nevertheless, an overview of scholarly works—particularly those with socio-political content—and of novels by Ağaoğlu and Erbil, presents us with the traces of feminist debates in the 1970s in Turkey. As a matter of fact, concerns related to state feminism, women's relation to socialism and cultural norms that are intermingled with Islamic traditions are noticeable in this locality.

Another key argument of this study is that feminist theories of the 1970s were so diverse and they adopted such different standpoints that they were never

able to be properly described by only one definition. For example, as seen in the concept of motherhood, critics such as Rich celebrated it as indicative of female difference and sacredness whereas those following Firestone's arguments emphasised that women's maternal function is manipulated by patriarchy to trap them in domesticity. Analysis of the selected novels' engagement with feminist concerns of the time markedly lays bare the diversity of feminist issues of the time since each of these novels both interacts and disagrees with its local theory or theories. By way of illustration, the British novels align with works such as Greer's *The Female Eunuch* in challenging the ubiquitous oppression of women, as they both consolidate the idea that sex cannot be a source of inferiority and women should resist silence and defy patriarchy. Yet, as in the feminist directions influenced by Rowbotham and Mitchell, they do not take sex as the only base of women's oppression since they do not dismiss the influence of other factors like class and psyche. On the other hand, the American novels show strong parallels between those feminist theories of the time which pivoted on consciousness-raising, the political nature of personal experience, and which targeted patriarchy as the enemy. Actually, *The Female Man* directly writes that the book is a tribute of respect to feminists such as Millett and Firestone, and *The Women's Room* frequently uses popular feminist statements of the 1970s such as "the personal is political." Concerning the Turkish novels, it can be said that they are the precursors of feminist discussions that gain importance from the 1980s onwards. Also, their undermining of female solidarity indicates resemblances to British feminism expressed in the works of Rowbotham and Figs. Within this frame, feminist consciousness is mostly shaped around the conflicts resulting from three dominant ideologies; namely, Islamism, Kemalism and socialism. Besides, it is worth noting that these two novels are ahead of their times as they closely explore the female sexuality—a topic which is yet adequately articulated even in contemporary context. With these in mind, taking the multi-perspectival approach that results from comparing feminisms arising in three distinct cultures enabled the analyses to show not only what was treated by the novels but also what was not. That is, when the comparative analysis of 1970s feminist theories is extended

to the analyses of the selected novels, the readings of these novels' feminism gained by being informed by insights from an eclectic body of critical perspectives and discussions.

To briefly review the findings of this thesis, all six novels share similar concerns which were identified by the chapters analysing the literature that followed a comparative analysis of the 1970s theoretical debates about feminism in the three countries; and it was the results of the theoretical investigation that guided the organization of the analytical chapters. The first chapter to analyse the novels, called "Female Body and Sexuality," delved into female corporeality, sexual objectification, sexual desire and pleasure, sexual freedom and sexual abuse and violence. The next chapter was "The Politics of Relationships" which looked at the novels' representations of male-female relations, concentrating on romantic love and marriage, women's relations to motherhood and reproduction and relationships among women focusing on the notion of sisterhood. The last chapter—"Women's Writing"—concentrated on the narrative strategies and literary modes that the writers engaged with. Roughly put, all these novels acknowledge the significance of these themes and literary choices, particularly taking notice of gender inequality, how women are given secondary places in sexual and personal relations and the urgency to challenge gender oppression. Nonetheless, as the results sections given at the end of each analytic chapter affirmed, different centres of attention indicate how distinctly (though not always disparately) these works attended to similar points; in the following paragraphs the overall outcome of these comparative sections will be presented in order to highlight the most eminent differences that may be attributed to the notion of local feminisms.

To begin with, in the British context what comes to the fore is an underscoring of a huge array of differences that lie behind women's problems and, therefore, every single attempt to monopolize women's experience received sustained attack. Accordingly, the debates about self, language and representation are intermingled and treated as interdependent, making it hard to treat any of them

separately from the others; even feminism itself is problematized, being criticised for its generalizing tendencies that are shown to forsake those not abiding with the dominant feminist ideology or those who cannot be a member of commonality attributed to women. In this sense, feminist standpoints claiming that women experience a universal oppression are not embraced since they also risk marginalizing those who do not belong to the sex and gender distinctions attributed to women. A question frequently raised by this concern is, “What about the outcast?” This brings attention on those people such as transsexuals, transvestites, and women consciously committing incest or prostituting themselves, who are otherwise elided within an explicit gender binarism. Tristessa, Evelyn and Praxis all go beyond normative inscriptions of gender as they escape stereotypification. That is, British feminist literature of the 1970s held gender distinctions as well as sex distinctions to be problematic and thus brought attention to limitations of the feminist theory and practices of the time which continued to disregard differences through their normative and unitary explanations of women and their experiences. Feminist theories claiming universal truths are thus challenged by representations of specific cases foregrounding personal choices. For instance, while Leilah is forced to have an abortion, Mrs Allbright has to give birth though she does not want to. Also, both in *The Passion of the New Eve* and *Praxis*, rather than binary-limited perspectives, intersections of various indicators of differences such as socio-political status and ethnic and religious background construct gendered categories. Both novels, in a very Butlerian way, challenge the notion of a fixed and stable identity. A decentred self, a subversive and accordingly an ambiguous textual mode are given exuberance in British local feminism in its interactions with Marxism, postmodernism and post-structuralism. Although Marxism’s relationship to the latter is mostly an uneasy one, they all oppose to bourgeoisie society and dominant ideologies creating hegemonic discourses, which underlines the gist of feminism explored within these novels.

In the American feminist novels of the 1970s, sex and gender are taken as constitutive to very category of woman and the importance of raising the political consciousness of women is foregrounded as the most important—or even only—way in which to terminate their oppression in the patriarchal society; thus all other identity markers are pushed aside, and the novels present women as constituting a specific caste whose sisterhood is powerful and indispensable for a feminist revolution. In striving to understand American feminism of this period it is paramount to note that a unitary perspective asserting a common criterion for the definition of woman established the widespread feminist direction of American socio-historical criticism. In American feminism of the 1970s fiction and theory robustly consolidate each other in mapping out a feminist consciousness to eliminate the unjust positions imposed upon women, and it is these unjust positions that remained at the centre of both theoretical and literary attention. In this respect, both *The Female Man* and *The Women's Room* enumerate the actions of individual resistance and feminist experiences—what Steinem called “everyday rebellions”—in order to encourage gender awareness among women. That is, although I believe that gender consciousness was influentially argued in all three contexts, it was more methodologically focused, integrated and, therefore, decisive in America, where feminism garnered public attention through the substantial work of radical feminists, gynocritic studies and members of the National Organization of Women (NOW). More precisely, radical stances pervade the feminist issues highlighted in this dissertation. Therefore, antagonism towards patriarchy, emphasis on lesbianism and singlehood (dismissing men as partners), and demands to challenge and alter the existing socio-political organization with its inherent attachment to patriarchy are quite notable in this context. Accordingly, feminist literature of this period appears as a powerful political tool to end women's oppression and to emphasize the urgency to change male-dominated social order accentuated by radical feminists, and this approach is frequently handled through gynocritical studies.

Turkish feminism of the decade is particularly distinguishable from these two other local feminisms, mainly because it lacks a background interwoven with activism and theorizing. Although female consciousness is foregrounded and women are at the centre of both *Lying Down to Die* and *A Strange Woman*, an explicitly feminist consciousness as was found to imbue the British and American feminist writings of the time does not exist here. Turkish literature and theory of the 1970s do not represent either collective organizations of women or individual feminist activists. In this respect Ağaoğlu and Erbil are pioneers in telling women's experiences and creating a feminist consciousness. A concern with gender consciousness is well observed in their representations of how women are deprived of personal freedom, in spite of the very liberal rights they have been granted by the constitution, due to the unconstrained control of cultural norms over the female sex. What is remarkable is that within these novels female consciousness becomes a space in which to interrogate three influential ideologies—Kemalism, Islam and socialism—and where the conflicting outcome of their interactions is highlighted. Explorations of female sexuality concentrating on virginity, chastity, and fidelity through the narratives of emancipated women characters who are living in a society in transition is the particular characteristic of the Turkish feminist novels scrutinized in this study. While women are exposed to the oppression of these wielders of social power, and consequently experience a self-detachment and emotional and psychological alienation, their problematic relationship to these discourses also creates a site of resistance. While Aysel and Nermin become outcasts in a religious society due to their liberated status, they also defy the male-dominated agendas of socialism and Kemalist projects which impose certain roles upon women. Remarkably, while in British and American feminist novels of this period the narrative can be rendered slippery through utopian and magic realist devices, in the Turkish novels the representations of women and women's issues are always grounded in a realism that accentuates the individualistic aspirations of women within the socio-political and historical atmosphere of the time. Modernist techniques such as stream of consciousness,

monologues and dreams are frequently used in both novels, through which social reality is processed through women's consciousness.

Thus, in each of the three localities the focus of attention was different, since each harbours culturally contingent issues related to women's status. As the mainstream feminism of the 1970s concentrated on the voicing of the oppression of women, it did not put any emphasis on local feminisms. Yet, as this study shows, each locality and even each novel within each locality, showed distinct ways of depicting of these universal topics. In this respect, if feminists of the 1970s' had attempted to consider the problems of women in other geo-political regions, paying attention to the distinct socio-political frames of localities such as the context of our Turkish feminist novels, the plurality of feminisms encountered would have been influential in positing feminist theories and practices that incorporated diversity. Within this frame, this study contributes to a concept of local feminisms which can be deduced through the different treatments of similar concerns. In this respect, concepts such as the moulding influences of locally differing religions and state policies, which are not overtly articulated in the 1970s feminist discourses, reinforce the diverse and plural nature of feminisms.

During the comparative analysis of the selected texts (both the theories and the novels), an inadequacy of materials related to the Turkish context was a limitation for this study. While there were many sources related to British and American feminist theory and practice, materials related to the Turkish context were very limited. Moreover, the miniscule number of Turkish sources written in or translated into English was discouraging; even the Turkish novels selected for this dissertation did not have English translations. These difficulties were at the same time a form of encouragement, because it can only be through attempts such as are made in this dissertation that Turkish women writers and novels can be given their place within international feminist literature and contribute to the archive of comparative studies. Furthermore, all of the novels and theories discussed here have been analysed in an interdisciplinary context, and it is therefore hoped that the insights provided by this study will not be of use to only

the field of literary studies but will also serve future research into several branches of knowledge, ranging from gender and sexuality, art and theory, and cultural studies to Middle East studies. Lastly, a point to be re-emphasized here is that this study has adopted a critical stance towards feminist literary theory and practice within which the feminist context of 1970s was not only scrutinized but also found inspiring and appreciated.

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APPENDICES

A: CURRICULUM VITAE

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EDUCATION

2016 Ph.D., English Literature, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey.

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2007 B.A., English Language Teaching, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Research Assistant, Middle East Technical University, Department of Foreign Language Education, January 2009- December 2014.

English Instructor, Ufuk University, Preparation School, September 2008- January 2009.

English Instructor, American Culture, Institution of Foreign Language Teaching, January 2008- September 2008.

PUBLICATIONS and ACADEMIC PRESENTATIONS

Akdoğan, Şule. "How Do We Read Virginia Woolf in 21st Century." Presented at 24th Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf, Loyola University Chicago and Northern Illinois University, Chicago, USA.

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EDITORSHIP

Yıldız-Baęe, Hlya & zlem Tre Abacı & **Őule Akdoęan** & Őermin Sezer. *Kazuo Ishiguro and His Work: Proceedings of the 19th METU British Novelists Conference*, Ankara: Kardelen, 2012.

B: TURKISH SUMMARY

YEREL FEMİNİZM YAKLAŞIMLARI: 1970’li YILLARDA İNGİLTERE, AMERİKA VE TÜRKİYE’DEKİ FEMİNİST EDEBİ KURAM VE YAZINININ KARŞILAŞTIRMALI ANALİZİ

Edebiyat kuramı ve yazını içerisinde feminizmin uzun ve karmaşık bir tarihi vardır ve 1970’li yıllar bu tarihte çok önemli bir yere sahiptir çünkü feminist eleştiri kuramı bu dönemde özellikle de Batı edebiyatında belirgin bir şekilde kendini göstermiştir. Bu dönem sadece sosyo-politik alanda yapılan feminist protestolara değil aynı zamanda feminizmin liberalizm, Marksizm ve psikanaliz gibi alanlara kaymasına da sahne olmuştur ve bu durum günümüzdeki feminizm anlayışını ve tartışmasını şekillendirmiştir. 1970-1980 arası dönemde, ikinci dalga feminizm akımına hâkim olan evrensel bir kadın kimliği ve bilinci yaratmak söylemleri çok vurgulanır. Kadınlar arasındaki farklılıklardan daha çok benzerlikler ön plana çıkartılmaya ve kadınlar arasında evrensel ve sembolik bir “kız kardeşlik” ruhu yaratılmaya çalışılır. Ayrıca, dönem boyunca politik ve feminist gündemin oldukça iç içe geçmiş olması da dikkat çekici bir unsurdur. Bu şartlar, feminist politika ve söylemde dikkat çekici bir hareketliliğe neden olmuş ve çok sayıda feminist eser ortaya çıkmasına katkıda bulunmuştur. Ancak yetmişlerdeki ilham verici söylemler daha sonraki dönemlerde, özellikle de feminizmin postmodernizm, postyapısalcılık ve postsömürgecilik etkileriyle iletişime geçmesiyle etkisini kaybeder. 1970’ler sonrası feminist gündem incelendiğinde, birçok kaynağın, dönemdeki feminist edebiyat kuram ve yazınına yerel farklılıkları göz ardı ederek tek, birleştirilmiş bir olgu olarak yaklaştıkları fark edilir. “Hegemonik,” “genelleyici” ve “toy” gibi sıfatlar dönem feminizmi için sıklıkla öne sürülen eleştirilerdir. Fakat dönem içerisinde teorik ve eleştirel eserler yakından incelendiğinde dikkat çekici bir çeşitlilik de görülür. Mary

Eagleton'ın da belirttiği gibi 1970'li yıllar sonradan dönem hakkında yapılan yorumlardan ve eleştirilerden çok daha karmaşık ve derindir ("Literary Representations of Women" 101). Sonraki dönemlerde ve günümüz feminizm söylemlerine hâkim olan çoğulluk algısı, feminizmin günümüz feminizm anlayışını şekillendiren birçok farklı alanla kaynaştığı bu döneme yani 1970'li yıllara atfedilebilir. Bu yüzden, bu çalışma ilhamını 1970'li yıllardan ve sadece kadınların sorunlarına karşı değil tüm baskıcı alanlara karşı mücadele bilinci yaratmaya katkı sağlayan dönem eserleri ve söylemlerinden almıştır. Bu kapsamda, bu araştırma İngiliz, Amerikan ve Türk feminist edebi kuram ve yazınını karşılaştırmış ve bunların farklılıklarını ve benzerliklerini ortaya çıkararak 1970'li yıllardaki farklı yerel yaklaşımlara dikkat çekmeyi hedeflemiştir. Bu amaçla, bu tez Angela Carter'ın *Yeni Havva'nın Çilesi* (*The Passion of New Eve*), Fay Weldon'ın *Praxis*, Joanna Russ'ın *Dişi Adam* (*The Female Man*), Marilyn French'in *Kadınlara Mahsus* (*The Women's Room*), Adalet Ağaoğlu'nun *Ölmeye Yatmak* ve Leyla Erbil'in *Tuhaf Bir Kadın* romanlarını ve bu üç kültürde oluşturulmuş olan temel feminist edebi kuramları incelemiştir. Aynı döneme ait feminist edebi yazın ve kuramının birbirinden farklı izler taşıdığı da vurgulanmış ve yerel feminizm kavramının bu eserlerde nasıl yansıtıldığı analiz edilmiştir.

Yetmişli yıllarda kadın tarihi ve yazınlarına olan ilgiye dikkat çeken Rich, geçmişe ve geçmişteki yazınlara eleştirel bir açıdan yeni bir bakış açısıyla bakmanın kadınlar için önemini vurgular ("When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision" 18). Bu "eleştirel" bakış açısı bu tezin ana stratejilerinden ve amaçlarından birini oluşturmuştur. Bu çalışma, 1970'li yıllarda yazılmış olan teorik ve edebi eserleri hem kısıtlayıcı hem de ilham verici bulur ve bu bakış açısıyla tekrar inceler. Bu nedenle bu tez çalışması, İngiliz, Amerikan ve Türk edebi kuram ve yazınlarını karşılaştırarak, bu dönemdeki eserler hakkında daha önceden yapılmış olan yorumları tekrar gözden geçirirken, bunlar hakkında daha önceden sorulmamış sorulara da yer vermiştir. Dolayısıyla, 1970'li yıllardaki feminist ortam incelenirken evrensel etkiler yaratmaya çalışan görüşlerin ötesinde,

daha önceden göz ardı edilmiş veya yeteri kadar ifade edilmemiş yerel alanlara ve bakış açılarına da yer verilmiştir. Bu bağlamda, bu tez çalışması belirli sorulara cevap bulmak amacıyla şekillenmiştir: Özel olarak adlandırılan İngiliz, Amerikan ve Türk feminizmi var mıydı? Feminizm evrensel olarak nitelendirilebilir mi? Feminizm 1970'lerde vurgulandığı gibi tekil ve birleşik miydi? Tüm feminizm çeşitlerini tek bir feminizm altında toplamanın sorunları nedir? Yerel feminizm kavramı nedir? 1970'lerde böyle bir kavram var mıydı, varsa ne kadar ön plandaydı? Edebiyatta yerel feminizm farkındalığı yaratmanın önemi nedir? 1970'li yıllarda feminizmde yerel etkenler ne kadar dâhil edilmişti veya o dönemde feminizm ne boyutta evrensel olarak tartışılıyordu? Yerel feminizm kavramının genel feminizm algısına nasıl bir etkisi vardır? Yukarıda belirtilen mantıksal temel çerçevesinde, bu tez seçilmiş altı romanı örnek olarak ele almış ve üç farklı ülkedeki feminizm algısını karşılaştırarak daha geniş bir feminist kuram algısı ortaya çıkarmayı hedeflemiştir. Soruna yaklaşım ülkelere göre incelenmiş ve feminist eleştirinin yerel kavramlara göre nasıl farklılaştığı belirtilmiştir. Bu amaçla, İngiliz edebiyatından Angela Carter ve Fay Weldon, Amerikan edebiyatından Joanna Russ ve Marilyn French ve Türk edebiyatından Adalet Ağaoğlu ve Leyla Erbil 1970'li yıllarda hem sosyo-politik hem de edebi kuramla yakından ilgili oldukları için çalışmaya dâhil edilmiştir. Adı geçen yazarların romanlarında vurguladıkları konular ile edebi eleştiri ve kuram dalında da eser vermiş olmaları da ayrıca önemlidir. Tezin birinci bölümünde, 1970'li yıllar hakkında sonradan yapılan açıklamalar ve eleştirilere de yer verilmektedir verilmiştir; bu kısımda yerel feminizm kavramının literatürdeki eksikliği de vurgulanmaktadır. Çalışmanın mantıksal temeli ve metodu da bu bölümde açıklanmış ve yazarlar hakkında kısa bilgiler verilmiştir. Bu çerçeveden bakıldığında, feminist kuram ve yazınında karşılaştırma yapan bu tez çok yönlü bir çalışmadır ve üç kültürdeki feminist teorilerin karşılaştırılmasını, her kültürde feminist kuram ve yazın karşılaştırılmasını (kuram ve yazının nerede örtüştüğünü ve nerelerde farklılaştığını) ve son olarak da seçilen edebi eserlerde feminist söylemlerin nasıl ele alındığını içerir.

Tezin ilk bölümünde tartışıldığı gibi, yetmişli yıllar feminizmin politik anlamda çok ses getirdiği bir dönemdir. Altmışlı yıllardaki politik protestoların 1970 hareketliliği için kaynak teşkil ettiği gözlemlenir. Özellikle, İngiltere’de koloni karşıtı protestolar ve Amerika’da insan hakları tartışmaları haksızlığa ve baskıya karşı mücadeleyi teşvik etmiş ve feministleri de benzer çabaları göstermeleri konusunda etkilemiştir. Toplum düzenindeki her türlü baskıya karşı direnmek kadın hareketleri için de vazgeçilmez bir olgu olarak ön plana çıkmıştır. Diğer bir deyişle, 1970’li yıllardaki feminizmin önemi kitlelerin katılımıyla gerçekleşen kökleşmiş bir hareket olmasına bağlanabilir. Dönem içerisinde, iş ve maaş eşitliği, çalışan annelerin iş yükü hakkında düzenlemeler yapmak, kürtaj reformu, medya tarafından sunulan kadın imgesi gibi konular sık sık dile getirilmiştir. Sonuç olarak, eşitlik sadece özel yaşamda değil politik alanda ve toplumun her türlü kurumunda sağlanmalı düşüncesi sıkça gündemde yerini almıştır. Birçok kadının özel hayatını ve kişisel ilişkilerini etkileyen ve toplum baskısı nedeniyle dile getirilemeyen konular tartışmaya açılmıştır. Nitekim birinci akım feminizm temel olarak kadın hakları ve cinsiyet eşitliği ile ilgilenirken, 1970’lerdeki akım bu tartışmaları daha geniş bir platforma taşımış ve sistemde köklü değişiklikler yapılması gereğini vurgulamıştır. Aslında, yetmişlerin en önemli özelliklerinden birisi de feminist eleştiri ve kuramındaki çeşitlenme sürecinin ortaya çıkmış olmasıdır; Freidan’ın liberal feminizmi, Millett’in radikal feminizmi, Rowbotham’ın Marksist feminist yaklaşımları, Rich’in lezbiyen feminizmi, Showalter’ın jino-eleştirisini (gynocriticism) ve Mitchell’in psikanalitik feminist söylemi bu çeşitliliğin en güzel örnekleridir. Humm’ın da ifade ettiği gibi, bu dönemi tanımlayan diğer bir etken de Greer, Millett ve Ellmann gibi eleştirmenlerin, erkek yazarların cinsiyetçi söylemlerine odaklanarak otorite figürlerine karşı direnmeleridir (47). Bu eğilim, kadın yazınlarını ve bu eserleri kadın bakış açısıyla incelemeyi gündeme getirerek daha önceleri edebi alanlardan dışlanmış kadın romancıları ilgi odağı yapmıştır. Feminist yayınevlerinin kurulması da bu alandaki çalışmalarını olumlu yönde etkilemiştir. Bu nedenle, popüler feminist dergileri kuram ve yazınların gelişmesinde büyük katkı sağlamışlardır; aslında bunlara, kadınların kadın deneyimleri ile ilgili yeni

bilgiler edinmelerini ve politik strateji geliştirmeyi amaçlayan “bilinç yükseltme” (consciousness-raising) eğilimlerinin bir yansıması olarak da bakılabilir. Bunların sonucunda, feminist yazar ve okuyucu kitlesi de önemli oranda artmıştır. Kadın yazarlar, ataerkil tutumları özellikle dikkate almış ve bu tutumların sadece gerçek hayatı değil sanat ve edebiyatın her alanını işgal ettiğini vurgulayarak edebi çalışmalarda yeni ifade şekilleri ararken aslında bir çeşit feminist okuyucu kitlesi oluşturmayı hedeflemişlerdir. Bu bağlamda, edebiyat kadınların ezilmişliğinin yansımalarının ve ataerkil toplumun etkilerinin gün yüzüne çıktığı bir alan olmanın yanı sıra kadınlara örnek alabilecekleri güçlü, bağımsız kadın imgeleri de sağlamış olmasıyla dikkat çeker. Bu açıdan bakıldığında, kadınlara atfedilen basmakalıp ve aşağı imgelere ve özelliklere meydan okuma ve bunları yeniden yapılandırma seçeneği çok gündeme gelmiştir. Bu ilgi değişimi hem baskı hem de bir övgü kaynağı olarak algılanan cinsiyet ve cinsiyet farklılığı, üreme politikası, kadın deneyimi gibi etkenlerle iç içe geçmiş şekilde gözlemlenir (Selden ve arkadaşları 120). Feminist yazılardaki öne çıkan temalar ise şöyle sıralanabilir: ataerkilliğin heryerdeliği ve baskınlığı; kadınlar için hâlihazırdaki politik organizasyonların yetersizliği ve kadının farklılığının özgürleşmenin kültürel politikası olarak savunulması. (Bahsedilen bu konular, tezin ikinci bölümünde üç farklı kültür için de kendi kültürel çerçevelerinde ve daha sonra da karşılaştırmalı olarak incelenmiştir.)

Tüm bu sözedilen konular yetmişli yılları feminist tarih için çok önemli kılarken, dönemin sonradan çok eleştiri aldığı da bir gerçektir. Bu eleştirilerin çoğu, dönem kuramlarının genelleyici tavrına karşı yapılmıştır. Bu genellemenin ortaya çıkmasında, feminist bilinci yaymak ve dolayısıyla evrensel bir kadınlık kimliği yaratmak için ırk, dil ve din gibi diğer kimlik özelliklerinin göz ardı edilmesi oldukça etkili olmuştur. “Tümleyicilik” ve “ortaklık” gibi temaları vurgulamak ile özdeşleştirilen edebi kuram ve yazın tüm kadınların gerçekliğini yansıtmaya eğilimleri ve bunun yetersizliği açısından eleştirilmişlerdir. Bu yaygın feminist akımın orta sınıf ve beyaz kadın kimliğini temsil ettiği ve yerel ve kültürel farklılıkları göz ardı ederek tekil (monolitik) bir kadın algısı yarattığı öne

sürülmüştür. Ayrıca, cinsiyet farklılığına dayalı bu algıların yine ikili karşıtlık (binary opposition) içerisinde kalarak bunun dışında kalan kimlikleri ve algıları ötekileştirdiği de öne sürülmüştür. Bu açıdan bakıldığında, dönem hakkında yapılan yorumlar ve eleştiriler de karmaşık, zaman zaman da çelişkili görüşler içerir. Ancak bu görüşlerin hepsi çok önemlidir çünkü edebi, sosyal ve politik alanda hâkim olan erkek egemenliğine karşı başkaldırıcı tetiklemişlerdir.

Tezin ikinci bölümünde ise; 1970’li yıllarda bu üç kültürde ortaya çıkan feminist söylemlere ve tartışmalara yer verilmiş ve bunlar arasındaki benzerlikler ve farklılıklara vurgu yapılmıştır. 1970’li yıllarda Türkiye’de bu yıllarda feminizme dair eser sayısının çok kısıtlı olması nedeniyle sonraki yıllara ait yazın ve kuramlar incelenmiştir. Burada belirtilmesi gereken önemli bir nokta ise, bu tezin ikinci akım feminist kuramı ve özellikle 1970’li yıllardaki kuram çerçevesinin rehber olarak ele alınması ile tek bir kurama bağlı kalmaktan kaçınılmasıdır. Yerel kültürel şartları vurgulayan bilgilere ve zaman zaman da yazarların kişisel görüşlerine de yer verilmiştir. Kuram ve yazının uyuşmadığı yerler de ayrıca vurgulanmıştır. Diğer bir deyişle tezde tek bir bakış açısı yerine eklektik metot benimsenmiştir çünkü altı romanın incelenmesi çok çeşitli ve farklı kuramlara ve eleştirel bakış açılarına değinmeyi gerekli kılmıştır. Romanlar belirli bir dönemin ürünü olsalar da sabit ve değişmez kurgular olmadıkları için geçmişteki eğilimlerin etkisini gösterebilir ve kendi çağlarının ötesindeki oluşumların habercisi olma özelliğini de taşıyabilirler. Bu yüzden, tezin farklı bölümlerinde 1970’li yıllar öncesinde öne sürülen ve henüz dile getirilmemiş bakış açılarına da yer verilmiştir. Fakat bunların detaylı analizi bu tezin kapsamında değildir. Ayrıca, bazen kuramsal altyapılar yazarlar tarafından çok bilinçli ve kasıtlı bir şekilde kullanılırken bazen tamamen tesadüfi bir ilişki gözlemlenir. Onun için, burada derin inceleme yapmak yerine yazarların çağlarının ötesine gittiklerini vurgulamak için bu kuramlardan da söz edilmiştir.

Kuram çerçevesinden kısaca bahsetmek gerekirse, feminizm 1960’ların sonunda İngiltere ve Amerika’da siyasal platformda yoğun bir şekilde kendini

göstermeye başlamıştır. İkinci akım feminizm Amerika'da olduğu gibi, İngiltere'de de sosyo-politik çerçeveye içiçe gelişmiştir. Birçok konuda hemfikir olsalar da, İngiliz feministler Amerikan feminizminin beyaz orta sınıf kadınları temsil ettiğini düşünmüş ve renk, ırk ve sınıf gibi konuları ihmal etmesinden dolayı eleştirmiştir. İngiltere'de o dönemde ön plana çıkan feminist kuram eserleri şunlardır: Germaine Greer'in *The Female Eunuch*, Eva Figes'in *Patriarchal Attitudes: Women in Society*, Sheila Rowbotham'ın *Women's Consciousness, Man's World*, Juliet Mitchell'in *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* ve Angela Carter'ın *The Sadeian Woman: An Exercise in Cultural History* başlıklı çalışmaları. Bunlardan Germaine Greer'in 1970 basımlı *The Female Eunuch* (*İğdiş Edilmiş Kadın*) adlı yapıtı hem İngiltere hem de dünya feminist literatürünü oldukça etkilemiş ve eser uluslararası boyutta ün kazanmıştır. Bu kitapta Greer, kadın kavramıyla ilgili tekdüze tanımların ataerkil toplum ve kurumları tarafından kadınları baskı altına almak için kullanıldığını örnek ve istatistiklerle açıklamaktadır. Greer'e göre bu tanımlar toplum tarafından kurulmuştur ve dolayısıyla yeniden inşa edilebilirler; feminist devrim kadınlık, cinsiyet, aşk ve toplum hakkındaki algılarımızın yeniden yapılandırılması ile mümkündür. Bu tutum, Figes, Rowbotham ve Mitchell'de de vurgulanır.

Bunlardan, Sheila Rowbotham *Women's Consciousness, Man's World* (*Kadın Bilinci, Erkek Dünyası*) adlı eserinde Amerikan eleştirmen Betty Freidan'ın *Feminine Mystique*'ini liberal bağlamda tartışmış ve feminizmin toplumun ekonomik yapısını göz ardı ettiğini öne sürmüştür. Aslında, Rowbotham, feminizmi Marksizm ile birleştirerek kadınların sorunlarını sınıf sorunu bilinciyle aynı platformda analiz etmiş ve böylece yine erkek egemen bir ideoloji olan Marksizm'de de feminist bir farkındalık alanı ortaya çıkartmıştır. Özellikle, çalışan kadınların iki iş yüküne maruz kaldığını vurgulamış; evde ve işte kadın emeğinin titizlikle ele alınmasını ve bu konuda iyileştirmeler yapılması gerektiğini savunmuştur. Rowbotham'a göre, kadın baskısının tek nedeni sadece ataerkil oluşum değil aynı zamanda da kapitalist düzendir. Bu baskıdan kurtulmak için, kadınlarda sınıf bilinci vurgulanmalı ve hangi konularda baskı gördükleri

gözler önüne serilmelidir. Dil, bilinçaltı, vücut ve cinsellik özellikle dikkat edilmesi gereken konulardır. Juliet Mitchell de *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* ile Freudyen psikolojiyi ve bunun feministler tarafından yanlış anlaşıldığını tartışmış ve böylece feminizm ve psikanaliz arasındaki olumsuz ilişkiyi tekrar yorumlamıştır. Mitchell'e göre psikanaliz ataerkil toplum için bir çözüm üretmez çünkü aslında psikanaliz bu toplum yapısının bir yorumudur. Dolayısıyla Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan, Eva Figes, Germaine Greer, Shulamith Firestone ve Kate Millett'in çalışmalarındaki Freudyen psikolojinin negatif yorumlarını farklı bir şekilde incelemiş ve psikanaliz ve feminizmin barışması gerektiğini öne sürmüştür.

Amerika şartlarında ise, Betty Friedan'ın 1963 basımlı *The Feminine Mystique*'i savaş sonrası ortaya çıkan memnuniyetsizliğin hâkim olduğu Amerika için ikinci akım feminizmin başlangıcı olarak kabul edilir. 1970 basımlı *Sisterhood is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement* ise birçok farklı alanda kadınlar tarafından yazılmış makaleleri bir araya getirmiş ve feminizmin Amerika'daki altyapısını güçlendirdiğini örneklemiştir. *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* adlı kitapta Susan Brownmiller tecavüzü incelemiş ve kadınları erkek baskısı altında toplanmış bir sınıf olarak ele almıştır. Diğer bir deyişle, daha önceden tabu sayılan ve kadının sessiz olması gerektiğini öne süren tüm kavramlar yazın ve kuramda yerini almış ve tartışmaya açılmıştır. Kısaca özetlemek gerekirse döneme damgasını vuran Amerikan feminist kuram eserleri şunlardır: Shulamith Firestone'in *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution*, Kate Millett'in *Sexual Politics*, Elaine Showalter'ın *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing*, Judith Fetterley'in *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction*, ve Nancy Chodorow'un *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* adlı kitapları.

Bunlar arasında Kate Millett'in *Sexual Politics (Cinsel Politika)* adlı yapıtı hem ikinci akım feminizmi hem de devamındaki feminist kuramlar için çok önemli bir yere sahiptir. Moi, Millett'in daha önce hiçbir teorisyenin

yapamadığını yaptığını ve kurumsal ve kurumsal olmayan eleştiri arasındaki boşluğu doldurduğunu belirtmiştir (24). Bu açıdan bakıldığında, Millett'in çalışması edebiyat ve feminizm arasındaki ilişkinin güçlenmesine de önemli ölçüde katkı sağlamıştır. Bu kapsamda, 1970'lerde önem kazanan başka bir akım da edebiyat ve sanattaki kadın imgelerini çalışmaktır ve bu akım erkek yazarlardaki kadın temsillerine eleştirel bir bakış açısıyla yaklaşmayı vurgulamaktadır. Susan Koppelman Cornillon'un *Images of Women in Fiction: Feminist Perspectives* adlı kitabının da dâhil olduğu bu yaklaşımlar, teorik dilin ulaşamadığı akademinin dışındaki kitlelere de ulaşarak kadınlar arasında feminist bilinç geliştirme amacı üzerine de yoğunlaşmışlardır. Bu akımda odak noktası yazarın deneyimleri, okuyucunun gerçek hayatı ve bunlar arasındaki bağlantıdır ve amaç okuyucunun ataerkil baskının hâkim olduğu olaylar karşısındaki kişisel farkındalığını artırmaktır. Dolayısıyla, 1970'lerin ikinci döneminde kadın yazarların özellikle kadın eleştirmenler tarafından incelenmesi çok önem kazanmıştır. Ellen Moers'in *Literary Women*, Elaine Showalter'ın *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing* ve Sandra Gilbert ve Susan Gubar'ın *The Madwoman in the Attic* adlı eserleri bu dönemde çok popüler olmuş ve dönem ve takibindeki feminist kuram içerisinde etkinliklerini korumuşlardır. Bu metinler kadın yazın geleneğini kadın yazarlar ve sosyal çevre etkileşimi çerçevesinde incelemektedirler. Özellikle Elaine Showalter bu akım içerisinde çok ayrı bir yere sahiptir. *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing* adlı eserinde kadın yazarların geleneğini üç ayrı aşamada incelemiştir ve kadın okuyucu ve kadın yazar kavramları üzerinde duran bu feminist eleştiri türünü jino-eleştiri olarak adlandırmıştır. Judith Fetterley de "direnc gösteren okuyucu" kavramını Amerikan feminizmine kazandırmış kadınlar tarafından kadınlara yönelik yazılan kadın edebi çalışmalarına dikkat çekmiştir.

1970'lerde Türkiye'de de genel olarak feminist algısı önem kazanmaktadır ama bu, İngiltere ve Amerika'daki gibi kurumsal ve düzenli bir algı değildir. Aslında, 1970'ler toplumu ve tüm kurumlarını sorgulayacak olan kadın hareketleri

için başlangıç noktası sayılır. Bu hareketler asıl 1980’lerde belirgin şekilde gündemdeki yerini alır. Şöyle ki, ikinci akım feminizminin Batı’dan yaklaşık on sene sonra Türkiye’de etkisini göstermeye başladığı söylenebilir. Genel olarak Türkiye’de kadın hareketlerini ve feminist çalışmaları etkileyen üç önemli ideoloji vardır; bunlar İslam, Kemalizm ve sosyalizmdir. Bunlardan sosyalizm 1970’lerin başlarında Türkiye’ye girmiş ve böylece kadınlar yeni bir ideoloji için mücadele vererek erkeklerle beraber aynı platformda yer almıştır. Dikkat çeken unsur ise 1970’lerde kadınların bu yaygın ideolojiler arasında derin çelişkiler yaşadığı ve bunların aslında kadın kimliğini çeşitli şekillerde bastırdığıdır. Bunun dışında Türkiye’de feminizm incelemelerine ışık tutan bazı çalışmalar şöylece sıralanabilir: Şirin Tekeli’nin “Emergence of the Feminist Movement in Turkey,” Deniz Kandiyoti’nin “Emancipated but Unliberated? Reflections on the Turkish Case”, Necla Arat’ın *Feminizmin ABC’si*, Janet Browning’in “Some Aspects of the Portrayal of Women in Modern Turkish Literature,” Nükhet Sirman’ın “Feminism in Turkey: A Short History,” Zehra F. Arat’ın “Turkish Women and the Republican Reconstruction of Tradition,” ve Ayşe Durakbasa’nın “Kemalism as Identity Politics in Turkey” ve *Halide Edib: Turk Modernlesmesi ve Feminizm* adlı çalışmaları.

Türkiye’de feminist tarih incelendiğinde, 1981 yılında Şirin Tekeli ve bir kaç akademisyenin Türkiye’deki kadınların sorunları üzerine tartışmalarının ve yazılar ortaya çıkarmaya başlamalarının önemli olduğu gözlemlenir. Bu grup, 1983 yılında kadınlar tarafından yazılmış tartışma yazılarının yayınladığı haftalık *Somut* dergisini çıkarmışlardır. Aynı grup daha sonra ‘Kadın Çevresi’ni kurmuş ve feminist söylem yaratmak için çalışmalarına devam etmişlerdir; 1984’te ‘Kitap Kulübü’ ile de amaçlarına ulaşmış olurlar. Bu kulüp ile Türk okurlar, Juliet Mitchell çevirileri ve Simone de Beauvoir ile röportajlar ile uluslararası feminist söylemlerle tanışmışlardır ve dolayısıyla Batı feminizmi hakkında akademik bilgi paylaşımı başlamıştır. Böylece feminizm daha kurumsal bir hal almaya başlamıştır; medyada ve yasal boyutlarda kadın istismarını eleştiren konferanslar ve tartışma grupları da feminist söyleme önemli katkılarda bulunmuşlardır. Politik

olayların dışında gelişen ve Duygu Asena tarafından 1981 yılında kurulan aylık *Kadınca* dergisi de Türk feminist hareketi için önemli bir adım olmuştur. Kadına yönelik şiddet, kadın cinselliğinin kadın bakış açısıyla yansıtılması ve evlilik gibi konulardaki problemleri tartışan makaleler dergide önemli yer tutmuştur. Kırca'nın da vurguladığı gibi *Kadınca* ve takibindeki *Elele* ve *Vizon* dergileri moda, ev ve çocuk bakımı gibi konuların yanında sağlık, eğitim, kadın cinselliği, eşitlik gibi konulara da yer vererek kadınları bu konularla tanıştırmış ve onlara yeni hedefler kazandırmışlardır (460).

Janet Browning "Some Aspects of the Portrayal of Women in Modern Turkish Literature," Deniz Kandiyoti "Sex Roles and Social Change: A Comparative Appraisal of Turkey's Women" ve "Emancipated but Unliberated? Reflections on the Turkish Case" isimli makalelerde Türkiye'deki kadınların politik hakları ile feminizm arasındaki bağlantıyı incelemişler ve bu hakların verilmiş şekli ile feminist söylemin yeteri kadar gelişmemesi arasında bir bağlantı kurmuşlardır. Sonuç itibarıyla, İslam, Kemalizm ve sosyalizm ile feminizm arasındaki ilişki yine gündeme gelmiştir. Örneğin, Kandiyoti Türk kadınlarını "serbest bırakılmış ama özgürleşmemiş" olarak nitelendirir ve kadınlar tarafından yapılmış siyasal aktivitelerin azlığına gönderme yapar (324). Bu bakış açısı, Türkiye'deki kadın çalışmaları alanındaki eserlerde etkili olmuştur. Bu kaynaklardan elde edilen bilgiler ışığında 1970'lerde feminizme özgü ayrı bir söylem yoktu denilebilir. Bu nedenle, İngiltere ve Amerika'da kuram ve yazında gözlemlenen çeşitlilik de dönem Türkiye'sinde yoktu. Bu yüzden, Ağaoğlu ve Erbil gibi yazarların eserleri feminist söylemin izlerini araştırmak için oldukça önemlidir. Kandiyoti ve Tekeli gibi akademisyenlerin feminizm alanında benzer eleştirileri 1980'lerde verdikleri doğrudur. Ama bunlar edebi yazın ve kuram altyapılı değil çoğunlukla sosyo-politik içeriklidir. Bu kapsamda, 1970'li yıllarda Adalet Ağaoğlu, Leyla Erbil, Tezer Özlü, Pınar Kür, Sevim Burak, Sevgi Soysal, Tomris Uyar ve Füzûzan gibi yazarların kadının toplumdaki yerini çok titiz bir şekilde incelemeleri Türkiye şartları için oldukça büyük önem taşır. Dikkat çeken bir diğer konu ise feminist olarak adlandırılmayı reddeden kadın yazarların

eserlerinde bile, yaygın ideolojilerin ve politik gündemin betimleri arasında tam olarak feminist diye adlandıramasak da feminist bilincin izlerine rastlanılmasıdır.

Bu çerçevede bakıldığında, bu üç kültürdeki feminizm söyleminde birçok ortak nokta görülür. Fakat aynı zamanda bu ortak noktaların ele alınış ve ifade ediliş şeklinde önemli farklılıklar da vardır. Türk edebiyatı ve eleştirilerin bu çalışmaya katılması Batı dışındaki feminist ortam ve tartışmalar hakkında bir farkındalık yaratmaktadır. Örneğin, 1970'lerde İngiliz ve Amerikan feminist kuramları edebiyatta ve toplumda kadın imgeleri ve durumlarını incelemek için önemli gelişmeler kat etmiştir; Türkiye'de ise bu dönemde feminizm aynı ölçüde gelişmemiş, İngiltere ve Amerika'da gözlemlenen gelişme ancak 1980'li yıllarda yaşanmıştır. Bu üç kültürdeki benzer noktalar da tezin bu ikinci bölümünde şöyle özetlenir: kadın bedeni, cinsel farklılık (sexual difference), evlilik kurumu, aile yapısı, annelik, kadın yazını, anlatım yöntemleri (kadın deneyimi ve kadın sanatı tartışmaları) ve ataerkil toplum sistemine karşı direniş ve alternatif üretmektir. Belirtilen bu konular, analiz bölümlerinin de organizasyonuna rehberlik etmiştir. Burada dikkat çeken nokta ise, evrenselleştirici bakış açısıyla iç içe olsalar da feminist kuramların bu konuları irdeleme şekillerinin tek ve sabit bir çerçeve taşımadığıdır. Ancak, yerel farklılıklar dönem feminizminin gündeminde değildir çünkü politik olarak aktif çaba gösteren feminist kadın nüfusu yaratmak öncelik kazanmıştır. Yine de, bu çalışmada da görüldüğü gibi dönem eserleri dikkatlice incelendiğinde, bölgesel ve kültürel bazda gözlemlenen farklılıklar hakkında yorum yapılabilir. Örneğin, İngiliz feminizmi Marksizm, psikanaliz ve Fransız yapısöküm kuramlarıyla iletişime açık olması nedeniyle, sosyo-tarihsel eleştiriyle yakından ilgili olan Amerikan feminizminden önemli bir ölçüde farklılık gösterir. Bu açıdan bakıldığında, İngiliz feminist eleştirilerde cinsiyetin yanı sıra sınıf ve kapitalizm gibi konular da önem kazanırken, Amerikan feminist söylemlere cinsiyet ve anti-ataerkillik üzerine odaklanan radikal feminist kuramlar egemendir. Bu fark, Amerikan feminizminin kadınlar arasında cinsiyet merkezinde ortak bir kadın bilinci yaratmak için sınıf, etnik ve ırk farklılıklarını göz ardı etmesiyle daha da belirginleşir. Türkiye'de ise politik ve teorik bir

bilinçle yürütülen feminist etkiler ancak 1980’lerde gelişir. Yine de, birçoğu sosyo-politik kökenli olan akademik çalışmalar ve Ağaoğlu ve Erbil’in romanları 1970’li yıllarda Türkiye’deki feminist bilinç izleri hakkında bilgi verirler. Nitekim devlet feminizmi, kadınların sosyalizm ve İslami geleneklerle iç içe geçmiş kültürel normlara olan ilişkisi bu yerel özelliğe oldukça ön plana çıkar.

Belirtilmesi gereken diğer bir konu ise 1970’li yıllarda feminist kuramların çok çeşitli olmaları ve farklı bakış açılarına sahip olmalarından dolayı tek bir tanımla ifade edilemiyor olmalarıdır. Mesela, annelik olgusunda da görüldüğü gibi, Rich gibi eleştirmenler anneliğin kadınlara özgü yanını vurgulayarak bu kavramı yüceltirken, Firestone ekolündeki feministler anneliğin ataerkil toplum tarafından istismar edilerek kadına yönelik baskıyı pekiştirdiğini vurgulamışlar ve anneliğin kadının biyolojik görevi olmasını değiştirmek için alternatif üreme ve doğurma teknolojilerine değinmişlerdir. Seçilen romanların feminist kavramlar ile olan ilişkisi analiz edildiğinde de bu romanların, kuramlar ile olan etkileşimi dikkat çekerken aynı zamanda bu kuramlardan farklılaştıkları da gözlemlenir. Dolayısıyla kuramsal alandaki bu çeşitlilik daha da vurgulanır. Örneğin, İngiliz romanlar Greer’in *The Female Eunuch* eserinde vurgulanan kadınlara yapılan eril baskıya karşı gelme fikrini destekleyip cinsiyetin kadına uygulanan baskının bir nedeni olamayacağını vurgular. Fakat bu baskının nedenini tek bir olguya yüklemeyip, Rowbotham ve Mitchell tarafından vurgulanan sınıf, bilinç ve bilinçaltı gibi faktörlerin de ataerkil baskıda cinsiyet kadar etkili olduğunu vurgularlar. Amerikan romanlar ise, “bilinç yükseltme,” kişisel ve özel deneyimlerin aslında politik olduğu düşüncesi (“the personal is political”) ve ataerkilliği ana düşman olarak gören dönemin feminist kuramlarıyla ciddi bir paralellik göstermektedir. Türk romanlarına bakıldığında ise, bu romanların 1980’li yıllar itibariyle önem kazanan feminist tartışmaların öncüsü oldukları söylenebilir. Bu eserlerde, feminist bilincin döneme hâkim olan üç ideolojinin (İslami Kemalizm ve sosyalizm) arasındaki çelişkiler etrafında şekillendiği gözlemlenir. Dolayısıyla, *Ölmeye Yatmak* ve *Tuhaf Bir Kadın*, günümüzde bile yeteri kadar dile getirilmeyen ve incelenmeyen kadın cinselliğini kadın bakış

açısından ele alarak dönemlerinin çok ötesine geçmişlerdir. Kuram ve akademik alandaki karşılaştırma roman analizlerine taşındığında feminizmin aslında ne kadar farklı ve eklektik bakış açıları içerdiği daha da çok ortaya çıkar.

Bu bağlamda, seçilen altı roman da yerel kuramlar kapsamında tartışılan konuların izlerini yansıtır. Tezin üçüncü bölümü olan “Kadın Bedeni ve Cinselliği,” kadının bedenselliği, cinsel nesneleştirme, cinsel arzu ve tatmin, cinsel özgürlük, cinsel istismar ve şiddet gibi konuları inceler. Tezin bir sonraki bölümü “İlişkilerin Politikası” olup romantik aşk ve evlilik konuları çerçevesinde kadın-erkek ilişkilerini, kadının annelik ve üremeyle olan ilişkisini ve son olarak de sembolik kız kardeşlik etrafındaki tartışmalara yer vererek kadınlar arasındaki ilişkiyi inceler. “Kadın Yazını” isimli beşinci bölümde ise yazarların anlatım biçimleri ve yöntemleri üzerinde durulmuştur. Tezin altıncı bölümü “Sonuç” bölümü olup, önceki bölümlerde tartışılan konuları kısaca gözden geçirmiştir. Genel olarak bakıldığında, seçilen romanların hepsi belirtilen konuların önemini kabul eder ve özellikle de cinsiyet eşitsizliğine ve kadınların cinsel ve kişisel ilişkilerde nasıl ikincil planda kaldığına dikkat çekerler ve cinsiyet baskısına karşı gelmenin gerekliliğini vurgularlar. Aynı zamanda statükoyu sorgulamanın ve genel geçer sayılan konuları tartışmanın ve bunlara karşı gelmenin bu romanlarda bir feminist yazın aracı olarak ortaya çıktığı söylenebilir. Fakat her alt bölümün sonunda sunulan sonuç ve karşılaştırma kısımlarında da görüldüğü gibi her kültürde, hatta aynı kültürdeki romanlarda bile, ilgi odağı farklı olup aynı konular farklı yöntemlerle ele alınmıştır. Aşağıda, bu kısa karşılaştırma bölümlerinden ortaya çıkan ve yerel feminizm kavramına katkıda bulunabilecek bulgulara kısaca değinilecektir.

İngiliz bağlamında özellikle öne çıkan konu, kadınların sorunlarının ardında yatan nedenlerin farklılıklarına dikkat çekilmesi ve böylece kadın deneyimini tekelleştirmeye çalışan her türlü girişime tepki gösterilmesidir. İngiliz feminizminde, öz benlik, dil ve temsil biçimleri gibi konular iç içe geçmiş bir şekilde ortaya çıkar ve beraber ele alınır. Genelleyici feminist eğilimler de feminist ideolojiyle uyuşmayan veya kadınlara atfedilen genel normlara dâhil

olamayan kimlikleri göz ardı etmesinden dolayı eleştirilir. Diğer bir deyişle, kadınların ortak bir baskı yaşadığını öne süren feminist yaklaşımlar, biyolojik ve toplumsal cinsiyet açısından “kadın” kategorisine giremeyen kişileri dışladığı gerekçesiyle benimsenmezler. Bu açıdan bakıldığında, sadece kadınlar değil her türlü cinsiyet söylemlerinden dışlanmış ve normların dışında kalan, transseksüeller, travestiler ve enseste dâhil olan ve fahişelik yapan kadınlar gibi farklı kimliklere de dikkat çekilir. Tristessa, Evelyn ve Praxis basmakalıp kategorilerin ve normların dışına çıkmış karakterlerdir; Carter ve Weldon bu karakterlerle 1970’li yıllarda feminist eleştiride yeteri kadar dikkat çekmemiş kavramları gündeme getirmişlerdir. Bu çerçevede, 1970’li yıllarda İngiliz feminizminin sadece biyolojik cinsiyeti değil toplumsal cinsiyeti de sorunsallaştırdığı ve kadın tanımına ve deneyimine yönelik yapılan genelleşici feminist yaklaşımları da eleştirdiği gözlemlenir. Bu dönem feminizmi, kadınların bireysel seçim alanlarına saygı duyulması gerektiğini de vurgular. Örneğin, Leilah gibi kadınlar anne olmak isteyip olamadıkları halde kürtaj olmaya zorlanırken, *Praxis*’deki Bayan Allbright istemediği halde çocuk doğurmak zorunda kalır. İkili cinsiyet karşıtlıklarından daha ziyade, sosyo-politik, etnik ve din gibi farklılıkların da cinsiyet kavramında ne kadar etkili olduğu vurgulanır. Hem *Yeni Havva’nın Çilesi* hem de *Praxis*, Judith Butler’ın postyapısalcı ve cinsiyet performansı hakkındaki görüşlerini anımsatacak şekilde, sabit ve değişmez kimlik kalıplarına meydan okurlar. Ayrıca, merkezsizleştirilmiş bir öz benlik, yıkıcı bir dil ve buna uygun olarak çok anlamlı ve karmaşık bir yazın biçimi, Marksizm, postmodernizm ve postyapısalcılıkla etkileşimde olan İngiliz feminist söylem içinde ön plana çıkar. Her ne kadar Marksizm diğer iki kavramla tezata düşecek olsa da, bu bakış açılarının hepsi burjuvazi ve baskın bir yaklaşım sergileyen her türlü ideolojiye karşı çıkarlar ve bu tutum da bu romanların ruhunu yansıtır.

Amerikan romanlarda ise biyolojik ve toplumsal cinsiyet “kadın” kategorisi tanımı için belirleyici unsurlar olarak ön plana çıkar. Kadınların bilincini değiştirmek, cinsel roller hakkında farkındalık yaratmak ve kadınların ezilmişliğini ve bastırıldığını gözler önüne sermek, ataerkil baskıyı sona erdirmek

için önemli koşullardan biridir. Bu amaçla, cinsiyet dışındaki tüm belirtiler arka plana atılır ve feminist bir devrim yaratmak için sembolik kız kardeşlik kavramı güçlü bir etmen olarak ortaya çıkar. Aslında, dönemdeki Amerikan feminizminin daha çok sosyo-tarihsel olduğu ve bütüncü bir eğilim aldığı söylenebilir. Ayrıca, kuram ve yazın dikkat çekici bir şekilde uyum içindedir ve kadınlara yapılan haksızlıkları sonlandırmak için feminist bilinç oluşumunun gerekliliğini desteklerler. Bu açıdan bakıldığında, *Dişi Adam* ve *Kadınlara Mahsus* kadınlar arasında cinsiyet bilincini geliştirmek için bireysel direnme ve feminist deneyimi kazanma hakkında birçok örnek temsil ederler. Yani, cinsiyet farkındalığı her ne kadar bu tezde çalışılan tüm romanlarda yer alsada, Amerikan romanlarda daha belirleyici bir unsur olarak öne çıkar. Bu olgu da, Amerika’da feminizmin radikal feministler, jino-eleştiri ve “Kadınların Ulusal Organizasyonu” (“National Organization of Women”) üyelerinin çabaları sayesinde dönem boyunca çok gündeme gelmesine ve popüler olmasına bağlanabilir. Daha iyi bir ifadeyle, radikal eğilimler bu tezde belirtilen feminist konulara oldukça hâkimdir. Bundan dolayı, ataerkilliğe karşı düşmanlık ve ilişkilerde erkekleri geri plana atmak için lezbiyenliğe ve bekârlığa yapılan olumlu vurgu ve de ataerkilliğin hâkim olduğu halihazırdaki sosyo-politik düzene meydan okuma ve bu düzeni değiştirme tartışmaları Amerikan yerel feminizm kavramı içinde dikkat çeker. Buna bağlı olarak, dönem içerisinde feminist edebiyat çok önemli bir strateji olarak kullanılır ve feminizmle tanışan ve bu sayede özgür ve bağımsız bir imaj kazanan kadın karakter imgeleri sıklıkla gözlemlenir.

Dönemdeki Türk feminist söylem, İngiliz ve Amerikan feminizmlerinden teorik ve politik altyapıya sahip olmamasıyla özellikle farklıdır. Hem *Ölmeye Yatmak* ta hem de *Tuhaf Bir Kadın*’da kadın bilinci merkezde olsa da, diğer iki kültürdeki gibi özellikle vurgulanan ve adlandırılan bir feminist gündem yoktur. Türk edebiyatında ve eleştirilerde toplu kadın örgütlerine veya bireysel feminist öykülerine rastlanmamaktadır. Fakat liberal hakların sadece yasalarda kaldığı ve uygulamada kadınların bu haklardan erkekler kadar yararlanamadığı ve kadınlara yönelik katı normların bu konulardaki etkisi tartışılır ve bu tartışma da cinsiyet

farkındalığının olduğuna işaret etmektedir. Dikkate değer bir bulgu ise, bu romanlarda kadın bilincinin Kemalizm, İslam ve sosyalizm gibi döneme hâkim ideolojilerin arasındaki çelişkili tutumları sorgulamak için alternatif bir boyut olarak ortaya çıkmasıdır. Bekâret, iffet ve sadakat gibi konular çerçevesinde tartışılan kadın cinsiyeti teması sosyal ve yasal haklarının farkında olan, Cumhuriyet'in ilanını takiben yapılan değişikliklere adapte olmaya çalışan bir Türkiye'de yaşayan eğitilmiş kadın karakter imgeleriyle anlatılır. Aysel ve Nermin örneklerinde görüldüğü gibi, bu kadın karakterler, belirtilen ideolojilerin baskısı nedeniyle kendilerine ve topluma yabancılaşırlar ve bunun hem psikolojik hem de duygusal boyuttaki etkilerini çok yoğun bir şekilde hissederler. Öte yandan bu ideolojilerle olan problemleri aynı zamanda bir direnme alanı olarak ortaya çıkar. Aysel ve Nermin özgür kişilikleri dolayısıyla muhafazakâr topluma uyum sağlayamazken, aynı zamanda sosyalizm ve Kemalizm gibi yine erkek egemen ve kadınları belirli kalıplar çerçevesinde davranmaya zorlayan ideolojilere de karşı koyarlar. Buna ek olarak İngiliz ve Amerikan edebiyatında ütopya ve büyülü gerçekçilik gibi alternatif yazın şekilleri ve teknikleri de ön plana çıkarken, Türk romanlarda kadın ve kadın ile ilgili konular ifade edilirken sosyo-politik ve tarihsel ortam ve gerçek boyut her zaman ön plandadır. Bilinç akışı tekniği, monologlar ve rüya anlatıları gibi modernist anlatı teknikleri bu iki romanda yaygın bir şekilde kullanılmış ve böylece sosyal gerçeklik kadın karakterlerin bilincinden süzülerek anlatılmıştır.

Bu şartlarda bakıldığında, her bir yerel söylemde odak noktası farklıdır çünkü her kültürde kadın kimliğini etkileyen faktörler de farklıdır. Dönemdeki yaygın feminist akımlar kadına yönelik baskıyı vurguladıkları için bu yerel farklılıklara değinmemişlerdir. Aslında, 1970'li yıllardaki feminist yaklaşımlar Türkiye gibi farklı jeopolitik koşulları da dikkate alsalar ve bunlara değinselerdi, feminizmin altında yatan çoğulluk, çeşitlilik ve farklılık gibi konulara vurgu yapan feminist konulara daha çok dikkat çekebilirlerdi. Bu açıdan bakıldığında, bu tez benzer konuların farklı ortamlarda farklı şekilde ele alındığını göstererek “yerel feminizm” kavramına katkıda bulunmaya çalışmıştır. Nitekim 1970'li

yıllarda açıkça ve sıklıkla vurgulanmayan farklı din ve devlet politikaları ve bunların kadınlık olgusundaki etkileri aslında feminizmin çoğulluğunun göstergesidir.

Bu çalışmanın ilk zamanlarında, seçilen eserlerin (hem kuram hem de yazın olarak) karşılaştırmalı analizi sırasında, Türk feminist söylemine ait bulguların azlığı bu tez için bir kısıtlamaydı. İngiliz ve Amerikan eserler hakkında çok fazla sayıda araştırma varken, Türkiye ortamının dâhil olduğu araştırmalar çok azdır. Ayrıca, Türkiye ve feminizm hakkında İngilizce yazılan veya İngilizce'ye çevrilen çok az sayıda eser vardır; seçilen iki çok önemli romanın bile İngilizce çevirilerinin olmaması da cesaret kırıcıydı. Fakat bu kısıtlamalar aynı zamanda teşvik edici de olmuştur çünkü bu tez çalışması Adalet Ağaoğlu ve Leyla Erbil gibi iki çok önemli yazarı aynı dönemde eser vermiş oldukları diğer kadın yazarlar ile beraber gündeme getirerek karşılaştırmalı edebiyat alanına da katkıda bulunmayı hedeflemiştir. Üstelik yazın ve kuramı disiplinlerarası bir çerçevede inceleyerek kadın çalışmaları, sanat ve teori ve Orta Doğu çalışmaları gibi alanların literatürlerine de ulaşmayı amaçlamıştır. Yine burada belirtilmesi gereken son nokta ise bu çalışmanın, feminist edebi kuramı ve yazınına eleştirel bir bakış açısıyla değinmesi, bunu yaparken de 1970'li yıllardaki feminist çalışma ve çabaları sadece eleştirmemiş aynı zamanda tüm bu çalışmaları çok ilham verici bulmuş ve takdir etmiş olmasıdır.

C: TEZ FOTOKOPİSİ İZİN FORMU

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TEZİN ADI (İngilizce): LOCAL FEMINISMS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF FEMINIST LITERARY THEORY AND PRACTICE IN THE 1970s IN BRITAIN, AMERICA, AND TURKEY

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